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U.S. NATIONAL INTERESTS AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES PURSUED IN IRAQ AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY

U.S. National Interests and Strategic Objectives Pursued in Iraq in the Early Twenty-First Century

In the early 21st century, the foreign policy of the United States (US) towards Iraq was intensified and certain American national interests and strategic goals were pursued in this area. The article analyses three groups of objectives: political, economic and geostrategic (military), which, with varying levels of intensity, the US government pursued in Iraq during that period. At the same time, the author focuses not only on the declared goals but also on those actually implemented. She outlines the main US national interests (divided into vital, very important, important and secondary interests) that determine its goals and strategies. Finally, the effects of the US strategic goals in Iraq are referred to, showing which actions have brought the expected results, and which have not been very effective.

Keywords: United States of America, national interests, strategic goals, George W. Bush, US foreign policy.

INTRODUCTION

Iraq's geopolitical location, its relations with other states, as well as the energy resources it possesses, led the White House to seek to draw the country into the American sphere of influence during the time of the Cold War. Since then, U.S.-Iraq relations have gone through various phases, and with the start of Gulf War II in March 2003, Iraq has been at the center of U.S. foreign policy and U.S. strategic objectives in the region.

The purpose of this article is to present the most important American national interests as well as strategic objectives pursued in Iraq at the beginning of the 21st century, which are divided into three main groups: economic, political, and geostrategic (military) objectives. The choice of the chronological period is dictated by the intensification of US foreign and security policy towards Iraq during the presidency of George W. Bush. It is worth mentioning that the author intends to show not only the officially declared goals, but also those actually implemented. The main research methods used in this article include analysis and criticism of sources and classification.

This research was based on three main assumptions: 1) In the first decade of the 21st century, the U.S. pursued various objectives in Iraq that reflected the growing American interest in the Middle East region, as well as the evolution of U.S. interests in a rapidly changing international context; 2) Realizing how powerful and effective policy-making can be based on noble ideals, U.S. policymakers reached for freedom-democratic arguments, justifying taking aggressive action inside Iraq with the desire to protect human rights from dictatorial rule; 3) the declared objectives (protection of civilians, spreading democracy and human rights, combating terrorism, preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, stabilizing the region) pursued by the U.S. towards Iraq did not fully reflect the objectives actually undertaken (expansion of the U.S. sphere of influence, strengthening the international position of the U.S., protecting the political interests of Israel, ensuring free access of the U.S. to Iraqi oil; achieving U.S. benefits from Iraqi reconstruction programs, weakening Iran).

NATIONAL INTERESTS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IN THE 21ST CENTURY

As an introduction, it is useful to clarify basic definitions and how Americans define national interests and interpret strategic goals.

In its most general sense, national interests are “the set of general and permanent objectives for which a state acts;”¹ they are seen as the driving force behind any action taken in the international arena, whether they are of a higher order (defined as *raison d'état*) or other relevant to the development or satisfaction of political or social aspirations.² It is emphasized that national interests determine the goals and strategies of states, de facto influencing the direction of their foreign policy, as well as the choice of methods and tools for its implementation.³ This basic classification distinguishes between groups of vital interests versus desirable ones, of which the first has a non-negotiable character and refers to the survival and existence of the subject under given conditions, while the second defines interests related to the quality of existence, which can be graded and negotiated.⁴ One of the leading American researchers of international relations, Hans J. Morgenthau, representing the political realism trend⁵ that dominates in the United States, pointed out that the national interest is defined in terms of power, constituting a kind of road map that enables the rulers to make rational decisions based on a correct interpretation of the facts, which de facto makes it easier to navigate the meanders of international politics.⁶

Some researchers have argued that without clear priorities, superpower foreign policy is reactive and impulsive.⁷ At the beginning of the 21st century, a team was established in the US – *Commission*

¹ R. Zięba, *Cele polityki zagranicznej państwa*, in: *Wstęp do teorii polityki zagranicznej państwa*, ed. R. Zięba, Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2005, p. 39.

² *Ibidem*, p. 38 et seq.

³ T. Łoś-Nowak, *Stosunki międzynarodowe. Teorie – systemy – uczestnicy*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 2006, p. 264 et seq.

⁴ S. Koziej, *Bezpieczeństwo: istota, podstawowe kategorie i historyczna ewolucja*, „Bezpieczeństwo Narodowe” 2011, no. II, p. 27.

⁵ Due to its position as a superpower in the international system, a militarized approach to security prevails in the United States. As a result, the dominant trend in international relations theory at the beginning of the 21st century remained political realism, which inextricably links security with military aspects. Based on the assumption that the world is a dangerous place where violence is an inherent feature, according to representatives of the realist trend, the state, in relations with other entities, should be guided by the national interest. Since one can never be sure of the intentions of other states, it is necessary to constantly invest in the expansion of military capabilities. See: E. Waško-Owsiejczuk, *Koncepcja bezpieczeństwa USA*, in: *Bezpieczeństwo międzynarodowe w XXI wieku*, ed. R. Zięba, Poltext, Warszawa 2018, M.H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, Yale University Press, New Heaven 2009, p. 106 et seq; 6 et seq.

⁶ H.J. Morgenthau, *Polityka między narodami: walka o potęgę i pokój*, Difin, Warszawa 2010, p. 21 et seq.

⁷ *What are America's National Interests?*, Harvard's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, www.belfercenter.org/publication/what-are-americas-national-interests (accessed: 09.06.2022).

on America's National Interests,⁸ which included academics, think-tank analysts, former government officials, and politicians, who set themselves the task of identifying and articulating U.S. national interests. It is worth noting here that the Commission's conclusions and recommendations were largely repeated in the State Department's strategic plans in the following years.⁹ The Commission's 2000 report emphasized that the United States has a privileged position in the international system, including more power and fewer opponents than ever before in American history. "Relative to any potential competitor, the United States is more powerful, wealthier, and influential than any other nation since the Roman Empire. With these extraordinary advantages, America is uniquely positioned today to shape an international system that promotes world peace and prosperity for decades and even generations to come."¹⁰ Moreover, the paper notes that despite the hegemonic¹¹ U.S. position in the world, its resources are limited, and consequently U.S. foreign policy should be selective about the issues that need to be seriously addressed. The guidepost is to be provided by strictly delineated, hierarchically formulated national interests, which are divided into vital,¹² very important,¹³ important¹⁴ and less important/secondary.¹⁵

⁸ Established in 1996 by Harvard's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, the Nixon Center, RAND, and the Hauser Foundation. The purpose of the Commission was to stimulate debate about core U.S. national interests. As the Commission's reports pointed out: "a lack of basic coordinates and a clear sense of priorities makes American foreign policy reactive and impulsive in a rapidly changing and uncertain world." See: *America's National Interests: A Report from The Commission on America's National Interests, 2000*, Harvard's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, www.belfercenter.org/publication/americas-national-interests-report-commission-americas-national-interests-2000 (accessed: 09.06.2022).

⁹ Department of State National Interests and Strategic Goals, US Department of State <https://2009-2017.state.gov/s/d/rm/rls/perfrpt/2002/html/18996.htm>.

¹⁰ *America's National Interests...*

¹¹ See: P. Frankowski, *Hegemonia Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki w warunkach turbulencji*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2006.

¹² Vital interests are essential to securing the survival and improving the well-being of Americans.

¹³ In the case of a violation of very important interests, there would be damage, but not an imminent threat of losing the ability of the U.S. government to protect the survival and improve the well-being of Americans.

¹⁴ Protecting important U.S. national interests is particularly important to maintaining a strong UN and other international cooperation mechanisms.

¹⁵ Less important or secondary U.S. national interests are not insignificant although they have little direct impact on the U.S. government's ability to ensure the safety and well-being of Americans.

TABLE 1
National interests of the United States of America in the 21st century

Vital interests	Very important interests	Important interests	Less important/ secondary interests
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ preventing nuclear, biological, and chemical attacks on the U.S. or on its armed forces stationed abroad ▪ ensuring the survival of U.S. allies ▪ establishing productive relationships (consistent with U.S. national interests) with countries that may become strategic rivals (China and Russia) ▪ ensuring the stability of major global systems (trade, financial markets, energy supply and environmental care) ▪ preventing the entry of hostile powers or failed states^a on U.S. borders ▪ maintaining close cooperation with allies in shaping the international system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ preventing, deterring, and limiting the threat of nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons anywhere in the world; preventing regional proliferation of weapons of mass destruction ▪ promoting acceptance of international legal principles and mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of disputes ▪ preventing the rise of regional hegemony in important regions, especially the Persian Gulf, as well as ending and preventing the emerging of major conflicts there ▪ promoting democracy, stability, prosperity of U.S. allies and ensuring their protection from external aggression ▪ combating terrorism, international crime, drug trafficking ▪ maintaining U.S. dominance in key military technologies and information systems ▪ preventing mass, uncontrolled migration across U.S. borders ▪ preventing genocide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ promoting pluralism, freedom, and democracy in strategically important countries without destabilization, and discouraging massive human rights violations in other countries ▪ preventing and ending conflicts in strategically less important geographic regions ▪ preventing the nationalization of U.S. assets abroad and maximizing U.S. GNP growth through international trade and investment ▪ increasing domestic production of key strategic industries and sectors ▪ reducing the economic gap between rich and poor nations ▪ maintaining an edge in international information distribution to ensure that American values continue to positively influence the culture of foreign nations ▪ protecting the lives and well-being of American citizens from terrorist organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ expanding democracy around the world ▪ offsetting bilateral trade deficits ▪ maintaining territorial integrity in every corner of the world ▪ increasing exports of specific sectors of the economy ▪ respecting international law in each country

^a A failed state is not clearly defined. In literature there is a variety of terms used to describe it, such as failed state, collapsed state, failing state, weak state, disintegrated state, crisis state, fragmented state, fragile state. As Hubert Dudkiewicz points out, "the term failed state describes a state of complete disintegration of social ties and dismantling of the state-legal infrastructure, involving economic catastrophe of the state, poverty, famine, humanitarian disasters and violations of basic civil liberties and human rights." See further: H. Dudkiewicz, *Prawo międzynarodowe w kwestii państwa upadłego*, in: *Problem upadku państw w stosunkach międzynarodowych*, ed. R. Klosowicz, A. Mania, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2012), p. 67–86.

Source: based on: *America's National Interests – Report from The Commission on America's National Interests*.

Strategic objectives are constructed based on national interests, the precise formulation of which shows the plans and vision of state policy in each area (especially in the economic, political, and military fields). At the same time, it is important that the strategic objectives are adapted to the given conditions, included in a specific time and place, considering the needs and opportunities that present themselves, and reflect a realistic assessment of the current situation (internal and external), as well as the expected (realistic) scenario of its development. While national interests reflect aspirations of the state that are timeless and independent from current conditions, strategic objectives refer to concrete and current conditions.¹⁶

With the start of Gulf War II in March 2003, Iraq was at the center of U.S. foreign policy and U.S. strategic objectives in the region. Most of the objectives, which the author of this article categorized into three main groups: political, economic, and geostrategic (military), were of interests that can be categorized as “vital.”

U.S. POLITICAL OBJECTIVES IN IRAQ

Four policy objectives can be distinguished that the US has pursued with varying degrees of intensity towards Iraq in the first decade of the 21st century, which often have the broader character of a superpower strategy towards the entire Middle East region. These include:

- strengthening the U.S. international position;
- expansion of the U.S. sphere of influence;
- democratic revolution in the Middle East;
- protecting Israel’s political interests.

After the end of the Cold War, the superpower adopted as one of its policy objectives in the Middle East strengthening relations with and ensuring stability for its strategic allies Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan. U.S. attention has also focused on Israeli-Palestinian peace dialogues.¹⁷ It is worth noting that after the collapse of the USSR, a convenient moment appeared for the formation of a new polar structure, which was used by the US to strengthen its international position in the new unipolar world.¹⁸ Some researchers

¹⁶ S. Koziej, *Bezpieczeństwo...*, p. 27.

¹⁷ See: J. Zając, *Środki i metody oddziaływania USA w bliskowschodnim procesie pokojowym (1991–2000)*, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2004, p. 9 et seq.

¹⁸ See: T. Farer, *Collectively Defending Democracy in the Western Hemisphere, Introduction and Overview*, in: *Beyond Sovereignty: Collectively Defending Democracy in the Americas*, ed. T. Farer, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1996, p. 1 et seq.

have seen this as a natural tendency for great powers to seek to expand their power in the absence of an opposing power.¹⁹ The pillars of US foreign policy during this period were based on three principles: 1) the values and principles of Western liberal democracy are universal and all nations of the world wish to become democratic (promoting democracy for the good of mankind); 2) democracies do not fight each other, therefore exporting democracy means promoting world peace (democracy was linked to global security); 3) promoting democracy makes the world safer and more prosperous for the US (democracy = security and prosperity).²⁰ It has become an indispensable part of U.S. national interests to promote democracy and peace, which is the engine of prosperity.²¹ State Department reports have emphasized that societies with free markets are generally more likely to share U.S. values, support free trade and sustainable development, and democratic states are less likely to threaten U.S. interests.²²

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a new quality in international relations emerged, manifested by the decline in the importance of military rivalry between the superpowers. In addition to maintaining the global post-Cold War equilibrium, the United States set itself the goal of ensuring global supremacy and creating an environment conducive to American interests. For this reason, the last decade of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century saw a marked intensification of U.S. involvement in the international arena. The aim was to reaffirm and consolidate American supremacy, as well as to demonstrate that it is the U.S. that decides what happens in the world, regardless of the consequences of its actions.²³ Its culmination

¹⁹ R. Hinnebusch, *The US Invasion of Iraq: Explanations and Implications*, "Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies" 2007, no. 16:3, p. 209–210.

²⁰ M.H. de Castro Santos, U.T. Teixeira, *The essential role of democracy in the Bush Doctrine: the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan*, "Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional" 2013, Vol. 56, Issue 2, p. 131 et seq.

²¹ See: R. Wordliczek, *Stany Zjednoczone i Unia Europejska jako promotorzy reform demokratycznych w państwach Bliskiego Wschodu i Afryki Północnej w pierwszej dekadzie XXI wieku*, "Przegląd Politologiczny" 2017, nr 1, p. 212 et seq.

²² *FY 1999–2000 Department of State Performance Plan National Interests*, Department of State, https://1997-2001.state.gov/global/general_foreign_policy/00_perf_1.pdf (accessed: 09.06.2022).

²³ The issue of the US war against Iraq divided Europe and the United States. The Bush administration did not like the resistance of parts of Europe, so they created internal divisions in Europe, dividing it into the „old” (secondary) and the „new” – „visionary” approach to international relations. From then on, America belittled the „old Europe” by building a „coalition of the willing” for unlawful actions in Iraq. This led to a split within the European Union, to an internal crisis in the United Nations, which proved powerless in the face of the aggressive actions of its strongest member, and to a crisis in NATO, which was treated instrumentally by the US. See: E. Waško-Owsiejczuk, *Europe’s Position in US*

was seen in 2003 when, on the assumption that the status of the dominant power in the Middle East depended on maintaining unchallenged American dominance in the Gulf region,²⁴ The United States invaded Iraq. By overthrowing Saddam Hussein's regime, the U.S. government wanted to expand the U.S. sphere of influence to include another close ally and initiate a democratic revolution in the Middle East. Iraq was to become the second (after Israel) voice of the West (US) in the region. The establishment of a sovereign, stable and democratic Iraq was to set an example for other countries in the region, which, encouraged by the success of the political changes in Iraq, were to follow its path. This was the case in the period after World War II, when the Americans sowed the seeds of democracy in Germany with the aim of spreading that system throughout Europe.²⁵

However, the democratic revolution in the Middle East should not be perceived as a goal of American policy in only missionary/idealistic strategic terms. On the one hand, referring to democratic peace theory,²⁶ it is assumed that democratic states are easier to cooperate with and more predictable in their actions, posing de facto less of a threat to others. On the other hand, having a democratic system is not a necessary condition for good relations and close cooperation between states. In the past, the U.S. authorities repeatedly made decisions and took actions that put economic interests above the protection of human rights. For example, the U.S. has a friendly relationship with Saudi Arabia, a nation which is an absolute monarchy and supports the death penalty (for homosexuality, witchcraft, etc.), whipping and torture. Even though in Saudi Arabia there are notorious violations of human rights, the United States has no plans to conduct any military intervention there as part of the democratic revolution and continues to closely cooperate with them. Washington has repeatedly pursued a policy of "hugging dictators," but only when the US could profit

Security Policy at the beginning of the 21st century, „International and Security Studies” 2017, no.1, p. 169–190.

²⁴ M.S. Doran, *Palestine, Iraq, and American Strategy*, „Foreign Affairs”, January 7, 2003 https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/cfr/international/1_FA_nift_030106_doran.html?pagewanted=7 (accessed: 09.06.2022).

²⁵ Remarks on the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy, November 6, 2003, in: *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George W. Bush*, Book II, United States Government Printing Office, Washington 2003, p. 1468–1474.

²⁶ This theory assumes that liberal governments will be willing to adhere to universally applicable norms and peaceful means of resolving conflicts without resorting to violence. See: B. Wiśniewski, *Teoria demokratycznego pokoju*, in: *Teorie i podejścia badawcze w nauce o stosunkach międzynarodowych*, ed. R. Zięba, S. Bieliń, J. Zajac, Wydział Dziennikarstwa i Nauk Politycznych Uniwersytet Warszawski, Warszawa 2015), p. 47 et seq.

from their strict rule or secure American interests. The main problem with Saddam Hussein's regime was that it was not pro-American or pro-Western at the time, so a democratic crusade needed to be undertaken against it. It was not the first time that a superpower invoked idealistic and democratic motives in pursuing its strategic interests. It is worth mentioning that one of the goals and reasons for the American military intervention in Afghanistan in 2001 was to overthrow the Taliban regime and protect human rights. Promoting democratic values is a useful tool for implementing foreign policy. The democratic revolution in the Middle East therefore had a dimension of strategic objectives, dictated by US national interests. The success of the democratization of Iraq was to strengthen the international position of the US, expand its sphere of influence, make Iraq a loyal US ally and protect the interests of its closest ally Israel.

In terms of American national interests, protecting Israel is classified as a vital interest. US-Israeli relations are described as the most important alliance in the world. The US sees Israel not only as a stable and dependable ally, but also as a guarantor looking after its interests in the region. It is rare for Congress to question the financial support given annually (over \$3 billion) by the US to Israel, for which they do not have to account.²⁷ No other country offers such a high level of diplomatic support as that provided by Washington to its closest ally, often standing alone with Israel at the UN when concerns are raised about Israel's ongoing violations of international law. The superpower has already used its veto power in the UN Security Council more than forty times to block condemnation of Israel's actions in the occupied territories. In searching for reasons for this unusual U.S.-Israeli symbiosis, some scholars and analysts point to unity of strategic goals, shared democratic values, and religious affinity.²⁸ Others point to the effectiveness of Israeli lobbying, which use the tools of intimidation, obstruction and rewarding of friendly politicians, to gain important influence on the decisions of Congress and the White House while shaping the American discussion around Israel.²⁹ Despite official Israeli denials that it lobbied Washington for war with Iraq, the interests of the closest US ally in the Middle

²⁷ J. Sharp, *U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel*, in: *Congressional Research Service Report for Congress*, Washington, August 7, 2019, p. 1.

²⁸ *Israel: Background and U.S. Relations*, in: *Congressional Research Service Report for Congress*, Washington, February 28, 2014, p. 1 et seq.

²⁹ Ł. Wójcik, *USA–Izrael: Najważniejszy sojusz na świecie*, "Polityka", February 17, 2015, www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/swiat/1609143,1,usaizrael-najwazniejszy-sojusz-na-

East are often cited as one of the main reasons for launching military operations in that country, which, given the information about Hussein's destabilizing support for the Palestinians in Israel, is an important argument supporting this thesis. According to public opinion polls conducted even before the US military intervention, in August 2002, 57% of Israelis supported a U.S. attack on Iraq. Based on the assumption that "the road to Jerusalem leads through Baghdad," the administration of President George W. Bush assumed that the democratization of Iraq would facilitate the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, leading to the democratization of the Palestinian state, which at the same time would become a dependable interlocutor for Israel. The overthrow of the Hussein regime, whose mindset can be characterized as anti-Israel, undoubtedly benefited Israel. The main U.S. ally counted not only on the new pro-American Iraqi government to not be hostile to Israel, but even to cooperate with them.³⁰

U.S. ECONOMIC OBJECTIVES IN IRAQ

The most important economic objectives pursued by the United States toward Iraq at the beginning of the 21st century was to:

- ensure open access to oil;
- build economic ties;
- achieve benefits from Iraqi reconstruction programs.

The groundswell of the U.S.-initiated war against Iraq in 2003, despite official denials, had a dimension of economic gain. The administration of President George W. Bush hoped for an economic recovery and huge profits for U.S. companies (especially the oil and arms industries), new jobs for Americans, and contracts to rebuild Iraq. American efforts to build economic ties with Iraq should be seen not only in terms of material interests (new markets), but also in a broader aspect – the search for a new ally, a predictable business partner and another U.S. voice in the region. In short, the White House sought to transform Iraq into a pro-American country. This was particularly evident in the early 21st century, when, after the overthrow of Saddam

swiecie.read (accessed: 09.06.2022); See also: J. Mearsheimer, S. Walt, *Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York 2008.

³⁰ See: R. Fiedler, *Od przywództwa do hegemonii. Stany Zjednoczone wobec Bliskowschodniego obszaru niestabilności w latach 1991–2009*, Wydawnictwo UAM, Poznań 2010, p. 308 et seq; K. Czornik, *Irak w polityce zagranicznej Stanów Zjednoczonych w okresie pozimnowojennym*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice 2011, p. 223 1 et seq.

Hussein's regime in 2003, reform and economic assistance became an important feature of U.S.-Iraqi relations. The political transition process in Iraq that began then required economic encouragement from the U.S.³¹ Economic cooperation between countries has an important place in the Strategic Framework Agreement – SFA,³² and subsequent U.S. involvement included deepening Iraq's trade relations with the international community, transitioning from a state-run economy to a market economy, improving infrastructure and services, and increasing foreign investment. Before the "shale revolution" gained momentum in the U.S., one of the goals of U.S. policy toward Iraq was to ensure free access to oil. Given the energy needs of the United States³³ and statements made by the administration of President George W. Bush that indicated the superpower was undergoing an energy crisis in 2001, it is not surprising that issues of U.S. access to Iraqi oil are most often cited as the primary reason for launching a war against Iraq in 2003.³⁴ The Bush administration assumed that implementing economic reforms in Iraq would bring greater predictability to the energy sector while ensuring U.S. economic stability. Based on the assumption that rising international oil prices would be reflected in U.S. energy prices while posing a huge problem for its economy, this takeover of Iraqi oil was meant to prevent a recession. It is worth noting here that the use of Iraqi oil

³¹ It is worth mentioning that the US tactic of linking the political transition process with economic support went beyond Iraq's borders. President Bush, who wanted to start a democratic revolution in the Middle East, wanted to encourage other countries in the region to follow Iraq's example. Since other governments were quite assertive about cooperating in the political transition for fear of losing power, the U.S. used economic stimulus as an incentive, which most were eager to use.

³² Strategic Framework Agreement for a Relationship of Friendship and Cooperation between the United States and the Republic of Iraq (Strategic Framework Agreement), Baghdad, November 17, 2008, www.state.gov/documents/organization/122076.pdf (accessed: 09.06.2022).

³³ At the time, the U.S., as the world's largest consumer of oil, met half of its needs by importing this energy resource. See: A. Jarczewska-Romaniuk, *Amerykańskie wizje ładu międzynarodowego po zakończeniu zimnej wojny*, in: *Porządek międzynarodowy u progu XXI wieku: wizje – koncepcje – paradygmaty*, ed. R. Kuźniar, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2005, p. 399.

³⁴ The G.W. Bush administration initially vehemently denied these reports, emphasizing that the U.S. had no interest in controlling Iraq's oil resources. Over time, it was openly claimed that Iraq was of special importance to the U.S. since it was "floating on a sea of oil." It is also worth noting that in 2001, the U.S. economy was undergoing an economic downturn after long years of prosperity, and fighting the recession became one of the biggest challenges and goals of the new White House administration. In addition, the report Strategic Energy Policy Challenges for the 21st Century showed how big a problem was the U.S. dependence on oil supplies from the Middle East region and the threats posed by the Hussein regime's control of Iraqi resources. See: *Ibidem*, p. 398 et seq.

resources, which were the second largest in the region (after Saudi Arabia), was very limited before the Second Gulf War, due to, among other things, the embargo imposed after Iraq's aggression against Kuwait, or the oil-for-food program, and the anti-American approach of the Hussein regime, which ultimately placed Iraq as an undesirable economic partner for the US. However, after the September 11, 2001 attacks, the fact that the terrorists turned out to be mostly Saudis (15 out of 19) had a cooling effect on relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, while motivating the U.S. administration to seek a safe alternative to oil cooperation with Riyadh, which for decades had been seen in the U.S. as guaranteeing the stability of oil supplies to the U.S. market. The overthrow of Hussein's regime and the introduction of a pro-American government in Iraq offered an opportunity to diversify supplies of this energy resource to the United States. Not insignificant for the military action taken by the U.S. was the fact that in October 2002, Iraq signed a contract for oil extraction from new fields (worth nearly US\$40 billion), whose parties were not U.S. companies but rather Russian and French.³⁵ Control of Iraq's energy resources would bring tangible benefits to the superpower in the form of being able to influence oil prices on world markets, while weakening the influence of OPEC, which in the past had made it difficult for the U.S. to access energy resources from the Middle East region. Some researchers argue that one of the main goals of the Bush administration was to privatize the Iraqi oil sector and put the oil under the supervision of American and British corporations. In addition, they emphasize that U.S. actions in this regard had the nature of strategic objectives, consisting in the elimination of competition from the Iraqi market of companies from France, Russia, China, and Brazil, among others, with which the Hussein regime conducted negotiations in the context of contacts for the exploitation of Iraqi oil. The rivalry of the U.S. with other powers concerned not only the extraction market, but also the financial market, which was heading in a dangerous direction from the point of view of the superpower; namely the moving away from dollar settlements in the oil trade. Today, even though there are still divergent opinions in the discussion of the reasons for starting the war in Iraq, there are many indications that one of its main motives was the desire by the U.S. to gain control over Iraqi oil fields. It was

³⁵ See: J. Zając, *Polityka wobec Bliskiego Wschodu*, in: *Polityka zagraniczna USA po zimnej wojnie*, ed. J. Zając, Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2006, p. 138 et seq.; K. Czornik, *Irak*, p. 226 et seq.

for this reason that one of the first facilities secured by the Americans was the Ministry of Oil in Baghdad, then they gained control of the Iraqi terminals in the Persian Gulf.³⁶ The paradox is that during the stabilization mission, Iraq's oil exports were less than during the First Gulf War (1990–1991). One of the reasons for this was the numerous terrorist attacks on the energy infrastructure as a symbol of the fight against the American empire that was robbing Muslims of their oil³⁷.

A second economic reason for the initiation of U.S. military action in Iraq was the planned profits of American companies from the reconstruction of the country after the war. Interestingly, the relevant preparations took place even before the start of the war, because in 2002 The U.S. Department of Defense, without using the bidding procedure, concluded a multi-billion-dollar contract with the Halliburton Company,³⁸ whose business connections led directly to the Vice President of the United States – Dick Cheney.³⁹ The document concerned the repair of infrastructure damaged by Iraqi forces during the war and the reconstruction of the oil infrastructure after its end. This goal, despite the difficulties with stabilizing the internal situation in Iraq, was one the Bush administration tried to gradually implement. As early as December 2003, the Department of Defense issued a directive that provided for the exclusive participation of countries that had supported the U.S. in the war against Hussein's regime in procurement for the reconstruction of Iraq. The estimated value of the contracts was over \$18 billion. Despite opposition from other countries, especially Europe, it was U.S. companies⁴⁰ that were given the largest contracts at the start of the stabilization mission,

³⁶ A. Jarczewska-Romaniuk, *Amerykańskie...*, p. 400 et seq.

³⁷ See: G. Luft, A. Korin, *Energy Security Challenges for the 21st Century: A Reference Handbook* Praeger, Santa Barbara 2009, p. 147–148.

³⁸ The scope of the contract was broad and included countless tasks, from oil fire fighting through fuel import to pipeline repair. See: J. Gerth, D. van Natta Jr, *The Struggle For Iraq: Postwar Rebuilding; Halliburton Contracts in Iraq: The Struggle to Manage Costs*, "The New York Times", December 29, 2003, www.nytimes.com/2003/12/29/world/struggle-for-iraq-postwar-rebuilding-halliburton-contracts-iraq-struggle-manage.html; M. Gongloff, *Iraq rebuilding contracts awarded Halliburton*, CNN, March 25, 2003, https://money.cnn.com/2003/03/25/news/companies/war_contracts/ (accessed: 09.06.2022).

³⁹ Media reports that only U.S. companies were invited to participate in the bidding process, and exactly these five companies (Halliburton, Bechtel, Fluor, Parsons, and Louis Berger) had close ties to the Bush administration, which has led to accusations that the White House is repaying them for generous political campaign donations. See: M. Tran, *Halliburton misses \$600m Iraq contract*, "The Guardian", March 31, 2003, www.theguardian.com/business/2003/mar/31/iraq.usnews (accessed: 09.06.2022).

⁴⁰ The first two major contracts were given on an express basis to the afore mentioned Halliburton Company and the Bechtel conglomerate for a total of \$3 billion. Aleksandra Jarczewska-Romaniuk, *Amerykańskie...*, p. 405.

which was not surprising given that the awarding of contracts for Iraq's reconstruction was overseen by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). What the Bush administration did not foresee was that peacemaking in Iraq would drag on indefinitely,⁴¹ while straining the U.S. budget,⁴² and the process of transforming Iraq into an economic partner of a superpower would face numerous political and geostrategic problems.

U.S. GEOSTRATEGIC OBJECTIVES IN IRAQ

U.S. geostrategic (military) objectives pursued toward Iraq and the Middle East region more broadly during this period include:

- ensuring the security of the United States and its allies;
- stabilizing and strengthening security in the region;
- weakening Iran;
- combating terrorism;
- preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

In different historical periods Washington has tried to interact with Iraq in different ways depending on the needs, possibilities, and developments beyond the control of the Americans, which forced them to redefine their geostrategic goals. A significant reevaluation of geostrategic goals took place after the attacks of September 11, 2001. Iraq was then placed on the list of countries belonging to the “axis of evil,”⁴³ alongside Iran and North Korea, threatening international security.⁴⁴ The administration of President George W. Bush, finding the tactics of containment insufficiently effective, decided to overthrow

⁴¹ Americans were overly optimistic about Iraqi reconstruction being financed by oil profits. In addition, the Iraqi government had great difficulty taking fiscal responsibility and undertaking economic reforms on its own. And the deteriorating security situation discouraged potential investors in Iraq. *Ibidem*, p. 408.

⁴² See: P. Cachero, *US taxpayers have reportedly paid an average of \$8,000 each and over \$2 trillion total for the Iraq war alone*, Business Insider, February 6, 2020, www.businessinsider.com/us-taxpayers-spent-8000-each-2-trillion-iraq-war-study-2020-2?IR=T (accessed: 09.06.2022).

⁴³ Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union, January 29, 2002, in: *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George W. Bush*, Book I, United States Government Printing Office, Washington 2002, p. 129–136.

⁴⁴ Henry Kissinger claimed that the U.S. (through the enforcement aspect of the operation) needed to demonstrate the consequences in the Middle East of challenging U.S. security, and that Iraq had violated the armistice agreement with the United States in several ways, which the UN confirmed. Moreover, the Hussein I regime was an ideological supporter of terrorism. See: B. Maddox, *Henry Kissinger on Iraq: “I don’t think some people understood the extent of the cleavage between Shia and Sunni”*, “Prospect” [online], September 17, 2014, www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/world/henry-kissinger-on-iraq-i-dont-think-some-people-understood-the-extent-of-the-cleavage-between-shia-and-sunni (accessed: 09.06.2022).

Hussein's regime with military intervention, the far-reaching effects of which led to a reassessment of US policy priorities. And in this case, geostrategic goals toward Iraq took on a broader character, as it was assumed that a pro-American, free Iraq would leave Iran isolated, Syria threatened, and the Palestinians more willing to negotiate seriously with Israel. On the one hand, a liberated Iraq was supposed to be a counterweight to states supporting terrorism in the region (Iran, Syria, Libya, Yemen), and on the other hand, in an era of deteriorating U.S.-Saudi Arabia relations in Iraq, the U.S. administration saw the potential of becoming a new ally of the Middle East superpower, with the prospect of moving U.S. military bases to its territory. The White House assumed that the overthrow of Hussein's regime would make it possible to eliminate the sources of terrorism and financing for the activities of radical Palestinian groups (especially Hamas), while the installation of pro-American and pro-Israeli authorities in the Palestinian Authority would make it possible to resolve the Middle East conflict.⁴⁵ The presence of coalition forces in Iraq was to strengthen Israel's position in the region. The decision to go to war with Iraq, made under President George W. Bush, was in line with Israeli interests, which saw Saddam Hussein's regime as a major threat to their security and a major destabilizing factor in the Middle East.⁴⁶

The stabilization and strengthening of security in the region were to be ensured by the transformation of Iraq into a loyal and strong U.S. ally, for which purpose a number of agreements were signed and assistance programs were launched, an example being the previously mentioned U.S.-Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA). U.S. security assistance to Iraq has included building and supporting the development of a modern and professional military capable of defending the country and its borders, as well as enhancing the ability of Iraqi forces to respond to threats (including countering cyberterrorism) and conduct counterterrorism operations.

An important geostrategic objective pursued at various times with different degrees of intensity and by choosing different methods has been to weaken Iran. In the past, U.S. strategy included using Iraq as a counterweight to Iran. The Bush administration did not foresee that in the following years the U.S. faced a new challenge in the form of

⁴⁵ See: K. Czornik, *Irak...*, p. 221 et seq.

⁴⁶ G. Alon, *Sharon to Panel: Iraq Is Our Biggest Danger*, Haaretz, August 13, 2002, www.haaretz.com/1.5024848 (accessed: 09.06.2022).

strengthening Iraq-Iran relations. Since the overthrow of the Hussein regime, Iran has sought systematically and effectively to increase its influence in Iraq, and not only in economic matters,⁴⁷ but also in matters of security. Thus, the U.S. tactic of conflating the governments of these countries proved to be ineffective in the long run.

The 2003 military intervention in Iraq was conducted under the banner of the “war on terror,” the Bush administration sought to convince the international community that the Hussein regime supported and collaborated with terrorists and possessed weapons of mass destruction, posing a direct threat to the U.S.⁴⁸ As it turned out, despite a strenuous search, U.S. forces failed to find elements of weapons of mass destruction on Iraqi territory or even evidence that Hussein’s regime was in possession of such weapons. Moreover, the U.S. war against Iraq has had widespread repercussions including the destabilization of the Middle East, an increase in terrorist attacks in the region and around the world. These events have forced the intensification of U.S. military involvement in Iraq for years to come.

CONCLUSIONS

The first decade of the 21st century was characterized by the intensification of U.S. foreign and security policy towards Iraq, where specific American interests and strategic objectives were pursued. It was assumed that by overthrowing Saddam Hussein’s regime and introducing democracy in Iraq, the Americans would make this country one of the main US allies in the region, which along with Israel would ensure stability, security, and development. At the same time, the effectiveness in the implementation of U.S. interests and strategic objectives in Iraq in both the short and long term did not look optimistic. Although some elements have been implemented, for the most part they have not produced the expected results. Thus:

– the implementation of political objectives, instead of leading to the strengthening of the international position of the U.S., brought about its weakening. Although the U.S. managed to transform Iraq into a more pro-American state, and, *de facto*, expand the

⁴⁷ T. Arango, *Iran Dominates in Iraq After U.S. ‘Handed the Country Over’*, “The New York Times”, July 15, 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/07/15/world/middleeast/iran-iraq-iranian-power.html (accessed: 09.06.2022).

⁴⁸ Address to the Nation on Iraq, March 19, 2003, in: *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George W. Bush*, Book I, United States Government Printing Office, Washington 2003, p. 281–282.

superpower's sphere of influence, and managed to strengthen Israel's political interests by the overthrow of the hostile Hussein regime, it failed to carry out an effective and lasting democratic revolution in the Middle East – in the case of Iraq itself, the democratic system is only on paper, without the implementation of a number of principles that should be followed by a democratic state.

– pursuit of economic objectives can be considered more effective in the short term-the Americans have succeeded in building economic ties with Iraq through cooperation agreements and the provision of economic and development assistance. Additionally, some U.S. companies began to benefit from Iraqi reconstruction and oil production programs as the stabilization mission began. However, providing free U.S. access to oil proved to be ineffective due to, among other things, terrorist attacks on Iraqi refineries and outdated infrastructure, resulting in fewer Iraqi oil exports during the stabilization mission than during Gulf War I (1990–1991).

– implementation of the geostrategic goals brought the most problems and challenges, and although at that time there was not a rise in the number of terrorist attacks in the U.S. itself, which would *de facto* indicate that the goal of ensuring U.S. security had been achieved, at the same time there was an increase in the overall number of terrorist attacks, not only in the Middle East region but more broadly in the world, thus putting U.S. allies at even greater risk. The other geostrategic objectives were also not effectively implemented, bringing successive destabilization, and weakening of security in the region; growth of terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism; and strengthening instead of weakening Iran. The last objective of preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq turned out to be superfluous. Despite an intensive search, U.S. soldiers in Iraq found no evidence of the Hussein regime's possession of such weapons.

It is difficult not to agree with Zbigniew Brzezinski, who described the U.S. war against Iraq as a “historical, strategic and moral failure.” Not only because it was undertaken on the basis of false assumptions, but its implications were far-reaching including undermining the global legitimacy of the United States of America.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Senate Foreign Relations Committee, *Securing America's Interests In Iraq: The Remaining Options: Iraq In The Strategic Context*, Session 2, Full Committee Hearing, February 1st, 2007, www.foreign.senate.gov/hearings/securing-americas-interests-in-iraq-the-remaining-options-iraq-in-the-strategic-context-session-2 (accessed: 09.06.2022). See also: Z. Brzezinski, *A Tale of Two Wars: The Right War in Iraq, and the Wrong One War of Necessity*, “Foreign Affairs” 2009, Vol. 88, No. 3, pp. 148–152.

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