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The Defeat of the Iraq's Total War Strategy Under the Regime of Saddam Hussein in the 2003 U.S.-Led Invasion: A Reflection

Dianata Panji Prasugi^{1*}, Agung Risdhianto², Fauzia G. Cempaka³

¹⁻³Universitas Pertahanan, Indonesia

E-mail: ¹⁾ dianatapanji@gmail.com

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*Corresponding author:

Dianata Panji Prasugi

dianatapanji@gmail.com



ABSTRACT

The United States (US) along with its western coalition partners carried out the Iraqi invasion in 2003 to topple down President Saddam Hussein who was considered a threat to the international community based on accusations of possession of weapons of mass destruction and his association with the 9/11 terrorist attacks. During the invasion, the Iraqi troops were easily defeated through a military approach by the coalition. The primary objective of this scholarly work is to isolate those variables that rendered Iraqi troops susceptible to swift subjugation. A qualitative methodology, grounded in documentary analysis from printed and online sources such as monographs, scholarly journals, and news archives, was utilised to conduct the inquiry. The resultant analysis identifies several interlocking explanations for Iraq's decisive defeat in the 2003 American-led offensive. These include a catastrophic failure of foresight on the part of Saddam Hussein, his diversionary focus on latent internal opposition, and the inept formulation and deployment of Iraq's military doctrines. Concurrently, the overwhelming materiel and strategic ascendancy of the coalition forces proved decisively advantageous. This reflection underscores that the effective implementation of a total war strategy demands detailed planning and due attention to non-military elements of national defense, a consideration with direct relevance for future defense strategy formulation.

Keywords: Clausewitz, Invasion of Iraq, Military Doctrine, Saddam Hussein, Total War Strategy.

1. Introduction

From the perspective of the United States and its coalition partners, the 2003 incursion into Iraq constituted a lawful act of self-defence against the peril ostensibly posed by Weapons of Mass Destruction within Saddam Hussein's regime. In the immediate aftermath of the September 2001 attacks upon the global financial hub, his administration was swiftly construed as both a menacing adversary and a flagrant challenge to the established international order. After the attack, President George W. Bush classified Iraq as a country that is part of the "Axis of Evil" and America has found a *casus belli* to fight in the name of the "Global War on Terror" (Royle & Mabon, 2022).

Theoretically, the 9/11 bombing perform three criteria or elements, which are categorized as international-scaled terrorism (Perwita & Yani, 2014). First, it is directed at foreign nationals or foreign targets, in this case the targets are United States citizens. Second, it was carried out jointly or by factions from more than one country, where Al-Qaeda, as a combined political entity from countries in the Middle East, was allegedly behind the action. Third, it is directed to influence the policies of foreign governments, which is directed to the World Trade Center building as a symbol of the splendor and success of the United States that was destroyed in a short time.

The United States has asserted a substantive linkage between Saddam Hussein and transnational terrorist networks. Foremost among the obligations of the American state is the safeguarding of its citizenry alongside their political and economic prerogatives, for national security remains an enduring imperative. Moreover, Washington extends considerable backing to democratic polities across the globe, while characterising Baathist governance as fundamentally autocratic and antithetical to liberal principles. Consequently, the removal of the Iraqi regime was elevated to a strategic objective, with invasion construed as the singular viable mechanism for its accomplishment.

The American invasion of Iraq, launched in the opening months of 2003, proceeded notwithstanding a UN Security Council inspection regime that had discovered no evidence of prohibited armaments. For the United States, this absence of material proof did not negate the perceived peril to national security, and the imperative for a pre-emptive strike against the Baathist stronghold was accordingly upheld as a measure to avert a catastrophic threat to America and the broader global order. Saddam Hussein, having asserted with confidence in early March that the faithful would resist aggression victoriously, subsequently vanished from public view shortly after the invasion commenced, communicating thereafter only through sporadic recorded messages. By April, the combined military might of the United States, the United Kingdom, and their allies had decisively overcome Iraqi resistance, and a mere three weeks later, the ceremonial destruction of Saddam's effigy in Firdos Square by Iraqi citizens and American soldiers came to embody the irreversible end of his reign (Rayburn et al., 2019).

Once Saddam Hussein's government had been toppled, the United States, via L. Paul Bremer III, who presided over the Coalition Provisional Authority, enacted a decree that abolished the Iraqi military and its intelligence services. The consequence of this measure was a substantial population of disenfranchised former soldiers and agents, from whose ranks insurgent movements would later emerge. In parallel, American authorities had placed Saddam at the apex of their list of fifty-five most-wanted fugitives and commenced a determined manhunt for him and his closest associates. That pursuit reached a critical juncture on July 22, 2003, when Uday and Qusay, the sons of Saddam and presumed heirs to his authority, were killed during a US military operation against a residential stronghold in Mosul, located in Iraq's northern region (Wilkins, 2023).

A period of five months elapsed before the United States military located and apprehended Saddam Hussein on December 13, 2003. He was found hiding in an excavated shelter, six to eight feet below ground, at a distance of nine miles from his hometown of Tikrit. The former president's capture gave impetus to the rise of various resistance movements, and in the ensuing clashes, US troops and their allies confronted rebel combatants in sustained urban warfare across several Iraqi municipalities. Even so, the security instability in Iraq at that time did not prevent the enactment of the Iraqi constitutional referendum in 2005, giving parliamentary control to the Shia people extensively.

The election of Shiites in the Iraqi Parliament prompted violence to emerge from Sunnis in 2006, especially in Samarra, a district filled with Shia groups, which marked the beginning of sectarian divisions across Iraq. This division continued after Saddam Hussein was verdicted in a death sentence in 2006 for his war crimes and human rights violations.

The United States invasion of Iraq in 2003 motivated by (unproven) allegations of WMD ownership still succeeded in overthrowing the regime of Saddam Hussein (Braut-Hegghammer, 2020). The overthrow of Saddam Hussein was a major victory for the United States which left many legacies ranging from the paralysis of the Iraqi military forces, the emergence of deep sectarian conflicts and ethnic divisions, the emergence of extremists from Sunni groups, and led to new wars.

In the period preceding the American invasion, specifically from 1991 onward, Iraq experienced a marked degeneration in both its industrial and agricultural sectors, alongside a pronounced deterioration of its transportation networks and civil infrastructure. The population's educational attainment and material standard of living likewise registered significant declines. Among all economic domains, only the nation's vast petroleum reserves remained as a plausible catalyst for prospective recovery and advancement. Furthermore, the Saddam Hussein administration bequeathed to Iraq a conspicuous absence of robust legal, political, economic, and regulatory frameworks, institutions without which a thriving economy cannot be sustained (Simuziya, 2023).

The deterioration of Iraq's transportation and infrastructure networks occurred in spite of significant official investment, first during the oil-boom years of the 1970s and later in the 1980s, when the Iran-Iraq war rendered such development a strategic necessity. A considerable portion of these assets was subsequently obliterated in the course of the first Gulf War, and the process of repair has been consistently undermined by international punitive measures enacted in response to alleged WMD-related transgressions. Telecommunications networks were also targeted and damaged during the height of the invasion in 2003.

Industrial installations suffered extensive harm during the Gulf War of 1991. For the industrial assets that survived the wartime bombardment unscathed, their operational viability was steadily eroded in subsequent years under Baathist rule, as persistent scarcities of spare parts and insufficient technological knowledge among personnel precluded effective maintenance. Additionally, the obsolescence and inherent frailty of the physical plant, together with the prevalence of an inadequately skilled labour force, served only to worsen the already precarious condition of Iraq's industrial economic base.

From a political standpoint, Iraq had long been characterised by considerable volatility even prior to the American invasion. The country was subjected to direct British administration through a constitutional monarchy between 1921 and 1958, a system that provoked opposition from anti-monarchist elements. This dissatisfaction culminated in a succession of military coups between 1958 and 1968, during which various army officers assumed control of the state. From 1968 until 2003, the Iraqi government was synonymous with the socialist Baath party, which furnished Saddam Hussein with his political apparatus until his eventual overthrow in the invasion. Externally, Iraq's circumstances were further compounded by the United States-led incursion, an action propelled by American geopolitical calculations within the Middle East. In order to consolidate its sway over a region beset by conflict, Washington has consistently sought alliances with like-minded states. Consequently, the protection of Israel has remained a persistent American priority, particularly in light of Saddam Hussein's aggressive posture, which was perceived as a threat to Israeli security.

American oil interests were likewise implicated in the decision to invade. With domestic reserves representing only 0.3 percent of the world's total, and with national consumption reaching 23 percent of global output, the United States confronts an acute dependency that necessitates firm guarantees of supply security. Beyond this material calculus, the invasion reflected America's broader posture as the world's paramount power, a status that renders it unwilling to countenance any interference with its strategic designs, including that posed by a hostile ruling authority. Thus, all obstacles to the realisation of American national interests are destined for elimination.

In the history of US-Israel relations, the United States has always maintained warm relations since its beginning. The United States has a close relationship in particular to stem the influence of 'hard-core' Arab countries and Islamic militant groups that oppose neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism behavior under the leadership of the United States. Based on the current phenomena, we can witness that internal factors such as the economy, political stability, and armed forces, and external factors such as foreign relations and also the motives of other countries to invade Iraq could drive Iraq's defeat under Saddam Hussein's regime to state that its government is sovereign and can fight the invasion with all the forces that can be mobilized for the war. This paper attempts to reflect on Iraq's defeat through an analysis of the universal war strategy that Iraq should have been able to do.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Clausewitz's Strategy Theory

According to Carl Von Clausewitz's seminal treatise "On War," strategy is the art of employing combat as a means to achieve victory. The term itself originates from the Greek Strategos, meaning "General Art," and in its earliest usage referred exclusively to the orchestration of military campaign planning (Clausewitz, 1976). Liddel Hart offers an alternative conception, describing strategy as "the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfill the ends of policy" (Syahputra, 2019). Strategy thus represents the application of military methods toward the realisation of final goals. When the views of these two influential thinkers are reconciled, a unified definition emerges: strategy encompasses the science and art of establishing objectives,

devising courses of action, and identifying the means of completion necessary to bring those objectives to fruition.

2.2. Total War

The Prussian general Carl Von Clausewitz in the 18th century in his book "Vom Kriege" stated that war is a continuation of politics in a different way. He also then interpreted what was done by Napoleon Bonaparte as a new war strategy, which thoroughly and totally utilized all existing resources in a country, including matters related to civil society ownership and infrastructure, and mobilized resources and the existing community for the benefit of war (Clausewitz, 2007).

In a more modern context, Robert Chickering highlights the importance of means of war to win a war. This is because the length of time in the war requires the mobilization of the economy and society in general. War further affects the engagement of civilians themselves, and industrial capability and modernization of armaments is a determinant of the implementation of a universal war strategy (Chickering, 1999).

Jeremy Black highlights the development of the total war that developed in 1860 to 1914, where information and transportation developed rapidly. The extent of the war area was then greatly supported by the existence of a transportation system which was the infrastructure of civil society. With this infrastructure, warring actors can deploy their large troops to a distant area even in a short time while still communicating with their operations control center. From this phenomenon we can see that total war utilizes civilian infrastructure for the benefit of war and the development of war control capabilities in a very wide area (Black, 2006).

Based on several existing arguments, it can be synthesized that total war is a war strategy used to resolve political disputes between parties in different ways. This strategy includes the utilization of all available resources, mobilization of human resources, and the use of available infrastructure for the benefit of war in the long term.

3. Methodology

A qualitative method grounded in documentary analysis, or desk research, constitutes the investigative framework adopted by the author in reflecting upon the collapse of Saddam Hussein's military strategy in the face of the 2003 United States-led invasion. Under this secondary research model, the scholar's task is to survey accumulated knowledge from earlier investigations so as to acquire a comprehensive perspective on the chosen domain. According to Corbin and Strauss (2014), the qualitative approach is defined negatively, in that it eschews statistical operations and numerical computation, and positively, in that it offers rich and nuanced accounts of phenomena that quantitative techniques are ill-suited to capture. Such an approach is also oriented toward the elucidation of meaning latent within observable social conditions, and it possesses the further advantage of intelligibility, as its data consist of narrative statements and its outputs are predominantly descriptive.

The technique for gathering data consists of information procured through a literature review, encompassing books, scholarly journals, articles, news reports, and authoritative publications germane to the research subject. This process is executed in a systematic fashion, whereby the author endeavours to collect a maximal body of materials, subsequently subjecting them to selection based upon their relevance to the investigative requirements. The criteria for literary selection involve the identification of texts that align with the central focus of inquiry, specifically the theme of Iraq's strategic defeat in the 2003 invasion, which guided the choice of particular articles. Thereafter, data analysis constitutes an indispensable stage that every researcher must undertake in the pursuit of scholarly inquiry.

4. Results and Discussion

Born into impoverished circumstances in Tikrit, a settlement situated approximately 100 miles from Baghdad, Saddam Hussein entered the world in 1937. Upon relocating to the capital as an adolescent, he enlisted in the Baath party, an organisation with which he would later become indelibly associated and which he would eventually direct. His involvement in multiple coup endeavours culminated in his contribution to the installation of his cousin as Iraq's dictator in July 1968, a position from which Saddam succeeded him eleven years thereafter. Throughout his twenty-four-year tenure, the secret police apparatus, instituted to safeguard his authority, subjected the populace to systematic intimidation while flagrantly disregarding fundamental human rights. Although considerable segments of his citizenry endured destitution, Saddam himself inhabited a realm of extraordinary opulence, commissioning more than twenty lavish palaces across the nation. His profound preoccupation with personal security purportedly compelled him to circulate constantly among these residences, with the result that his nocturnal resting places remained perpetually undisclosed (Leffler, 2023).

At the dawn of the 1980s, Saddam initiated a protracted conflict with Iran that endured for eight years, a war estimated to have claimed in excess of one million casualties across both belligerent nations. He stands accused of deploying nerve agents and mustard gas against Iranian combatants during this hostilities, in addition to the employment of chemical weaponry against Iraq's Kurdish populace in the northern regions of the country in 1988. Following his incursion into Kuwait in 1990, a coalition force under American leadership mounted an invasion of Iraq in 1991, compelling the dictator's military to withdraw from its smaller neighbour; nevertheless, this operation failed to effect his removal from power (Wang, 2023). Throughout the subsequent decade, Saddam contended with both economic sanctions and aerial bombardment by the United Nations, measures designed to impair his capacity to manufacture chemical, biological, and nuclear armaments. As Iraq continued to face allegations concerning illicit petroleum sales and ongoing weapons production, the United States launched a second invasion in March 2003, this instance with the explicit objective of deposing Saddam and dismantling his governing apparatus.

4.1.1. Iraq's Power Before the Invasion: Military Forces

By early 2003, Western military analysts estimated that Iraq's armed forces had diminished to roughly 40 percent of their 1991 Gulf War strength, when they had numbered approximately one million troops. International sanctions had obstructed both the retention and modernisation of obsolete weaponry and equipment, while Iraqi personnel remained deficient in contemporary combat training (Otterman, 2005). The Iraqi Army, under Saddam Hussein's command as supreme commander, was structured geographically into four regional commands, each comprising three principal branches: the regular army, the Republican Guard, and the Special Republican Guard.

The regular army comprised an estimated 300,000 to 350,000 personnel, structured into five corps and sixteen divisions. Approximately two-thirds of this force consisted of conscripts, while the majority of its weaponry was obsolete. The Republican Guard, by contrast, numbered between 60,000 and 70,000 troops organised into six divisions. They were regarded as an elite formation, populated largely by career soldiers who enjoyed superior equipment, training, and remuneration, and were therefore anticipated to offer more determined resistance. This force operated under the direct authority of Saddam's son Qusay and was assigned to the defence of Baghdad, Tikrit, and other strategic bastions of the regime (Bibi & Ali, 2022).

The Special Republican Guard, an elite formation, was estimated to comprise roughly 15,000 personnel recruited from the regime's most loyal adherents. Charged with safeguarding the president, his family, VIPs, and presidential facilities, this unit reported directly to Qusay and possessed its own armoured brigade and air defence commando element. To preclude coup attempts by less dependable troops, the Special Republican Guard was generally the sole military force permitted within central Baghdad.

When hostilities commenced, American planners' expectations regarding mass defections from the regular army proved largely accurate, though the number of surrendering soldiers was considerably lower than anticipated, with approximately 7,000 surrendering to US forces compared to 80,000 during the first Gulf War. A greater proportion of soldiers simply discarded their uniforms and melted back into civilian society. Surprisingly, fierce resistance from the Republican Guard and Republican Special Guards did not occur. After

days of carrying out airstrikes, the elite unit protecting the outskirts of Baghdad disbanded and was easily driven back by US troops. Meanwhile, stiff resistance came from militias and paramilitaries who were not in uniform, such as Fedayeen Saddam.

According to US and British military reports cited by The Wall Street Journal, approximately 3,160 Iraqi soldiers had perished by April 15. In total, roughly 13,800 had been taken prisoner by American and British forces. A significantly larger number appeared to have merely discarded their uniforms and returned to their homes, while others, particularly senior officers, were believed to have fled to Syria or other nations. Prior to the conflict, the Iraqi government had indicated that Saddam retained control over aviation, air defence, and surface-to-surface missiles. Qusay was entrusted with the defence of Baghdad and Tikrit. Ali Hassan al-Majid, whom opponents dubbed "Chemical Ali" for his alleged role in overseeing chemical attacks against the Kurds, commanded the southern sector. Izzat Ibrahim, a trusted associate and vice president of the Revolutionary Command Council, presided over the northern region. Mazban Khader Hadi, a member of the ruling council, controlled the central area.

4.1.2. Military Fleet

Iraq's tank inventory was estimated at between 1,800 and 2,000, a significant reduction from the pre-1991 Gulf War total of at least 5,500. Approximately 700 of these, the Soviet T-72s, were deemed reasonably capable, yet they were numerically and technically outmatched by American armour. The T-72, for instance, suffered from deficient night vision equipment and possessed only half the effective range of the M1A1 Abrams, which had engaged Iraqi tanks from a distance of 1.9 miles during the 1991 conflict. An additional 3,700 armoured vehicles were estimated to remain in service, though the fleet was largely obsolete. US planners further assessed Iraqi artillery strength at roughly 2,300 pieces, supplemented by some relatively advanced anti-tank guided missiles and tens of thousands of machine guns and other small arms. The air force was believed to operate about 300 combat aircraft, though many were thought to possess negligible operational capability; indeed, no Iraqi warplanes flew during the campaign. Primary fixed-wing assets included French Mirage F-1s and Russian-made MiG-23s, MiG-21s, and MiG-29s. Approximately 350 helicopters were also in service, of which roughly 80 were armed.

Iraq maintained an extensive air defence organisation, a 15,000-person unit believed to operate over 850 surface-to-air missile launchers and approximately 4,000 anti-aircraft artillery pieces (Quadri, 2022). American experts were divided on its effectiveness, with some contending that it would present a considerable danger to US aircraft operating at low altitudes. In practice, however, it had minimal impact on coalition air superiority: an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter was downed, apparently by small-arms fire, on 24 March, and an Iraqi surface-to-air missile struck an A-10 "Warthog" near Baghdad on 8 April. The A-10 pilot was rescued shortly thereafter, while the two Apache crew members, along with five other Americans taken into custody, were released on 13 April.

With such extensive air defense conditions to maintain, based on the principle of total war, Iraq should be able to utilize civil communications and radar systems as part of the utilization of civilian infrastructure. This is because the communication and radar systems used in the military world and by civilians are the same. With no differences in working principles, military radars through the integration of civilian radars can be utilized to support defense operations in a total war strategy (Khotimah et al., 2023). Iraq's military strength has been greatly reduced since the Gulf War. As a result, the existing fleet and forces are unable to match the US strength. Conditions that were exacerbated by political instability in Iraq made Iraq unable to reach its ends to fight the US invasion. When political and economic conditions worsen, ideal conditions will not be created for conducting military spending, where the integration of defense-security spending components can synergistically increase security stability (Saputro et al., 2020).

4.1.3. Saddam's Control

An elaborate and overlapping system of security and secret police forces, answering immediately to Qusay and other high-ranking officials, formed the instrument of Saddam's control. The loyalty and terror that these roughly 100,000 operatives generated sustained his rule, and these same agents were utilised to coerce the Iraqi population into compliance with the war (Israeli, 2023).

American forces encountered greater resistance than anticipated from insurgent fighters closely affiliated with Saddam's regime, including Saddam's Fedayeen, or "Men of Saddam's Sacrifices," a paramilitary organisation estimated at 30,000 to 40,000 personnel. With conventional military assets largely neutralised, Iraq increasingly resorted to guerrilla warfare, employing tactics such as hit-and-run assaults by small armed groups, the donning of civilian attire by combatants, the ignition of oil fires and wells, suicide bombings, feigned surrenders, and the exploitation of civilians as human shields.

Based on the perspective of a total war strategy, national defense efforts prioritize or utilize non-military elements to achieve success (Abdi et al., 2020). In this case, Iraq put forward military elements that were limited due to losses from previous wars and implemented a strategy that could only win short-term battles, not long-term wins. Instead of utilizing existing resources and infrastructure that can support war as well as human resources, Iraq is carrying out tactics (ways) that sacrifice a lot of military elements that are important for the defense of its country.

4.1.4. Political Turbulences

Iraq achieved independence in 1932, and in 1958 it became a republic under Abd Al-Karim Qasim. His tenure proved brief, however, as the Ba'ath Party succeeded in overthrowing him and assuming control of the state. The party governed the country largely under the infamous Baathist Saddam Hussein until his removal by US-led forces in 2003 (Gassama et al., 2023). Regrettably, even prior to 2003, conflict had already emerged and shaped much of Iraq's modern history, particularly during Saddam's rule. In 1980, Hussein initiated war against Iran, a protracted eight-year struggle that concluded in stalemate and left more than one million dead.

Compounding these circumstances is the protracted history of the contentious region of Iraq, known in antiquity as Mesopotamia, where successive powers have contended for dominance and imposed their authority. Over the past four centuries, both the Ottoman Empire and Persian rulers sought to subjugate the territory, with Saudi Arabia and Syria joining this contest more recently. At the time of the Iraqi invasion, President Bashar al-Assad of Syria stood as Saddam Hussein's sole fellow Baathist leader. Iraq's strategic geography further renders it a de facto buffer between Saudi Arabia, the heartland of Sunni Islam, and Iran, the centre of Shia Islam. Consequently, both parties have exploited Iraq as an arena for advancing their influence and settling their disputes, whether through armed confrontation or efforts to sway its government. Increasingly, the Iraqi state has been co-opted as a theatre for proxy warfare.

As a country that is continuously involved in the war, political stability in Iraq is one of the sectors that is quite affected. In fact, political stability is an important factor in a strategy that can be developed so that resources (means) can be arranged for the benefit of war (Syarifuddin et al., 2021). In this Iraqi reflection, political stability is required to maintain sovereignty in the midst of an invasion, instead of being divided and give the impression of weakness.

4.1.5. Demographic

Iraq, often hailed as the cradle of civilisation for its abundant resources and rich cultural legacy, had its boundaries first delineated in the 1920s and was quickly established as a semi-autonomous monarchy under British authority. From this foundation arose a society deeply divided by ethnicity, religion, and political allegiance. The population is predominantly Arab, but includes a considerable Kurdish minority, as well as smaller contingents of Turkmen and Assyrians (Fawcett, 2023).

Iraq's population is deeply rooted in religious plurality, comprising Shiites, a considerable Sunni minority, and smaller Christian and other religious groups. In urban areas, the piety of both Sunnis and Shiites has been somewhat compromised by the allegiance required to the ruling Baath Party, a secular organisation whose favour was essential for social and professional progress. Yet this Baathist political dominance generated profound animosity and suppressed aspirations for enhanced religious liberty. This then made it difficult for Iraq to unite its population, because they were divided based on sectarian differences, creating turbulent political conditions and people unable to be mobilized to unite against the invasion.

The invasion of Iraq witnessed the toppling of Saddam Hussein's government by coalition forces in less than twenty-one days, with only modest losses. Such speed and facility pointed to two critical realities: most

Iraqi military units did not mount substantial opposition, and Iraqi leadership neglected to adopt defensive postures capable of impeding the advancing coalition forces.

Several interrelated factors collectively account for the rapid breakdown of Iraqi opposition:

- A. Saddam Hussein committed a fundamental strategic miscalculation, predicated on the conviction that armed conflict with the United States might still be averted, that any ensuing hostilities would be confined to aerial bombardment rather than ground invasion, and that the coalition would ultimately acquiesce to a diplomatic arrangement permitting his continued rule.
- B. Saddam was also distracted by internal threats. The steps taken against the insurgent movement have made the implementation of the defense strategy ineffective, this has implications for reducing the Iraqi military leadership's concentration and decision-making on the battlefield and preventing the coordination and command of Iraqi forces in an integrated manner.
- C. Iraq's military planning and operational execution were deficient in conception and implementation. The defensive framework failed to capitalise on potential strategies for extending the conflict and inflicting greater losses upon Coalition forces. Low morale and insufficient motivation further eroded Iraqi defensive capabilities. The prevailing conviction that resistance was pointless, coupled with an absence of willingness to sacrifice for Saddam, prompted most officers and soldiers either to offer minimal combat or to desert their posts prior to engagement.
- D. The overwhelming military superiority of Coalition troops conferred a formidable edge. Coalition air and ground assets executed accurate and lethal strikes against Iraqi targets at long range, at close range, and under cover of darkness. Additionally, the Coalition's swift mobilisation of ground forces and their ability to sustain operations across extended supply lines critically impaired Iraq's efforts to establish any coherent defence.

Based on its military, infrastructure, political, and demographic aspects, Iraq is not like other countries which are in a condition where all elements can support a total war strategy when they have to deal with the invasion of the United States, especially during the regime of Saddam Hussein. The factors of Iraq's defeat reflect that a total war strategy requires a detailed plan and attention detail to aspects of the non-military forces possessed to support the war.

5. Conclusion

The United States (US) together with its western coalition partners invaded Iraq in 2003 to topple down President Saddam Hussein who was considered a threat to the international community based on accusations of possession of weapons of mass destruction and links to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. During the invasion, the Iraqi troops were easily defeated through a military approach by the coalition. There are several factors that caused Iraq to be so easily defeated through the US invasion with coalition partners in 2003 including: Saddam Hussein made a strategic miscalculation, his belief that conflict with the United States could be avoided and negotiations would keep his regime in power. Saddam was also distracted by internal threats such as coup attempts and rebellions which divided concentration. In addition, the Iraqi military strategy and operations were poorly formulated and executed, coupled with weak motivation and morale, which undermined Iraqi defenses. Lastly Superior military capabilities gave Coalition troops a tremendous advantage. The coalition of ground and air forces was able to provide accurate and lethal fire on Iraqi targets from long ranges and at close range during the night which made the Iraqi defenses even weaker. The factors of Iraq's defeat reflect that a total war strategy requires a detailed plan and pays attention to aspects of the non-military forces possessed to support the war. This reflection contributes to the total war literature by illustrating how the neglect of non-military elements, including political cohesion, infrastructure utilization, and societal mobilization, can undermine an otherwise materially prepared defense strategy, offering a cautionary reference point for defense planning in other states. Future research may extend this reflection through comparative case studies of other total war failures, so as to test whether similar patterns of strategic miscalculation and non-military neglect recur across different national contexts.

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