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## Iraq War (2003-): Was It Morally Justified?

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### *Summary*

This article argues, after explaining the theory of just war, that the US-led invasion on Iraq was not morally justified. Furthermore, it explains why democratization cannot be a justification for aggression, neither from the legal nor from the ethical point of view. In addition, this article claims that the immorality of the war has been a crucial factor, because it has caused a low level of public support for the war and, consequently, has led to American military failures and failure of other coalition forces in Iraq. Finally, the author concludes that the Iraq war has shown that we do not live in a unipolar system of international relations and that the power of the USA was overestimated prior to the war.

*Keywords:* Iraq, just war, morality, intervention, democratization, power, unipolarity

*Just-war theory has always played a part in official arguments about war... And if theory is used, it is also, inevitably, misused. Sometimes it serves only to determine what lies our leaders tell, the complex structure of their hypocrisy (Walzer, 1992: xi-xii).*

The war in Iraq (2003-) has initiated a plethora of analyses in many disciplines of social sciences (international law, international relations, strategy, political science, media analysis, etc.). One of the most fruitful issues of discussions is the morality<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The term morality is used in order to refer to discussions initiated by the journal *Ethics & International Affairs* about the ethical aspects of the Iraq war. Furthermore, according to Snauwaert (2004: 121), “the name of the tradition, ‘just war’, is rather unfortunate for it clouds the issue. What is really being addressed is the moral justifiability of the use of force. Also it is not really a theory of just war. It provides more of a moral calculus for the determination of the moral justifiability of force than a theory of war.”

of this war. The main purpose of this article is to present the strongest arguments in favour of the US-led invasion, and then to criticize these arguments. The main hypothesis is that the occupation of Iraq cannot be justified from the ethical perspective.

### Just-War Theory

The theory of just war has its origin in the work of St. Augustine. According to him, the most important criterion is whether war occurred for a just purpose or for self-gains.<sup>2</sup> Hugo Grotius (1625), in his work *De iure belli ac pacis*, differentiated between *jus ad bellum* (justice of war) and *jus in bello* (justice in war). According to Walzer (1992: 21), “*jus ad bellum* requires us to make judgments about aggression and self-defence; *jus in bello* about the observance of the customary and positive rules of engagement”. He also formulates a theory of aggression that has six propositions. The most important ones are the following (italics – M. W.):

2. *This international society has a law that establishes the rights of its members – above all, the rights of territorial integrity and political sovereignty.*
3. *Any use of force or imminent threat of force by one state against the political sovereignty or territorial integrity of another constitutes aggression and is a criminal act.*
4. *Aggression justifies... a war of self-defense... (ibid.: 61-62)*

Walzer (*ibid.*: 77) also argues against preventive wars – aimed at preventing a shift in the balance of power – because they lead to numerous wars whenever shifts in power relations occur. A pre-emptive strike can be justified only when there is an imminent threat. To be afraid is not enough to justify such a strike, but there must be a clear intention of an enemy to attack. “A state under threat is like an individual hunted by an enemy who has announced his intention of killing or injuring him” (*ibid.*: 85).

Walzer (*ibid.*: 90) also provides three additional exceptions for the general rule of non-intervention:

- when a particular set of boundaries clearly contains two or more political communities, one of which is already engaged in a large-scale military struggle for independence; that is, when what is at issue is secession or “national liberation”;
- when the boundaries have already been crossed by the armies of a foreign power... that is, when what is at issue is counterintervention; and
- when the violation of human rights within a set of boundaries is terrible... that is, in cases of enslavement or massacre.

<sup>2</sup> See Gonzalez, 1984.

It is evident from the analysis above that, according to Walzer's criteria, there was no justification for the US-led intervention in Iraq. There is no doubt that both sides violated *jus in bello* in the Iraq war.<sup>3</sup> However, it was only the American-led coalition that violated *jus ad bellum* in this war. In other words, the USA and allies committed an act of aggression. For, according to Walzer (*ibid.*: 52), "every violation of the territorial integrity or political sovereignty of an independent state is called aggression". This was not a pre-emptive strike, because there was no imminent threat to the USA or any other country. On the contrary, even the neighbours of Iraq, who could have been threatened the most, were opposed to the intervention. This was not a counterintervention, for there was no intervention of another power. There was no enslavement or massacre at the moment of intervention. On the contrary, as it will be stated later, when Saddam Hussein organized massacres of his own population, he had full backing of the USA. Finally, Kurds really wanted secession, but this could not have been a justification for occupying the entire Iraq. In other words, according to Walzer's criteria, the US-led intervention in Iraq is actually a prime example of aggression.

However, not all authors support Walzer's theory. Prior to the war and during the war, neoconservatives provided arguments in favour of the intervention that differ from Walzer's position. The next section cites the main arguments of this school of thought.

### **Neoconservatives and Their Arguments in Favour of the Intervention in Iraq**

O Tuathail (2006: 121) briefly summarizes the neoconservatives' position about international relations:

Neoconservatives advocated an activist imperial role for the United States as "the sole remaining superpower" willing to confront "tyranny" abroad and unapologetically promote American interests and values. Unlike political realists, neoconservatives believed that moral values – their political version of them, which they project as "universal values" – are central to world politics. Neoconservatism, in sum, was an imperial vision of the US role in world affairs.

It would be out of the scope of this article to present in detail all the elements of the neoconservatives' theory of international relations. Therefore, only elements that are important for the explanation of the Iraq war will be presented. For neoconservatives, the main task of US foreign policy is to secure American hegemony

<sup>3</sup> One can hear every day about violation of *jus in bello* by Iraqi insurgents. However, there is no doubt that coalition forces have also committed numerous violations of the Geneva Convention. Notorious Abu Graib is only the tip of an iceberg. For more details see Davis, 2007.

in the world. According to Rice (2005: 83), “we will seek to dissuade any potential adversary from pursuing a military build-up in the hope of surpassing, or equalling, the power of the United States”. In order to do it, the USA would not hesitate to wage preventive wars for “the United States has long affirmed the right to anticipatory self-defense”. Though Iraq was unable to equal the power of the USA, it might become, on the basis of oil revenues, a regional power capable of interfering with US interests in the Middle East, especially if Iraq were to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, according to Kristol and Kagan (2005), it was necessary to formulate a policy of regime change. According to the authors, “an American strategy built around the principle of regime change would have sent U.S. forces on to Baghdad to remove Saddam Hussein from power, and would have kept U.S. troops in Iraq long enough to ensure that a friendlier regime took root” (p. 70).<sup>4</sup>

However, the authors also argue that regime change is also in the interest of the Iraqi people, and, therefore, that the intervention was morally justified. Here we come to the main arguments in favour of the intervention, which were most succinctly summarized in an article by Teson (2005). He claims that it was justified to occupy Iraq because the military intervention in this country enabled the removal of a brutal tyrant from power – who was finally brought to justice – and the establishment of democracy in Iraq. According to the author, “the removal of Hussein brought... prospects of freedom and democracy to the Iraqis..., it included willingness to surrender Hussein to trial on charges of crimes against humanity... [In addition], country will have, for the first time in history, a liberal constitution that will hopefully guarantee human rights and the rule of law” (Teson, 2005: 11). Similarly, according to Weigel (2007: 16), “regime change in Iraq was a necessity. It was necessary for the people of Iraq, it was necessary for peace in the Middle East..., and it was necessary in order to challenge an Arab culture warped by irresponsibility, authoritarian brutality, rage and self-delusion – out of which had emerged, among other things, contemporary Jihadism.”<sup>5</sup>

Consequently, this article will try to answer the following questions. First, can war in Iraq be justified from the ethical point of view? Second, is it morally justi-

<sup>4</sup> The article was first published in 2000. This fact shows how strong an influence the neoconservative theoreticians had on President Bush. In a way, this article was a prophecy about the future policy of the USA in Iraq.

<sup>5</sup> Of course, it is possible to find many other arguments in favour of invasion on Iraq, as well as criticisms of these arguments. For example, there is an abundance of analyses that justify the war in Iraq as a pre-emptive attack against the Iraq threat toward the USA. However, such arguments are so weak that they are not analyzed in this article. In addition, many authors have already excellently criticized these types of arguments, and there is no need to repeat these criticisms here (see Chomsky, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2007a; Harding, 2004; Hamm (ed.), 2005).

fied to attack another country in order to establish democracy? Third, is it important whether the war in Iraq was morally justified? Furthermore, what caused the American military failure in Iraq? The final question concerns consequences of the American failure for broader issues in international relations.

The main hypotheses and answers to the questions above are the following. First, the US-led invasion on Iraq was not morally justified. Second, democratization cannot be a justification for aggression, neither from the legal nor from the ethical point of view. Third, the immorality of the war has been a crucial factor, because it has caused a low level of public support for the war and has led to the failure of coalition forces in Iraq. Finally, the failure of the USA in Iraq has shown that we no longer live in an age of unipolarity.

### **Tyranny and Aggression**

There is no doubt that Saddam Hussein was a dictator. He did not allow for free elections and he systematically oppressed any form of opposition to his rule. Furthermore, according to some estimates, only in his military actions against Kurds and Shi'a rebels in 1988 and 1991, Hussein's troops killed approximately 482,000 people.<sup>6</sup> No wonder that even authors who are very critical of the aggression on Iraq think that overthrowing Hussein was an occasion for rejoicing.<sup>7</sup> So, what might be wrong with overthrowing such a tyrant? Is the removal of Hussein not a sufficient justification for the US-led intervention in Iraq? This article argues that it is not.

This analysis will start with a historical comparison. There is no doubt that Stalin was a much more brutal tyrant than Hussein. Does it mean that Germany's attack on the USSR was justified? Does it mean that Stalin did not have the right to defend his country from foreign aggression? Of course, one can say that Hitler was also a tyrant. However, he came to power through democratic elections. Does it mean that Hitler's aggression on the USSR would have been justified, had he organized the aggression on the USSR immediately after the elections (before democratic institutions were suspended)? Would it have meant that people in the former Soviet Union should not have defended their country because a tyrant was in power? Or let us take another example. After the Second World War, Italy and former Yugoslavia had border disputes. At that time Italy was a democracy, and Yugoslavia was not. Does

<sup>6</sup> Tony Blair quoted in O'Leary et al, 2005: xii. See also U.S. Agency for International Development, 2004; Human Rights Watch, 1993; Iraqi Kurds, Story of Expulsion, BBC News, November 3, 2001, available at [news.bbc.co.uk](http://news.bbc.co.uk).

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Chomsky, 2007: 59, and Harding, 2004. There is at least one reason not to rejoice in the overthrowing of Hussein. According to Walzer (1992: 67), "resistance to aggression is necessary to deter future aggressors". Indeed, had the resistance to American aggression on Iraq not been so fierce, the world might already have experienced war in Iran.

it mean that Italy had the right to occupy disputed territories or even to occupy the entire Yugoslavia? Did the USA have the right to attack and kill 3.8 million people in Vietnam<sup>8</sup> because this country lacked democratic institutions? Was colonialism justified because colonized territories did not have multiparty systems? Was it justified to brutally oppress liberation movements in colonies because governments in the colonial metropolis came to power through democratic elections? According to Tarzi (2007: 39), “the colonial era... is replete with subjugation of colonized people by grand Western democracies... It is accepted that colonial territories were not democratic states.” So, if we now agree that subjugation of non-democratic territories was not morally justified in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, we have to agree, by the same token, that the same practices cannot be justified in the 21<sup>st</sup> century either.

The question can also be formulated in the following way: does the fact that Hussein did some terrible things in the past disqualify his effort to defend Iraq from US invasion? The answer is, once again, no. Many politicians played a negative role in one period of their career, and a positive role in different circumstances. For example, Winston Churchill was a politician who supported colonialism, who even argued in favour of using weapons of mass destruction in order to suppress rebellions in colonies. According to Chomsky, “fortunately for imperial powers, air power was becoming available to control civilian populations, though some, like Winston Churchill, were enamoured to the possibilities of using poison gas to subdue ‘recalcitrant Arabs’ (mainly Kurds and Afghans)” (Chomsky, 2003: 161). Yet, Churchill played a very positive role during the Second World War. Similarly, the founding fathers of the USA organized genocide of Native Americans. According to Finney, “the United States’ founding fathers were staunchly anti-Indian advocates..., all four provided for genocide against Indian peoples of this hemisphere” (<http://www.greatdreams.com/lies.htm>, accessed on 11 May 2009). That Finney’s assessment is correct can be concluded from the following quotations. In 1779, Washington instructed General Sullivan before attack on Iroquois people: “lay waste all the settlements around... that the country may not be merely overrun, but destroyed..., and do not listen to any overture of peace before the total ruin of their settlements is effected”. In 1807, Jefferson instructed the War Department prior to actions against Native Americans: “In war, they will kill some of us; we shall destroy all of them” (Stannard, 1992: 118-121).<sup>9</sup> In addition, both Washington and Jefferson were slave-owners. So, does the fact that the founding fathers were much more brutal toward Native Americans than Hussein was toward Kurds and Shi’a rebels mean that they were not right when they led the war for independence from British colonial rule?

<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/bmj.a137> (accessed on 7 May 2009).

<sup>9</sup> According to Stannard, 1992 – concerning the number of casualties – the genocide against Native Americans was the worst in the entire human history.

Of course, the answer is no. Similarly, Hussein was on the right side in 2003, trying to organize defence of his country from foreign aggression. Furthermore, the USA did not attack Iraq with the purpose of punishing Hussein for wrongdoings against his own people. During the period when Hussein's worst crimes happened, Iraq had full support of the USA. According to Chomsky (2003: 106), "Donald Rumsfeld was Reagan's special envoy to the Middle East during the period of the worst terror there and was also delegated to establish firmer relations with Saddam Hussein." Similarly, according to the same author,

both the U.S. and the U.K. continued their support for Saddam without notable change, including provision of means to develop weapons of mass destruction after the end of war with Iran. In 1989, Iraqi nuclear engineers were invited to the U.S. for advanced training. In April 1990, four months before Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, a high level senatorial delegation, led by 1996 Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole, went to Iraq to convey President Bush's good wishes to Saddam and to assure him that he need not be concerned with the criticism he hears from some maverick commentators in the United States (Chomsky, 2007: 55).

In other words, Hussein had US support when he attacked his own people, and even committed mass murder, but he was ousted from power when he tried to organize the defence of his country and its natural resources from foreign powers. Hence, the US aggression on Iraq cannot be morally justified by the argument that intervention brought Hussein to justice.<sup>10</sup>

The idea that democratic countries have the right to intervene against dictatorships<sup>11</sup> encompasses an additional problem: who is the supreme judge that should decide whether a country is a democracy or not? For example, prior to the First World War, Germany was considered one of the most developed democracies in the world. According to Oren (1996: 269), "Imperial Germany was a member of a select group of states – modern, constitutional, administrative, cohesive nation-states – that were politically the most developed on earth". In contrast, when the USA entered the First World War, Germany suddenly started to be considered as an example of autocracy. Furthermore, even countries that are dictatorships are not labeled thus if they maintain good relations with the USA. However, when dictators no longer want to listen to the USA, they suddenly become tyrants. According to

<sup>10</sup> Of course, it does not mean that Hussein's rightful position concerning resistance to foreign aggression and occupation exculpates him for all his past wrongdoings (see above). The occupation was illegal and immoral, but Hussein's regime was also illegitimate and immoral. Therefore, the Iraq war was caused by two immoral policies.

<sup>11</sup> The classification of regimes in this article is based on Przeworski et al., 2000: 15, 18. According to the authors democracy is a regime "in which those who govern are selected through contested elections... whereas dictatorships are regimes that are not democracies."

Schwarz and Skinner, “those friends who lead patently authoritarian regimes might be called ‘king’ or ‘president’, sometimes ‘leader’, but never ‘dictator’” (Schwarz and Skinner, 2002: 172).

Motives for aggression on Iraq are even more questionable if we take into account the state of democracies in the attacking countries. According to O Tuathail (2006: 123), “George W. Bush was elected president of the United States after the US Supreme Court ordered the termination of vote recounts in the state of Florida in December 2000 (if all votes had been counted, later analysis showed, the Democratic candidate Al Gore would have won Florida and thus the presidency).” In other words, during the 2001-2004 period the USA did not fulfil the minimum requirement for democracy: the election of government through fair elections. The United Kingdom – which also participated in the mission of bringing democracy to Iraq – is a kingdom, the Upper House is not a democratically elected body, and there is no official separation between state and church. In addition, in the 2005 elections, both major parties (the only ones for which it is worthy to vote) were against the withdrawal of troops from Iraq in spite of the fact that the majority of UK citizens was opposed to aggression on Iraq. This means that, in this major issue, citizens of the UK were in the position to choose “between Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola”. Furthermore, the situation in other countries that participated in the aggression on Iraq did not differ much. According to Chomsky (2003: 131), “support for a war carried out ‘unilaterally by America and its allies’ did not rise above 11 percent in any [European] country”. In other words, European countries attacked Iraq – claiming to do it in order to bring democracy to this country – ignoring the will of 90 percent of the people in their own countries. However, of even more importance is the opinion of the Iraqi people. Do they perceive coalition troops as liberators of their country? The answer is unequivocal – no. According to Chomsky (2007: 162), “one important source is a poll for the British Ministry of Defence this past August (2005), carried out by Iraqi University researches and leaked to British press. It found that 82 percent are ‘strongly opposed’ to the presence of coalition troops.” So, 90 percent of the people in countries that attacked Iraq are against this aggression, and 82 percent of the people in Iraq are against foreign occupation. Still, many authors justify aggression as an act of democratization. In other words, the above-mentioned authors did not take into consideration the opinion of the Iraqi people. According to them, Iraq must accept foreign troops on Iraqi soil in the name of democracy. Obviously, these authors think that they know better what is good for Iraqis than Iraqis themselves.<sup>12</sup> Teson (2005: 16) even goes so far to claim that “the Iraqi resistance is a

<sup>12</sup> The only remaining justification for occupation is based on the Leninist logic that communists have the right to rule even without support of the majority of the population, because commu-

criminal enterprise”.<sup>13</sup> So, the dominant perception is still that those who organized aggression on Iraq had a noble cause, while those who defend their own country are criminals. If 82 percent of Iraqis want foreign troops to leave their country, and if these troops do not want to leave their country voluntarily (at least not as long as they do not suffer heavy casualties and extreme cost of occupation), then one may say that those who fight against foreign troops are in fact more in tune with the preferences of the majority, and thus *per definitionem* that their view represents the people more closely. For insurgents strive to accomplish what a great majority of Iraqis want – liberation of their homeland. According to Walzer (1992: 52), “all aggressive acts have one thing in common: they justify forceful resistance”. However, according to Teson (2005: 16), “the Iraqi insurgents are fighting an unjust war. They are not fighting for their homeland against the invader: they are fighting for the deposed tyrant against the Iraqi people and its allies.” Of course, Teson does not provide any evidence for his claim. The reason is simple – there is no evidence to support it. Rare public polls have shown that the Iraqi people support the insurgents, and not the aggressors.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, the question remains: does this mean that 82 percent of Iraqis prefer a domestic tyrant over foreign occupation? In answering this question it is important to stress that the UN Charter grants to every country the right to choose its own political system. Furthermore, according to article 51, “nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations”. In other words, if 82 percent of the people who do not want foreign troops on their soil really prefer domestic tyranny over foreign occupation, they have the right to have such a form of government. However, Teson does not provide any proof that insurgents really want a tyranny. To claim that those who fight against occupation of Iraq actually prefer tyranny is tantamount to claiming that the US soldiers who fought against Hitler actually wanted racial segregation in the southern states, that they fought for US support to Latin American dictators, or that the US soldiers actually revelled in slaughter of Native Americans in previous centuries. In other words, it is much more likely that Iraqi insurgents are actually real patriots. For, as long as democratic

nists have knowledge of the long-term interests of the working class and the entire population. The only difference is that now the USA has taken the communists’ position.

<sup>13</sup> “A conqueror”, writes Clausewitz, “is always a lover of peace... he would like to make his entry into our state unopposed; in order to prevent this, we must choose war” (quoted in: Walzer, 1992: 53).

<sup>14</sup> According to a poll – conducted by ABC News, USA Today, the BBC and ARD German TV in March 2007 – 51% of Iraqis and more than 90% of Sunni Iraqis support attacks on US forces. See: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17687430/> (accessed on 21 May 2009).

government cannot order soldiers on their own soil what to do, a country cannot be a real democracy. Simply put, after the removal of Saddam's tyranny, Iraq experienced a war and, according to Walzer (1992: 29), "war is most often a form of tyranny". The Iraqi people did not have the right to remove Saddam through free and fair elections, but neither do they have the right to remove from power the person that has really been ruling Iraq since the occupation – the President of the USA.

However, one may claim that Iraq is now a democracy. Indeed, multiparty elections were held in this country. Yet, it is obvious that elected officials cannot have real power with foreign soldiers on Iraqi soil. To quote Walzer again (*ibid.*: 88), "the (internal) freedom of a political community can be won only by the members of that community". Furthermore, the democratic character of these elections was drastically undermined by the fact that the legal president of Iraq – Hussein – and his party were not allowed to participate in the elections. In East European countries, communists had the opportunity to participate in the first democratic elections (in several countries they even won the elections). So, it is logical to ask why Hussein was also not allowed to run in the elections. Additionally, if somebody claimed that politicians who are in power in Iraq today really represent the people, he/she should explain why these politicians need 200,000 elite foreign troops on their soil? And why Hussein was able to run Iraq with no support of foreign troops? The most logical answer is that Hussein had more support among Iraqis<sup>15</sup> than the actual government, which came to power with the backing of countries that occupied Iraq. As Walzer pointed out (*ibid.*: 98-99), "a government that receives economic and technical aid, military supply, strategic and tactical advice, and is still unable to reduce its subject to obedience, is clearly an illegitimate government".

An additional question which arises from the claim that aggression on Iraq was justified – because Iraq was a dictatorship – is whether it means that the USA has the right to occupy all Arab states. According to the Western standards, none of those countries is a democracy. So, should the USA and its allies attack all of them? Why did the USA attack Iraq, and not Saudi Arabia? According to this logic, the USA also has the right to attack China in order to establish democracy in this country. It is obvious that such a logic must be rejected, for, as Walzer (*ibid.*: 87) pointed out,

the members of a political community must seek their own freedom, just as the individual must cultivate his virtue. They cannot be set free, as he cannot be made virtuous, by any external force. Indeed, political freedom depends upon the existence of individual virtue, and this the armies of another state are most unlikely to

<sup>15</sup> Hussein's authority can be classified as traditional (according to Weber's classification). He was a "father figure" to many Iraqis. See Heywood, 2002: 211.

produce – unless, perhaps, they inspire an active resistance and set in motion a self-determining policy.

However, it is important to provide additional explanation of why Iraqis resist foreign invaders. It is possible to find different answers in the literature concerning this question. According to Teson (2005: 16), the purpose of resistance is

to restore the brutal rule of Hussein in Iraq (or something like it) and, more generally, to defeat the forces of democracy and human rights and install totalitarian, premodern political structures. These insurgents are, most likely, either the accomplices in Hussein's past atrocities or allies in the terrorist war against the Coalition and the West.

McMahan (2005: 13) provides a rather different explanation. According to him,

one reason why the American invasion on Iraq in 2003 was not a justifiable instance of humanitarian intervention is that there was no evidence that ordinary Iraqis wanted to be freed from the Ba'athist dictatorship *by the United States* – a country that a little more than a decade earlier, and under the leadership of the current president's father, had bombed their capital, decimated their civilian infrastructure, and successfully pressed for the institution and perpetuation of sanctions that subsequently resulted in many thousands of deaths among civilians.

Indeed, according to the World Health Organization, approximately one million of Iraqis died as a result of sanctions. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, 576,000 of them were children. And, according to Joan B. Croc Institute of International Peace Studies, between 106,000-227,000 of them were children under the age of five.<sup>16</sup> Terrible human losses continued after the US occupation. Burnham et al. (2006) argue that the toll of post-invasion excess deaths is 650,000 people. Stiglitz (2008: 138) estimates that, by the year 2010, the total number of Iraqi deaths would exceed one million, while the number of injured would exceed two million. Furthermore, 4.6 million people – one out of seven Iraqis – have been uprooted from their homes (*ibid.*: 133). The data regarding the economic situation are also grim. According to the same author, "Iraq's GDP, in real terms, is no higher than it was in 2003, in spite of a near quadrupling of oil prices; at least one in four Iraqis are unemployed; and Baghdad gets only nine hours of electricity per day – less than it had before the war" (*ibid.*: 140). In addition, median income also failed.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, Iraq paid a heavy price for "democratization".

<sup>16</sup> Data are taken from Cockburn and Cockburn, 2002: xxix, 114-135; and Garfield, 1999.

<sup>17</sup> See <http://edition.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/meast/05/12/iraq.livingsurvey/index.html> (accessed on 7 May 2009).

Obviously, Iraqis live no better under the US occupation than they used to live under Hussein's authoritarian rule.

However, it is important to explain why the USA under Bush wanted so much the democratization of Iraq. For example, according to Chomsky (2007: 156), "in 2002, Washington embraced President's Bush's vision of democracy by supporting a military coup that very briefly overturned the Chavez government". And Chavez was a democratically elected president. So, why was the USA willing to sacrifice so many American soldiers and Iraqi citizens in order to bring democracy to Iraq, simultaneously destroying a democracy in another part of the world (Venezuela)? To be honest, the USA did not originally justify the aggression by claiming that it wanted to bring democracy to Iraq.<sup>18</sup> Only when it became obvious that Iraq did not possess weapons of mass destruction (WMD), did the story of democratization start to be important. The most logical explanation is that the USA attacked Iraq neither because Iraq possessed WMD<sup>19</sup> nor because it was important to the USA that Iraq should be a democracy. The reason was Iraqi oil.<sup>20</sup> Iraq possesses approximately 10 percent of world's oil reserves and it is located in the heart of the world's most

<sup>18</sup> For example, President Bush did not even mention the terms democracy or democratization in his radio-address in the beginning of "Operation Iraqi Freedom" (see <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030322.html>) (accessed on 22 May 2009).

<sup>19</sup> It is important to add that it is very doubtful whether the existence of WMD in Iraq would be a sufficient justification for aggression on Iraq if we take into account that occupying forces have piles of WMD. Indeed, do the USA and the UK have the right to demand of any country in the world prohibition on production of WMD as long as these two countries have the same weapons? This is especially questionable if we have in mind the fact that the USA itself violates the Non-Proliferation Treaty that not only demands non-proliferation of WMD to countries that do not possess them, but also obliges countries that already possess WMD to gradually get rid of them (for more details see Chomsky, 2007a, especially pages 69-78). In contrast, the USA openly admitted that it developed a new generation of atomic bombs (so-called small atomic bombs). Furthermore, the previous record of using WMD also does not give moral authority to the USA and the UK to demand of any country not to produce WMD. To illustrate, the USA did not have any restraint when it used atomic bombs against Japan, threatening this country with complete destruction if it refused to surrender unconditionally. The hypocrisy is even more evident in the case of the UK attacking Iraq for alleged possession of WMD, although the former used poison gas to quell the Kurds in Iraq in 1924 (see Harding, 2004: 7).

<sup>20</sup> It is possible to find alternative explanations of the main rationale for the war. For example, Fouskas and Gokay (2005) claim that the main goal of the intervention was to keep dollar as the main currency for the trade of energy. Furthermore, Blair's foreign policy was probably also motivated by the idea of "liberal interventionism", rather than solely by the thirst for oil (he supported the intervention against Serbia, even though Serbia did not have oil). Additionally, there is no doubt that the intervention in Iraq sent a message to Iran, and the idea of so-called "Pax Americana" in the Middle East was also important. However, this article claims that the main reason for the intervention was Iraqi oil.

important oil export region.<sup>21</sup> Control over Iraq enables permanent military threat to other countries in the region, and favourable contracts for US oil companies. Allegedly, Al Capone said that it was much easier for him to persuade somebody when he said nice words and had a pistol pointed at somebody's head than when he only said nice words. Similarly, it is much easier to persuade Iraqi officials to sign contracts that are very lucrative for US companies when these officials are surrounded by 160,000 American troops.

Of course, it would be very difficult to get public support for the war on the basis of the above-mentioned justification. According to Walzer (1992: xi-xii), "no one political leader can send soldiers into battle, asking them to risk their lives and to kill other people, without assuring them that their cause is just – and of their enemies unjust". Therefore, it is always important to make up a noble justification for occupation. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, occupation of colonies was justified on the basis of the claim that colonial powers brought civilization to the colonies.<sup>22</sup> Today, such a justification would not be in accordance with modern discourse, which no longer accepts the idea that certain countries have the right to occupy other countries because the latter are not civilized. Therefore, a new word started to be important – democratization. It has the same function today that the word civilization had in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, the real intentions have almost always been the same. Two hundred years ago Thomas Jefferson wrote: "We believe no more in Bonaparte's fighting merely for the liberty of the seas, than in Great Britain's fighting for the liberties of mankind. The object is the same, to draw to themselves the power, the wealth and the resources of other nations."<sup>23</sup>

To conclude, the above analysis has shown that the aggression on Iraq was not justified. The people of Iraq did not want occupation by foreign troops, and the real intention of the aggressors was not to institute democracy, but to gain control over natural resources of this country.

### **Importance of Ethics**

A logical question after the above analysis is whether there is any importance in investigating the morality of the Iraq war. If it is true that this war was immoral, one may ask: so what? Why would the USA not occupy Iraq even if this is immoral, especially if occupation is in the interest of the USA? Almost 2,500 years ago Thucydides (2002: 38) wrote: "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must". However, what is peculiar for the war in Iraq is that the strong have not been

<sup>21</sup> See Harding, 2004: 48.

<sup>22</sup> For an excellent analysis of justifications for colonialism, see Doty, 1996.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Chomsky, 2007: 54.

able to do what they originally wanted, while the weak, in spite of terrible suffering, have virtually forced a coalition of forty countries to leave Iraq. Even the USA – which is gradually becoming the only occupying force – is trying to find a way for an “honourable” withdrawal of its troops. Is this connected with the morality of the war? It will be argued in this section that the answer to this question is positive. Indeed, the most logical explanation for the failure of coalition troops to win in Iraq is that the illegitimate character of the American-led aggression on Iraq caused a low level of morale of coalition troops,<sup>24</sup> and a very high level of morale of members of the resistance movement. However, before explaining this hypothesis, this article will first provide evidence about the warring sides. This is important because those who oppose American troops in Iraq are frequently labelled in literature as terrorists.<sup>25</sup> In addition, this section will investigate whether the USA and its allies won the war in Iraq. The article will then continue with the analysis of the relationship between morality and success in Iraq.

In 2003, the USA organized the so-called “Coalition of the Willing”, a group of countries that, first, attacked Iraq and, later, occupied the country. The list of countries was rather impressive. During the 2003-2009 period, forty countries participated with their troops in occupation of Iraq. And this coalition has been led by the world’s only superpower, which spends on its military almost the same amount of

<sup>24</sup> The morale of the troops is a military secret everywhere in the world. Therefore, it is not possible to confirm the above hypothesis from primary sources (for example, the assessment done by the USA military itself). However, there is an abundance of secondary sources that confirm a low level of morale. To illustrate, *The Christian Science Monitor* reports, in the article “Troop morale in Iraq hits ‘rock bottom’”, about soldiers demanding their troops to go home or female soldiers becoming pregnant for the same purpose. An officer described the mentality of the troops: “They vent to anyone who will listen. They write letters, they cry, they yell. Many of them walk around looking visibly tired and depressed... We feel like pawns in a game that we have no voice [in].” A soldier in Iraq wrote in a letter to the Congress: “The way we have been treated and the continuous lies told to our families back home have devastated us all.” (The entire article is available at <http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/0707/p02s01-woiq.html>, accessed on 24 May 2009). Of course, one may ask whether the morale of the troops is of any importance, as long as soldiers obey orders or as long as there is no mutiny in the military. However, as Inter Press Service reports: “Morale among US soldiers in the country is so poor, many are simply parking their Humvees and pretending to be on patrol, called ‘search and avoid’ missions” (<http://www.alternet.org/waroniraq/66160/>, accessed on 24 May 2009). So, with soldiers obeying orders in such a way, it is no wonder that the USA is not able to establish control over Iraq. That the morale of the troops is important is also obvious from the fact that there is no plausible alternative explanation for the American failure in Iraq.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, Weigel, 2007: 15, and Teson, 2005. The media also frequently label those who oppose occupation militarily as terrorists.

money as all other countries in the world put together.<sup>26</sup> The USA alone has 144,000 troops in Iraq,<sup>27</sup> while other countries provide 6500 troops (August, 2008). In addition, 190,000 private military contractors, loyal to the occupation forces, are present in Iraq.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, Iraqi troops loyal to the occupational forces in Iraq are also powerful, at least when the number of soldiers, policemen and other paramilitary troops is taken into account. According to the Pentagon, as of March 2008, there were 531,000 Iraq Security Forces (180,000 military, 340,000 police, plus others).<sup>29</sup> So, a logical question arises: how is it possible that such a strong coalition is unable to defeat insurgents who have no ally? An additional important question is: against whom do these 871,500 soldiers, policemen and mercenaries loyal to the USA actually fight? Such questions become even more striking if we take into account that Iraqi Kurds perceive the coalition troops as liberators, and that there is no Kurdish insurgency against the occupation of Iraq.

Of course, it is in the interest of the US Government to present the war in Iraq as a war against terrorism, especially against Al Qaeda. However, The Iraq Study Group Report argues that “Al Qaeda is responsible only for a small portion of violence in Iraq”. Furthermore, according to the Report, “Al Qaeda in Iraq is now largely Iraqi-run and composed of Sunni Arabs”.<sup>30</sup> In other words, insurgents, who fight against foreign occupation, is a more appropriate term for these fighters than terrorists. The Report also identifies that most attacks on Americans come from the Sunni insurgency. Other sources also confirm that foreign fighters make up a very small percentage of the insurgency. Major General Joseph Taluto, head of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, said that “99.9 per cent of captured insurgents are Iraqis”.<sup>31</sup> The estimate has been confirmed by the Pentagon’s own figures; in one analysis of over 1000 insurgents captured in Fallujah, only 15 were non-Iraqis.<sup>32</sup> According to the *Daily Telegraph*, information from military commanders engaging in battles around

<sup>26</sup> In 2008, the United States spent more on its military than the next forty-two spending countries combined, accounting for 47% of the world’s total military spending (Stiglitz, 2008: 238-239).

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.dawn.com/2008/08/09/int1.htm> (accessed on 7 May 2009).

<sup>28</sup> The Congressional Budget Office figure, reported in *The Christian Science Monitor*; the article is available at <http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0818/p02s01-usmi.html> (accessed on 24 May 2009).

<sup>29</sup> [http://www.mnf-iraq.com/images/stories/Press\\_briefings/2008/march/080304\\_pentagon\\_transcript.pdf](http://www.mnf-iraq.com/images/stories/Press_briefings/2008/march/080304_pentagon_transcript.pdf) (accessed on 7 May 2009).

<sup>30</sup> [http://www.usip.org/isg/iraq\\_study\\_group\\_report/report/1206/iraq\\_study\\_group\\_report.pdf](http://www.usip.org/isg/iraq_study_group_report/report/1206/iraq_study_group_report.pdf), p. 10 (accessed on 7 May 2009).

<sup>31</sup> <http://archive.gulfnews.com/articles/05/06/09/168406.html> (accessed on 7 May 2009).

<sup>32</sup> [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle\\_East/FK20Ak03.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/FK20Ak03.html) (accessed on 7 May 2009).

Ramadi exposed the fact that “out of 1300 suspected insurgents arrested in five months of 2005, none were non-Iraqis”.<sup>33</sup> In 2005, the Washington-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) concluded that foreign fighters accounted for less than 10% of the estimated 30,000 insurgents, and argued that the US and Iraq Governments were “feeding the myth” that they comprised the backbone of the insurgency.<sup>34</sup> From the sources above it is possible to draw only one conclusion: the USA and the coalition troops are actually fighting against the Iraqi people.

So, who has won in this battle between the USA, its allies and their domestic supporters on the one side, and the majority of the Iraqi people on the other side? There is no doubt that the USA was very successful in the beginning of the war. The USA and coalition troops captured Baghdad after only three weeks of fighting, having suffered only 159 casualties (Ben-Israel, 2003: 55).<sup>35</sup> It is logical to ask why the USA and its allies were so successful in the first phase of the war. There is a logical answer: because of the balance of power. To illustrate, the US military budget at the time was 400 billion dollars (greater than the total GDP of Russia), while the Iraqi military budget was 1.5 billion dollars. In addition, the US coalition included the majority of NATO countries, and many countries outside Europe. In other words, the “Coalition of the Willing” had a 300 times higher military expenditure than Iraq.<sup>36</sup> Iraq had virtually no ally when the aggression started. Therefore, it is no wonder that the country which had already been destroyed in the first Gulf War, ruined by a harsh embargo, and permanently bombarded in the so-called “no-fly” zone, was unable to resist such a powerful coalition in a frontal type of war.

However, everything that happened after the occupation, when an urban-guerilla type of war started, has been a great surprise. Indeed, countries that made this coalition have been withdrawing from Iraq one by one for two reasons. First, knowing that this is an unjust war, the domestic public pressured their politicians to withdraw troops. Second, the successfulness of rebels, and their ability to impose heavy casualties on coalition troops increased even further the public pressure for withdrawal. Even in the USA, after almost six years of war, voters elected a president who has argued in favour of pulling out the troops. However, it should be stressed that this probably would not have happened had the insurgents not been so success-

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/1504712/US-Army-admits-Iraqis-outnumber-foreign-fighters-as-its-main-enemy.html> (accessed on 7 May 2009).

<sup>34</sup> *The Guardian*, September 23, 2005.

<sup>35</sup> Though it seems to be an impressive victory, it is not something new in military history. For example, in 1941, the Axis powers occupied Yugoslavia – a country with a very unfavourable terrain for Blitzkrieg – in only 12 days with less than 200 casualties.

<sup>36</sup> Harding, 2004: 53. These data show that the claim that Iraq was a threat to the USA was ridiculous.

ful in their fight against occupational troops. That insurgency has been successful can be proven on the basis of the following data. According to Stiglitz, (2008: ix-x, 5-6),

nearly 4,000<sup>37</sup> U.S. troops have been killed and more than 58,000 have been wounded, injured, or fallen seriously ill... One hundred thousand U.S. soldiers have returned from the war suffering from serious mental health disorders... The total budgetary and economic cost to the United States will turn out to be around \$3 trillion... The cost of direct U.S. military operation – not even including long-term costs such as taking care of wounded veterans – already exceeds the cost of the twelve-year war in Vietnam and is more than double the cost of the Korean War. And, even in the best case scenario, these costs are projected to be almost ten times the cost of the first Gulf War, almost a third more than the cost of the Vietnam War, and twice the cost of World War I. The only war in our history which cost more was World War II, when 16.3 million U.S. troops fought in a campaign lasting four years, at a total cost (in 2007 dollars, after adjusting for inflation) of about \$5 trillion.

Hence, 30,000 Iraqi insurgents,<sup>38</sup> having only light infantry weapons and improvised explosive devices, injured or killed more than 60,000 coalition troops, and forced every U.S. taxpayer to spend an average amount of 20,000 dollars for the war in Iraq. It is probably best to compare the wars in Iraq and in Vietnam. In both cases the USA tried to occupy and conquer a foreign country that did not want foreign troops on their soil. In both cases the USA was unsuccessful. Even the success of the Vietcong is surprising when the balance of power is taken into account. However, the success of Iraqi insurgency is an even greater surprise. Insurgents in Vietnam had military support of two great powers (the USSR and China), the geographical factor in Vietnam (jungle) was much more favourable for a guerrilla type of war, and North and South Vietnam together have four times more inhabitants than Iraq. In contrast, Iraqi insurgents achieved their goal without support of any great power. According to Chomsky (2007: 74), “the failure of the U.S. occupation of Iraq is surprising, given U.S. power and resources... and the lack of significant outside support for resistance”. The USA and its allies are extremely unsuccessful in Iraq if one compares their occupation with other historical cases. To quote Chomsky again (2007a: 56), “it is a remarkable fact that Washington planners have had more trouble controlling Iraq than Russia had in its satellites or Germany in occu-

<sup>37</sup> The latest figure is 4300 deaths (<http://antiwar.com/casualties/>, accessed on 24 May 2009).

<sup>38</sup> The International Crisis Group estimated that there were approximately 5,000 to 15,000 insurgents in Iraq (ICG, 2006). According to *USA Today* (September 27, 2007, p. A1) approximately 19,000 insurgents have been killed. Other sources provide different data about the number of insurgents.

piep Europe". Indeed, Germany was able to control (controlling at the same time many other countries) a country of similar size, with a little less inhabitants and one that was considered to be equally powerful as Germany – France. During the time when Germany controlled France, all elite German troops were on the Eastern front. Furthermore, members of the French Resistance had full support of the great powers – the USA, the UK and the USSR. Yet, Germany did not have much trouble in keeping full control over France. So, why has the USA not been able to establish – together with such allies as the UK, Japan, Spain, Italy, Ukraine, Poland, etc. – control over a country that has a 400 times lower GDP and 15 times less inhabitants? This is particularly amazing if we take into account the fact that the USA sent all its elite units to Iraq.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, it is important to ask why the insurgents have been so successful and who has been supporting them. It is clear that without a relatively widespread support, the insurgents would not have been so successful. Support for the insurgents is especially strong among Sunnis. According to a poll conducted by the Brookings Institution, in 2005 82 percent of Sunnis and 69 percent of Shiites wanted near-term US withdrawal (Chomsky, 2007: 116). Since President Bush rejected withdrawal, it is hardly surprising that the Iraqi people gave such a strong support to the insurgents. It is also no wonder that 100,000 US soldiers have serious mental health problems.<sup>40</sup> War as such is an extremely stressful event. However, anxieties grow when soldiers doubt the justification for the war and when those who are supposed to be liberated begin to rebel against their *liberators*. In contrast, the insurgents are very motivated to fight, even against a much more powerful enemy, when they feel that they have the support of the population. As a result, US taxpayers must pay \$3 trillion for this war, four times more than they pay for the bailout of the financial sector, and 60 times more than they should pay for the rescue of car industry. In order to fight such a strongly motivated rebellion, they have to pay 100 million dollars per insurgent (total amount divided by number of insurgents). However, other countries are not so eager to pay such a heavy price. As Stiglitz pointed out (2008: 145), “increasingly, the ‘coalition of the willing’ was becoming the ‘coalition of one’”. In the end, even the USA will most likely be forced to withdraw troops from Iraq at to end this immoral occupation of a foreign country. This will not happen only if the US Government should continue to pay 500 billion dollars a year for the Iraq war. Nevertheless, in this case, Iraq will persist to be one of the most important causes of the economic crisis in the USA, and the most important source of rancour toward this country around the world. Furthermore, politicians

<sup>39</sup> By October 2007, 1.641,894 US soldiers had been (at certain periods of time) deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan (the great majority of them in Iraq) (Stiglitz, 2008: 255).

<sup>40</sup> 263,000 troops have already been treated by the Department of Veterans Affairs. 52,000 of them suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (Stiglitz, 2008: 65, 106).

who promise the withdrawal of troops will continue to have, in the elections, a huge edge over the opponents of withdrawal. Finally, only one question will remain: how long can they keep postponing the fulfilment of their promise?

### **Morality of the War and the Balance of Power**

Immediately after the USA and its allies occupied Iraq, numerous political scientists were so impressed by the US victory that they concluded that the USA was becoming more powerful than any country in human history. According to Heller (2003: 5), “American military preponderance is not only uncontested in the contemporary world; it is virtually uncontested in recorded history. Even the British Empire at the height of its power did not possess the overwhelming advantage over any potential adversaries currently enjoyed by the United States.” Similarly, according to Ikenberry (2004: 83), “never before was one country so powerful and unrivalled”. Therefore, the authors conclude that we live in an age of unipolarity. Are these assessments correct? If one compares the capability of powers in previous centuries, the answer to this question is definitely – no. For example, Spain was able to control – at the peak of its might – a large part of two continents (North and South America). The UK and France controlled almost the entire Africa and large parts of Asia. The UK alone controlled India, a country with 10 times more territory and inhabitants than the UK proper. Japan was able to control China – the most populous country in the world. It has already been mentioned that Germany occupied and controlled France during the Second World War, and the Soviet Union did not have much trouble controlling countries in Eastern Europe. And yet, the USA – together with its mighty allies – has not been able to effectively control a country with 15 times less inhabitants than the USA alone. At least, it was unable to control Iraq without spending enormous amounts of money, comparable with the money spent during the Second World War. In other words, in contrast to other great empires, the USA was unable to establish control which may pass a cost-benefit analysis. Simply put, it started to become obvious, after six years of occupation, that it would be cheaper for the USA and its allies to buy Iraqi oil on the free market than to achieve control of it by force. The coalition troops were on the brink of defeat in 2007. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that – on April 19, 2007 – the US Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid stated that the USA lost militarily the war in Iraq.<sup>41</sup> Since that time, the military situation in Iraq gradually became more favourable for the USA, while the strength of insurgency decreased. However, according to Stiglitz (2008: 184), “it is not that the violence has ceased: every week there are reports of attacks that kill twenty-five or more people, attacks that almost anywhere else would be headline news. It is

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,267181,00.html> (accessed on 7 May 2009).

only that in Iraq, we have become so inured to massive violence that when it becomes slightly less pounding, it seems acceptable.” In other words, there is no doubt that the USA has not achieved the goals it originally pursued in the beginning of war. So, is the USA really the most powerful country in history if it is unable to control such a small, exhausted country which has no ally? The real test for every military is the result on the battlefield. Hence, the US failure in Iraq has shown its military and political limits. The USA has not been completely defeated in Iraq militarily (not as, for example, Japan was defeated in the Second World War), but the USA has been defeated economically (on the basis of a cost-benefit analysis).<sup>42</sup> Therefore, in spite of the fact that the USA is still the most powerful country in the world, after the American failure in Iraq the international system can no longer be considered unipolar.

Why do we have such a discrepancy between the perceived power and the effective power of the USA? Nye’s (2004) differentiation between hard power and soft power gives an effective tool for answering the above question. According to the author, military power and economic power are examples of hard power. Hard power rests on “carrots” and “sticks”. In contrast, “getting others to want what you want – is ‘soft’ power. It co-opts people rather than coerces them” (Nye, 2004: 124). Obviously, George W. Bush was not able to get what he wanted – that people should perceive the aggression on Iraq as liberation of the country.<sup>43</sup> Consequently, in order to win elections, Governments of US allies have just been waiting for the right moment to withdraw troops from Iraq, the US soldiers have also been dreaming about going home, and voters in the USA have elected a president that promised the withdrawal of troops. In addition, and most importantly, Iraqi Shiites and especially Iraqi Sunni have just been waiting for the “liberators” to leave their country. Even more, they have resisted foreign occupation militarily in order to force the US troops to leave. Does it mean that the USA failed because of flawed public relation policy, or, as Weigel (2007: 17) claims, due to “the capacity of al-Jazeera and other new-technology Arab-language media to spread lies”? The answer is, once again – no. The USA learned lessons from the Vietnam war, where journalists were frequently very critical of US soldiers. Therefore, a new concept of embedded journalism was developed. Journalists were on the frontline together with soldiers, they developed a sense of comradeship and reported very favourably about the US and allied mili-

<sup>42</sup> In this respect, the American defeat in Iraq is similar to the defeat in Vietnam. Had it wanted, the USA could have kept of fighting in Vietnam until today, but with disastrous consequences.

<sup>43</sup> According to a Gallup Poll in Baghdad from October 2003, only 1 percent of Iraqis thought that the USA invaded Iraq in order to establish democracy, and only 5 percent thought that the USA wanted to help Iraqis. The majority of respondents thought that motives for intervention were to control Iraqi oil or to reorganize Middle East according to US interests.

tary. Furthermore, the leading networks readily accepted claims that Iraq had WMD and was capable of attacking the Western countries with these weapons. As a result of propaganda, “44% of Americans believed that most or all hijackers in September 11 were Iraqis, and 41% thought that Saddam Hussein possessed nuclear weapons. Some of these views may have been deliberately encouraged by misinformation in order to bolster support for the war” (Goodman and Cummings, 2003: 93). In other words, it was the Western media rather than al-Jazeera that spread lies.

But why is it that people around the world no longer believe in Bush’s explanation of the USA’s motives? It is really hard to believe that a government that does not care that tens of millions of its own citizens (many of them children) have no health care, that does not care about its own homeless people, a government that is not known for charity,<sup>44</sup> has suddenly become so altruistic that it is willing to spend trillions of dollars, and sacrifice the lives and health of its soldiers in order to bring democracy to a country that is 10 thousand kilometers away. It is much more believable that this is motivated by oil. Consequently, by far most people around the world have accepted the most logical explanation of the motives for the war and concluded that the USA and its allies have waged an immoral war. Immorality has decreased their power and increased the power of the insurgents, who feel that they wage a just war. As a result, the USA has sustained a loss not only in moral credibility, but also in power. Coupled with the economic crisis in the USA, this has shown that we do not live in an age of unipolarity.

### **Morality of the Interventions**

This article argues that the intervention in Iraq was not morally justified. Therefore, it is important to make some policy recommendations on the basis of the case study of the Iraq war. Does it follow from the above analysis that military intervention in another country is always immoral? Teson (2005) and many other authors<sup>45</sup> connect the intervention in Iraq with other interventions, especially military interventions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. So, were all three cases of intervention unjust? The answer is no. To compare the aggression in Iraq with the intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo means to compare apples with oranges.

<sup>44</sup> The USA gives only .1 percent of GDP for foreign aid, in contrast to some Scandinavian countries, which give almost one percent of their GDP for aid (Greenberg and Page, 2002: 547).

<sup>45</sup> In 1999, Tony Blair also compared the situations in Serbia and Iraq: “Many of our problems have been caused by two dangerous and ruthless men – Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milošević. Both have been prepared to wage a vicious campaign against sections of their own communities.” With this speech, he established his concept of liberal interventionism. However, all criticisms – mentioned throughout this article – of the neoconservative justification for the intervention in Iraq can also be applied to Blair’s concept.

The legitimate government of Bosnia and Herzegovina asked (almost begged) other countries to intervene and help the residents of Sarajevo and other parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina to avoid Serbian slaughter of Bosnians.<sup>46</sup> In Kosovo, a great majority of inhabitants also wanted foreign intervention and really accepted foreign troops as liberators. In contrast, the legal government of Iraq, and, what is even more important, the majority of inhabitants of Iraq did not want foreign intervention. In this respect, only Iraqi Kurds behaved similarly to Kosovars. Here we come to the main difference between interventions in Iraq and in Kosovo. In the first case, the entire country was occupied, not only a part that really wanted foreign troops (Kurdish part of Iraq). In the second case, foreign troops came only to the part of Serbia where an oppressed nation (Kosovars) really wanted them.<sup>47</sup> Had NATO troops occupied the entire Serbia, interventions in Iraq and in Serbia would have been very similar, and – from the moral point of view – unjustified. There is no doubt that Serbs, in this scenario, would have behaved very similarly to Iraqi Sunni. Vice versa, had the intervention in Iraq been limited only to the Kurdish part of the country, the intervention would have been very similar to the intervention in Kosovo, and – from the moral point of view – justified.<sup>48</sup>

On the basis of the above analysis, a policy prescription can be formulated: an international document should be established which would oblige occupying forces to allow an international organization to organize and monitor a referendum (no later than a year after occupation), in which the local population would be allowed to decide whether it does or does not want continued presence of foreign troops on its soil. If the majority of the population voted against their presence, foreign troops would have to withdraw as soon as possible. Had this procedure been followed in

<sup>46</sup> Of course, Serbian representatives, led by Radovan Karadžić, left the Bosnian Government.

<sup>47</sup> Walzer (1992: 93) claims that foreign powers do have the right of intervention in the case of secession if the central government wants to prevent secession by force. “The rule against interference is suspended because a foreign power [central government – M. A.], morally if not legally alien, is already interfering in the ‘domestic affairs’, that is, in the self-determination of a political community.” However, secession of twenty percent of the territory does not justify intervention and occupation of the entire country. See Antić (2007) for a discussion about justifications for secession.

<sup>48</sup> This is the main reason why Peter Galbraith (2006) proposes a partition of Iraq as the only solution. Galbraith argues that an independent Kurdistan can be an American stronghold in Iraq, because Kurdistan is the only place in Iraq where people sincerely celebrated American troops as their liberators. In this case, an independent Kurdistan can also be a place where the USA may have military bases with the consent of the local population. In other words, the solution for Kurdistan can be very similar to the solution for Kosovo. In both cases there is a mutual interest (American and of the local population) for secession and the presence of foreign troops in new independent countries.

Iraq, it would have been very clear whether the intervention was aggression and occupation, or “liberation”.<sup>49</sup>

## Conclusion

In his excellent assessment of the US-led intervention in Iraq, Joseph Stiglitz (2008: 162) argues that “the Iraq war has shown that even the sole remaining super power, a country that spends almost as much on defense as all other countries combined, cannot impose its will on a country with 10 percent of its population and 1 percent of its GDP – at least not without inflicting on itself a cost greater than it is willing to pay”. This article tried to explain the above-mentioned paradox. It argues that the USA and its allies have not been able to impose their will on Iraq because of a dubious justification for the war. Members of the resistance movement in Iraq have been highly motivated to fight against occupiers. In contrast, soldiers from countries that occupied Iraq have not been motivated for waging the war, and voters in these countries have demanded withdrawal of troops, knowing that the war is immoral. As a result, the most likely scenario is that even the last occupying force – the USA – will eventually be forced to leave Iraq.

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<sup>49</sup> Though such a referendum did not take place in Iraq, public polls show that Sunni and Shi'a Iraqis (great majority of the population) do not want the presence of US troops on Iraqi soil.

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IRAČKI RAT (2003-): JE LI BIO MORALNO OPRAVDAN?

*Sažetak*

U ovom se članku, nakon objašnjenja teorije pravednog rata, ustvrđuje da invazija na Irak pod vodstvom SAD-a nije bila moralno opravdana. Potom se obrazlaže zašto demokratizacija ne može biti opravdanje za agresiju ni s pravoga ni s etičkoga gledišta. Povrh toga u članku se tvrdi da je nemoralnost rata bila ključan čimbenik jer je uzrokovala nisku razinu javne potpore ratu te su iz toga proizašli američki vojni neuspjesi i neuspjeh drugih koalicijskih snaga u Iraku. Autor na koncu zaključuje kako je Irački rat pokazao da ne živimo u unipolarnom sustavu međunarodnih odnosa i da je prije rata u Iraku moć SAD-a bila precijenjena.

*Ključne riječi:* Irak, pravedan rat, moralnost, intervencija, demokratizacija, moć, unipolarnost