

## Editors' introduction: new interventionism but same old promises and perils?

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The brand of external interventionism adopted by the US and its allies post 9/11 is based on a belief that powerful Western democracies can create liberal democratic societies in unstable or failing post-colonial and post-communist states through direct military and economic intervention in their internal affairs. The Bush Administration and its allies have self-consciously cast the Iraq war as a test-case for the merits of its external interventionism paradigm and are, subsequently, openly challenging the 'sovereignty first' approach to international relations that was, at least in theory, the cornerstone of inter-state relations for most of the twentieth century.

As the ongoing debate over the legality and justifications of the US-led invasion of Iraq demonstrates, supporters of US interventionism believe there is little point in arguing over what has already occurred, in particular whether the invasion of Iraq was right or wrong. One should instead, according to this view, look ahead and judge the US intervention in Iraq on the basis of its ability to transform Iraq into a peaceful and prosperous entity, a development that will, in turn, inspire other Arab-Muslim societies in the region to democratise themselves and build free market economies. The ethos of external interventionism – as promoted and practised by the Bush Administration – is based on a particular ideological view of the post-Cold War environment and how it should evolve. That is, that in the post-Cold War era, there is only 'a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise'.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, the conceptual vacuum left by the disappearance of the Cold War's geo-strategic imperatives has been gradually filled by a normative set of strategies and ideals that once were consigned to the dustbin of ideas. Dismissed as hopelessly naïve by E.H. Carr on the eve of World War II, and ignored throughout the realist-dominated Cold War era, Wilsonian-like ideals of liberal democracy and freedom again have become major drivers of US foreign policy. Resurrected initially with Bush senior's pronouncement of a 'new world order' in the early 1990s with the support of Fukuyama's

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earlier and premature celebration of the 'end of history', the Bush Administration's doctrine of militarily kick-starting liberal democratic reform has recast normative, liberal-based – as opposed to realist – prescriptions for foreign policy, making their reincarnation complete.

While the idea of exporting and encouraging democracy as a strategy for reducing international conflict is not itself new, what is new is the Bush Administration's commitment – borne out of the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington and in stark contrast to George W. Bush's original foreign policy intentions – to use the US's overwhelming military power, unilaterally if necessary, as a tool for selectively effecting democratic transition: a commitment underpinned by the neo-conservative conviction that it would be morally wrong for the US not to put its unrivalled military and economic power to work in the service of democracy and freedom.<sup>2</sup> Central to this strategy, which also guides the so-called War on Terror (WOT) is the assumption, drawn from democratic peace theory, that the creation of a homogenous world, made up only of liberal democratic (read pro-Western) states, is the best defence against terrorism and international instability. Subsequently, the pursuit of Washington's post-9/11 world view has largely depended on what is now referred to as the 'new interventionism':<sup>3</sup> direct military intervention aimed at converting so-called 'rogue' states like Iraq into Western-style democracies.

Prior to the arrival of the new interventionism doctrine and its assumed 'defensive' right to preventative military action, growing concern over large-scale human rights abuses, cross-border spillage of internal crises and its effects on the security of other states, and the impact of transnational threats on developing and developed states alike, were already causing the once unassailable principle of sovereignty to come under question in Europe and the US. The Bush Administration's employment of its interventionist doctrine in Afghanistan and Iraq, however, clearly has pushed this debate far beyond its initial humanitarian focus by directly challenging, and to some extent already neutralising, both the inviolability of the sovereign state and traditional interpretations of the United Nations Charter definitions for the legitimate use of force. And given the fundamentally different international political landscape that has emerged from the ending of the Cold War bipolar system, the rise of transnational terrorism, and an apparent willingness among Americans for the US to exploit its status as the world's only superpower, some now believe that the 'new interventionism' is here to stay. Whether or not 'interventionism' per se will become accepted practice among states remains unclear, although current attitudes toward humanitarian intervention – formed in the wake of the genocide and mass murders of Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, Kosovo and most recently Sudan, to name but a few examples – indicate a growing intolerance among Western governments

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for traditional notions of sovereignty when they become obstacles to acting against government-led or sanctioned atrocities. If, however, interventionism does eventually become customary practice,<sup>4</sup> it is imperative that its future shape and implementation be tempered by the lessons of the neo-conservative experience in Iraq.

The essential justification for the 'new interventionism' is its important role as a tool for creating a liberal democratic world, which will, according to the neo-con world-view, deliver peace, prosperity, and security for all. The new interventionist doctrine, as test driven in Iraq, clearly differs on this point from notions of humanitarian intervention, which aim only to either stop, or possibly prevent,<sup>5</sup> large-scale socio-economic human rights abuses, such as genocide, or provide assistance in situations where the state is unable to prevent these rights from being eroded as in cases of famine. For humanitarian intervention – and the more qualified notions of sovereignty that have emerged as justification for it – the brand of government system in place (that is, democratic, authoritarian, or otherwise) is of lesser importance than its ability and willingness to provide acceptable levels of socio-economic security. The Bush Administration's new interventionism, in contrast,

has been developed on the assumption that states must not only provide socio-economic security for their citizens, but must do so within a liberal democratic political and economic system, thereby also introducing the establishment of political and civil rights standards as an additional requirement for sovereignty to be legitimate.

The criteria for an intervention's successful completion, therefore, are far more demanding than humanitarian-based interventions; the Bush, Blair, and Howard governments' unwillingness, or inability, to clearly state the point at which the Iraqi people can go it alone, despite mounting political pressure to do so, demonstrates the complexity and difficulty of the new interventionism end game. Moreover, because realisation of the new interventionism's goals requires, in addition to peace and stability, ideological conformity, it falls victim to many of the same problems that have plagued efforts to create and implement a universal human rights regime. And in addition to the question of whether ideological conformity on a global scale is possible, and the indications so far are that it is not, the new interventionism also raises the even more fundamental question of whether such a world is even desirable.

Such questions are inherently controversial and the lack of agreement on them, even within the US, says much about the why the Bush Administration has struggled to convince many governments that its actions in Iraq are legitimate. The initial US approach to gaining international support was based on now discredited claims, backed most enthusiastically by the UK and Australia, of Saddam Hussein's ongoing development and stockpiles

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of weapons of mass destruction. This strategy was grounded in traditional geo-strategic wisdom and threat perceptions and given further urgency by growing concern over transnational terrorism following the 9/11 attacks. But evidence for the kind of major and imminent threat painted by the Bush Administration was never compelling enough, in the eyes of the broader international community or the public at least, to justify replacing the then existing UN sanctions and weapons inspections programs with direct military intervention.

When the US and its allies decided to act without Security Council approval, a decision had been made, in effect, to demonstrate the legitimacy of the US position by revealing the threat the Bush Administration believed existed. The subsequent failure of the US and its allies to justify their main rationale for invading Iraq was defended by policy makers and some analysts<sup>6</sup> arguing that military action against Saddam, in the circumstances, was the right thing to do since there were no other options. This essentially 'mistake we had to have' defence, however, assumes that it was clear that something different needed to be done, which overlooks the fact that this very issue was at the heart of the Security Council and wider public debate prior to the US invasion.<sup>7</sup>

As a debate that began in *Foreign Affairs* in late 2004<sup>8</sup> suggests, the relatively recent erosion of US credibility – that has now come to characterise the Bush Administration's tenure – has resulted from its apparent failure to understand the sources of legitimacy relied upon by previous administrations in the post-war era to maintain international support and credibility for US foreign policy. The debate itself focuses on disagreement over the sources of US legitimacy between, on the one hand, Robert Tucker and David Hendrickson, who argue that a commitment to international law and consensual decision making has traditionally underpinned US legitimacy, and, on the other hand, Robert Kagan, who instead attributes the sources of American legitimacy to the role the US played as 'the leader of the free world' during the Cold War in response to the broadly recognised threat to the Western alliance posed by the Soviet Union.

As Kagan points out in one of his replies, the debate itself is somewhat much ado about nothing in that both parties agree on the main points that a) US credibility has seriously declined; and b) urgent action is required to restore it. Moreover, both the arguments presented in the exchange hit the mark to a large extent in explaining how recent US policy, particularly in Iraq, has so seriously damaged the credibility and support the US once enjoyed among all of its allies. When looked at from these perspectives, President Bush and his senior staff clearly have underestimated the importance of at least appearing willing to act consensually and within

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established norms,<sup>9</sup> as argued by Tucker and Hendrickson, and also to be seen to be acting in response to a threat that is widely recognised as legitimate, as Kagan argues was the case with the geo-strategic and ideological threat presented by the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

## PROMISES AND PITFALLS OF INTERVENTION: THE MIDDLE EAST EXPERIENCE WITH DEMOCRACY

The peoples of the Middle East certainly are no strangers to foreign intervention and influence. Looking over the many struggles, conflicts, and political machinations that have characterised the region since the First World War, one sees a historical cocktail of colonial occupations, unrealised nationalist aspirations, the galling irony of poverty and instability in spite of huge oil reserves, and, most significantly, ongoing military and economic interventions by Western powers. This volatile mix of historical circumstances and events now appears to have produced two major contemporary outcomes: transnational terrorism and the emergence of Islam as a popular vehicle for pursuing the political and socio-economic reforms that secular nationalist governments in the Middle East largely failed to provide. What it has not produced among Arab and Muslim peoples, however, and as the authors in this volume argue, is any widespread rejection of democracy as the preferred system of government. Nor has it produced, as some have proposed, any kind of a 'pan-Islamic' offensive against the 'West' that is driven by Muslim frustration and anger with the decline of Islamic civilisation.

The escalating levels of widespread anti-US and British sentiment in the Middle East, which underpin many of the problems faced by the 'coalition of the willing' in Iraq (see, for example, the chapters by Anthony Bubalo, Amin Saikal, and Michael Heazle), are rooted in the colonial, Cold War, and contemporary interventions and policies of successive British, French, and US governments. Prevalent among Muslims and Arabs is the perception that Western governments have, at best, been unhelpful with the establishment of stable and independent democratic states in the Middle East and, at worst, have actively prevented democracy from taking root in the region.

As Rashid Khalidi observes, the Middle East experience is a strong indicator that foreign occupation is not conducive to the creation of democratic government and the kind of civil society that its survival depends upon. Foreign occupation and intervention are instead far more likely to breed virulent nationalist resistance that, where successful, leads to authoritarian governments with little interest in developing public

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participation in politics and government.<sup>10</sup> Richards, meanwhile, also attributes the authoritarian inclinations of Arab nationalism in the post-colonial period to the superpower dynamics of the Cold War:

For at least the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, Arab governments unsurprisingly believed that they needed to be militarily strong to protect their often hard-won independence . . . . And, during the Cold War, an authoritarian military regime could always count on support from one superpower, provided that such an Arab regime made suitable political moves against the other superpower. In short, the fact that the often violent struggle for independence was followed by a half-century of conflict with Israel, in a context of global Cold War, greatly strengthened authoritarianism.<sup>11</sup>

Anticipating the end of colonial rule, elites in Arab states such as Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq attempted to recreate the liberal democratic reforms attempted in Iran and the Ottoman Empire in the early twentieth century. But like these early attempts, a mixture of internal and external factors – such as illiteracy, conflict, and foreign occupations – continued to undermine democracy in the Arab states. Then, by the time of decolonisation, the beleaguered proponents of liberal democratic governance in the region found themselves too closely tied to colonial dominance in the eyes of an emerging, pro-nationalist military elite in Iraq, Syria, and Egypt that used resentment of the British and French to topple the already struggling constitutional systems of their countries in a series of military coups.<sup>12</sup>

With the notable exception of Iran, indigenous resistance to colonial rule led mostly to the creation of nationalist inspired authoritarian governments throughout the Middle East in the 1950s and 1960s. Elsewhere, Jordan's fledgling democratic government was replaced by the monarchy in 1957, while democracy in Lebanon finally collapsed under the weight of internal strife and foreign occupation. Iran, which looked the Middle East's most promising candidate for stable democratic government in the 1950s, saw its democratically elected government extinguished by US and British backed intervention against its government's plans to nationalise Iran's oil industry. Creating further distrust and nationalist animosity towards the West and its liberal democratic traditions by this stage was British and US support for Israel and the ensuing conflict that the Israeli struggle for survival set off with the Arab states.<sup>13</sup>

By the early 1970s, the net result of decades of colonial occupation and intervention – capped off by Israel's comprehensive US backed humiliation of the Arab nationalist cause – could clearly be seen: strong popular resentment of Western intervention in Middle Eastern affairs coupled with a growing sense of frustration and anger at the failure of Arab nationalist leaders to deliver anything other than authoritarian misrule. Over the last

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30 years, this anger and frustration has been further exacerbated by the ongoing Arab–Israeli conflict and its impact upon the Palestinians, along with a general sense that Western occupation of the region has not only continued but has done so at the expense of Arab and Muslim rights to self-determination and political and social freedoms.

But it should be noted that America's credibility problem in the region is also, rather ironically, the result of the past failure of various US and UK governments to intervene, diplomatically or otherwise, in support of democracy and the political freedoms of Arabs and Muslims. The distinct lack of any US intervention or pressure on the behalf of pro-democracy advocates at critical junctures in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Bahrain, Yemen, and Kuwait over the last four decades, especially when juxtaposed with the Western interventions that have occurred, has served only to reinforce the now omnipresent conviction that US and British policies in the Middle East remain focused only on protecting and furthering Western interests. This source of discontent among Arab and Muslim people, as opposed to their authoritarian governments, again raises the important question of credibility and also the extent to which it is the act of intervention or rather the kind of intervention and the circumstances under which it occurs, an issue raised by Amin Saikal in his chapter, that creates the kinds of conflict and resentment now being witnessed in Iraq and elsewhere.

For the vast majority of Muslim and Arab people casting judgement on the record and current state of Western involvement in the Middle East, colonial rule by Britain and France has merely been replaced by American hegemony supported by the military dominance of Israel and the cooperation of authoritarian governments in key Arab states such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Jordan. Western intervention and influence, in return, have helped entrench authoritarian regimes at the expense of democratic reform. This relationship, however, has now discredited secular nationalist causes for very much the same reasons (that is, tainted by foreign influence) provided by Arab nationalists to justify overthrowing the region's post-colonial parliamentary systems.

As a consequence, many Arabs and Muslims now regard post-colonial secular states in the Middle East as an obstacle rather than a cure to the region's ills and the Bush Administration's intervention in Iraq, in spite of the pro-democracy rhetoric, as little more than notice that yet another US-dependent, authoritarian regime is under construction. US funding and support for such regimes, in addition to unwavering American support for Israel and its occupation of Arab territory, has left many in the region totally disillusioned with notions of Western-style secular government and economic reform, thereby greatly increasing, as Fawaz Gerges has noted, the

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appeal and utility of non-secular, democratic governance based on traditional Islamic values:

Within the past 10 years, mainstream Islamic voices have worked arduously to redefine liberal democracy in Islamic terms and make it comprehensible and acceptable to Arab and Muslim masses. Simply put, Muslim and Islamic democrats have been trying to Islamise democracy and modernity and strip them of their Western clothing. Although they have come far, the journey is just beginning. Islamicising liberal democracy is still a work in progress; a great deal of hard work remains.<sup>14</sup>

Arab and Muslim memories of past Western interventions and their legacies – in particular the seemingly intractable Arab–Israeli conflict and the overthrow of the Mossadeque government in Iran – gradually have eaten away at Western credibility in the Middle East over the years. Given that US and British intentions were already being viewed with great apprehension and suspicion in the region prior to the US-led invasion of Iraq, one of the critical questions now seems to be what, if any, US credibility remains among Arabs and Muslims today and how the absence or presence of credibility influences and shapes the outcomes of intervention.

With Iraq currently looking to be on the edge of civil war and US hopes for the country looking increasingly unrealistic, it now appears that the Bush Administration may have gambled what remained of US prestige in the Middle East on an ill-conceived and implemented strategy, and lost. Indeed, success in Iraq was always going to be the essential benchmark for the new interventionism doctrine. But the Iraq experience has also become, by implication and association, a major determinant of the WOT and its future course and, quite possibly, also the future of neo-liberal hopes for an international community made up only of liberal democratic societies made prosperous by free-trade and Washington Consensus-led economic development and prosperity.

It is always possible to dismiss contemporary interventions, as many do, as no more than misguided imperial adventures masquerading as attempts to further the cause of freedom and democracy. The problem with this rather cynical disposition, however, is that it can lead one into a cul de sac of predetermined conclusions that are too superficial to contribute much to our understanding of what interventionism represents and, importantly, the outcomes its implementation is likely to produce. The editors and contributors to this volume believe it is more useful to analyse, as dispassionately as possible, the politics and economics of external interventionism in order to comprehend the promises, pitfalls and perils of such an enterprise. As the perspectives provided in this volume indicate, a complex combination of factors lies behind interventionist-inspired urges to

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intervene in the domestic affairs of post-colonial and post-communist states diagnosed as 'democracy deficient', ranging from enlightened self-interest and commitments to freedom and democracy to more contentious propositions claiming that 'failed' states in the developing world in general – and the Middle East in particular – pose an unacceptable security threat to Western democracies.

The issue of credibility and suspicion of ulterior motives concerning the new interventionism constitutes a common theme in much of the analysis and discussion in the following chapters, raising questions concerning the circumstances and conditions under which 'successful' interventions, of either a neoliberal or humanitarian persuasion, can be mounted. On the basis of the Iraq experience and the perspectives provided in this volume, it appears that any successful direct intervention would require very careful assessment of how the domestic population is likely to perceive the motives and interests of the intervening powers, as well as careful consideration of the impact the intervention itself, in terms of its execution, will have on the security and well-being of the society concerned.

US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld's insistence, for example, on the implementation of a 'lean war' strategy in Iraq resulted in social chaos immediately after the US-led removal of Saddam Hussein's government, undermining confidence in the US and its allies and strengthening the foundations of the internal instability and violence that have come to characterise post-Saddam Iraq. Similarly, the credibility of the US and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's (NATO) 1998 military intervention in Kosovo was undermined by the numerous civilian deaths and injuries, and the extensive damage to critical infrastructure in Kosovo and Serbia, caused by the exclusive use of air strikes. The fact that US and NATO leaders appeared to prefer the risk of civilian deaths over the risk of casualties among their own forces significantly eroded local and international confidence in the humanitarian basis of the intervention, in addition to further limiting the supply of critical public services.

The Iraq situation also suggests that the new interventionism's provisions for unilateral action is a major flaw, rather than an advantage, given its goals of completely reshaping the political and economic character of the target country. Implementing a military-based interventionist strategy with little or no international support not only compromises the legitimacy of the intervention but also places a huge logistical and financial burden on the occupying power(s) due to the long-term engagement and support that are clearly needed to reengineer the political and economic circumstances of a formerly authoritarian state. As the problems now confronting the US effort in Iraq demonstrate, it is a huge task requiring levels of resources and commitment beyond even the capabilities of a superpower like the US. The

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need for broad international support for interventions and the post-intervention effort, therefore, is one of the major lessons offered by the Iraq experience; it should be recognised as an absolutely essential ingredient of any interventionism doctrine if the goals of interventionist strategies are to be realised.

## OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

The collection of chapters that follows has its genesis in a February 2005 conference – hosted by the Griffith Asia Institute and attended by internationally recognised scholars and recent senior members from the Australian defence establishment – which used post-Saddam Iraq as a prism for re-examining the external interventionism paradigm and its implications. The chapters that have evolved from the conference, therefore, examine the Iraq war and its global ramifications as a test case for the US-led paradigm of societal transformation through external intervention.

Part I of the volume deals with the political origins and future of neoliberal interventionism. Michael Wesley's chapter, 'The new interventionism and the invasion of Iraq', sketches the analytical history of this 'new' interventionism and seeks to locate the case of Iraq as part of that historical narrative. Wesley identifies four distinct but overlapping evolutionary stages of interventionism that together have led to the 'new interventionism'. He argues that the Iraq intervention is the latest development in what should be seen as 'a long-term trend towards greater interventionism in the domestic affairs of post-colonial and post-communist states'. This trend, according to Wesley, is being driven by a belief, which first emerged among policy makers in developed states in the 1980s, that the internal problems of post-colonial/communist states adversely affect the national interests of other states, particularly in the form of transnational security threats. Out of the ideological victory for liberal democratic idealism that accompanied the end of the Cold War, therefore, has come an increasing intolerance among Western governments for states, in particular those seen as producing potential threats, that do not fit the new global norm – now defined exclusively by neoliberal, democratic market ideals.

The second chapter in Part I by Ira Chernus, entitled 'Competing US perspectives on Iraq', explains how the Iraq war has brought long-standing foreign policy dilemmas within the US into sharp relief. According to Chernus, domestic pressure on US foreign policy should be understood in terms of five distinct and competing world views: neo-conservative elite ambitions to secure US geopolitical power in the broader Middle East,

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relying on the unilateral use of military power; the desire of the conservative public at large to see America as the symbol of virtue, and destroy what it views as the forces of evil; the liberal internationalist elite and its goal of incorporating Iraq into the structure of a global body corporate; the liberal public's hopes for real democracy in Iraq, with full guarantees of human rights for all; and finally, the anti-war progressives' desire to bring US troops home immediately as part of a larger agenda to slow the spread of US imperialism and corporate globalisation. A major domestic challenge facing any administration in Washington in the framing of foreign policy, argues Chernus, is mounting political pressure to satisfy or at least mollify all five groups. The Bush Administration, therefore, has been unable to pursue a single, coherent policy in Iraq, and such diverse political imperatives are likely to continue complicating political support for, and the implementation of, future interventionist actions.

Part II focuses on the major challenges, both regionally and locally, facing the US-led coalition's efforts to transform post-Saddam Iraq into a fully functioning liberal democracy. Anthony Bubalo in his chapter, 'Democratisation dilemmas: Iraq, the United States, and political reform in the Middle East', defines two major problems facing the coalition forces in Iraq and the region: first, that US involvement in any democratisation process, in either Iraq or elsewhere in the Middle East, is both essential and a liability; and second, the challenge of overcoming the mostly generalised and superficial understanding in Western societies of the mood and sentiments of Arab and Muslim peoples, particularly in relation to indigenous attitudes towards democracy and the form it should take. Bubalo argues that the Iraq war has brought to the fore forces for democratic change in the Middle East that the Bush Administration did not anticipate and is now unable to control. Furthermore, undue focus on US policy in the Middle East is distracting attention away from the diverse and complex array of local responses to the Iraq experiment that are now developing among local actors. Indeed, the US intervention is now struggling to manage threats and challenges the Bush Administration failed to anticipate. America's image and credibility have suffered enormously as a result of the ongoing terrorism and sectarian division in post-Saddam Iraq; yet, in Bubalo's view, it can – and ought to – play an important role in facilitating the process of democratic change in both Iraq and the broader region. How the Bush Administration manages this dilemma, and whether it can recognise and seriously engage with the diverse range of local actors in Iraq and the Middle East, will be a crucial element in the success or failure of Iraq, and the Middle East's, democratic transformation.

In Chapter 5 Peter Khalil draws on his personal and professional experiences of living and working in Iraq as the country's interim National

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Security Advisor to offer his own perceptions of what is happening on the ground and the very complex political situation confronting the new Iraqi government. Is the state of play as promising as the Bush Administration and its supporters continue to suggest, or is the ambitious agenda of societal transformation of post-Saddam Iraq faced with problems that may, in the end, fatally undermine the Iraq intervention? According to Khalil, the political challenges are extremely convoluted by various tensions between indigenous actors who for the most part share little more than a mutual distrust of US motives and intentions. He argues that many Iraqis supporting the resistance cannot be clearly separated from those supporting the coalition effort in Iraq, stressing that cooperation with allied forces often is transitory since it is commonly based on shared short-term tactical interests rather than any joint recognition of long-term strategic interests. Declining US political influence in Iraq means that American involvement in Iraq's political reform should, therefore, be restricted to the creation of a durable federal structure without any further attempt to shape or control the internal political situation; as Khalil points out, 'any overt US interference will only inflame tactical resistance even from political factions or groups that share the US's long term strategic interests'.

The third chapter in Part II, 'Post election Iraq: a case for declining optimism' by John Hartley, examines the factors behind Iraq's political divisions and worsening security situation. Hartley concludes that the grounds for the cautious optimism that accompanied expectations for the 2005 Iraq elections have been seriously eroded by ongoing political wrangling over an Iraqi constitution and the inability of the coalition forces so far to provide a stable security environment for political negotiation and compromise to develop within. Cause for some optimism in Iraq still exists, but Iraq's immediate future is largely dependent on the outcomes of two major issues: the question of how the Iraqi people themselves will manage the electoral process and the challenge of stabilising the fast deteriorating security situation, in particular the need to neutralise al Zarqawi's efforts to derail the political process through sectarian violence. The elections held on 30 January 2005 were certainly imperfect, but they were a necessary step in offering a political solution to the seemingly interminable insurgency in post-Saddam Iraq. A largely Shia-led and elected government has emerged in Iraq for the first time in its history. The leaders of the majority Shia community are busily engaged in a series of delicate political compromises with other minorities in order to legitimise the new government as a truly representative political body. But in order to do so, the Sunni minority, which ruled with such authority under Saddam Hussein, will have to be brought into the political process if there is to be any hope of a viable and reasonably peaceful future for Iraq. Furthermore, both Iraq's and the coalition's leaders will need

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to find an effective means of starving the insurgents, and their affiliated organisations such as al Qaeda, of any public support for their actions.

Part III of the volume features two chapters dealing with the shaping of Western–Arab–Muslim perceptions and relations, with a particular focus on the credibility issues that have coloured both the US-led intervention and allied efforts at building political pluralism and democracy in Iraq. Amin Saikal's chapter, 'Islam and the West: where to from here?', re-examines relations between the United States and the Arab–Muslim world and concludes that the relationship has been hijacked by three minority extremist groups: al Qaeda, neo-conservatives, and Zionists. Improving the relationship and finding solutions to terrorism and conflict in the Middle East, according to Saikal, depends on the US pursuing a diplomatic settlement of the region's problems and focusing its policies on the long-term needs of the Iraqi, Palestinian, and Afghan people rather than short-term US 'geo-political' preferences.

Saikal argues that many in the Middle East and elsewhere regard America's WOT – and particularly its yet to be justified extension to cover the US invasion of Iraq – as part of a deliberate design to maintain and strengthen America's dominance in the Middle East and the Muslim world, leading many Muslims to reject the Bush Administration's unabashed depiction of the US as a leading moral and democratic force in world politics. The chapter suggests that there is still latitude for moderates from the mainstream of both the US and the Arab–Muslim world to reach out to one another in order to build bridges of understanding and dialogue. Indeed, the need for moderates to remain apart from and impervious to 'clash of civilisations' type characterisations of Western–Arab–Muslim relations is an absolutely essential pre-condition for any emergence of a stable post-Iraq War order in world politics.

Michael Heazle's chapter, 'Covering (up) Islam part III: terrorism and the US intervention in Iraq', revisits the late Edward Said's analysis of Western perceptions of Islam to argue that US and British credibility problems are worsening as a result of such perceptions and the practice of employing them to 'cover up' and marginalize the important role Western interventions and policy have played in generating anti-Western sentiment in the Middle East. The central issue addressed by this chapter concerns the role this politically structured and extremely influential image of 'Islam' plays in justifying interventionism as a foreign policy option for Western governments and the extent to which this widely held perception of Islam has compromised the WOT.

Unlike Amin Saikal, Heazle takes a pessimistic view of the future and predicts that US-led efforts will continue to be rendered unworkable in the future by widespread distrust of US policy in the region. The atmosphere of

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distrust and suspicion will continue, he argues, due to the ongoing refusal of policy makers in the US and UK to risk geo-strategic control of the Middle East's energy reserves by attempting a more balanced policy approach to the grievances of Arabs and Muslims. Moreover, Heazle also asserts that growing animosity towards the policies of the Western allies has made the intervention's WOT-based rationale illogical, since even if the Bush Administration's experiment with enforcing democracy were to succeed in Iraq, it would be very unlikely to produce the kind of pro-Western, liberal democratic society envisaged by President Bush and his neo-conservative advisors.

The volume's final section, Part IV, examines the economic and socio-economic development dimensions of the new interventionism paradigm. In 'Iraq's sovereign debt and its curious global implications', Ross Buckley explores the unexpected role that Iraq played in the debate on global debt relief. In late 2004, the Paris Club of creditors waived 80 per cent of the debts owed to them by Iraq. This extraordinary gesture paved the way for a seemingly radical change in US policy towards the intractable problem of poor country indebtedness. The handling of Iraqi sovereign debt was also made conspicuous because of the many far more deserving cases that have not received such generous treatment. One could argue, observes Buckley, that the US-led debt relief for Iraq is consistent with its commitment to nation building in the Middle East. But he instead advances the troubling possibility that this generous episode of debt relief may well be part of a broader plan to make multilateral agencies, most notably the World Bank, much more politically dependent on the contributions of its donor nations, thereby enabling the US and its allies to more easily manage a compliant multilateral agency as part of their foreign policy arsenal.

Yan Islam concludes the volume with an analysis of what he believes to be an insufficiently explored episode in post-Saddam Iraq, namely, the ambitious reforms to engender a neoliberal styled free market economy under the Constitutional Provisional Authority led by Paul Bremer. The Bretton Woods institutions hailed these reforms as a way of engendering sustainable growth. Such optimism, however, argues Islam, is at odds with joint World Bank/UN mission findings claiming that rebuilding Iraq would be a monumental exercise, in addition to reservations expressed by the IMF staff that the Bremer-era reforms were overly ambitious. His chapter explores the reasons behind the neoliberal experiment in Iraq and highlights the risks of ignoring the lessons of similar experiments that have been undertaken in other parts of the world.

## NOTES

1. National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 2002.
2. The commitment to democracy and freedom has longed underpinned US foreign policy, acting as the rationale for America's image as a force for 'good' in the world (see for example Ira Chernus, 'Competing US perspectives on Iraq', in this volume), and was a defining characteristic of the Reagan administration. But its pursuit as a US foreign policy goal prior to 9/11 was tempered by realist priorities and strategies during the Cold War and also the Bush snr and Clinton administrations' preference for a more multilateral approach to foreign relations. Cantori argues that after the fall of the Soviet Union and its defeat in Afghanistan, 'The already messianic American foreign policy for advocacy of democracy then became redirected from "godless communism" to Islamism'. See Louis Cantori, 'Accelerating Islam: Bush policy in the Middle East', in 'Evaluating the Bush menu for change in the Middle East', Louis Cantori and Augustus Richard Norton (eds) (2005), *Middle East Policy*, **12** (1), Spring, ProQuest document ID 814022171.
3. See Michael Wesley's chapter, 'The new interventionism and the invasion of Iraq', in this volume.
4. Given the large number of interventions that already have occurred in the post-war period, in spite of the UN Charter, one certainly could argue that intervention, rather than non-intervention, has been established as 'customary' state practice. See for example, Michael J. Glennon (2003), 'Why the Security Council failed', *Foreign Affairs*, **82** (3), May-June.
5. Prevention, however, is a far more problematic and controversial basis for intervention, as the Iraq intervention has demonstrated.
6. Walter Russell Mead, for example, argues that it was the way in which the intervention was proposed and implemented, and not the decision to topple Saddam Hussein's regime, that was flawed. See Walter Russell Mead (2005), *Power, Terror, Peace, and War*, New York: Vintage Books, pp. 109-38.
7. The essential question of whether the threat alleged by the Bush, Blair, and Howard governments was sufficiently supported by the available evidence certainly appears to have attracted far less attention than it needed to at the time. But given that the absence of Iraqi WMD strongly suggests that the containment strategy had in fact worked, an important question to be answered now is why the coalition governments only were able/willing to come to the conclusion that it had failed. See George A. Lopez and David Cortright (2004), 'Containing Iraq: sanctions worked', *Foreign Affairs*, July/August.
8. See Robert Kagan (2004), 'America's crisis of legitimacy', *Foreign Affairs*, **83** (2), March/April; Robert Tucker and David Hendrickson (2004), 'The sources of American legitimacy', *Foreign Affairs*, **83** (6), November/December; Robert Kagan (2005), 'A matter of record', *Foreign Affairs*, **84** (1) January/February; and Robert Tucker and David Hendrickson (2005), 'The flip side of the record', *Foreign Affairs*, **84** (2), March/April.
9. Tucker and Hendrickson attribute US legitimacy in the past to the following four perceptions of US policy and its implementation: a 'long held commitment to international law, [US] acceptance of consensual decision making, its reputation for moderation, and its identification with the preservation of peace'. See Tucker and Hendrickson, 'The sources of American legitimacy'.
10. Rashid Khalidi (2005), 'The lessons of history', *Global Agenda*, 1 October, [www.globalagendamagazine.com/2005/rashidkhalidi.asp](http://www.globalagendamagazine.com/2005/rashidkhalidi.asp).
11. Alan Richards (2005), 'Democracy in the Arab region: getting there from here', *Middle East Policy*, **12** (2), Summer, Proquest Document ID: 858575691.
12. Khalidi, 'The lessons of history'.
13. Ibid.
14. Fawaz Gerges (2005), 'Is democracy in the Middle East a pipedream?', *YaleGlobal Online*, 25 April, <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/article.print?id=5622>.

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