

Greed as a Weapon

Teaching the other Iraq war

By ADAM SANCHEZ

WHEN I ASKED my 9th-grade modern world history classes to write a list of what they knew about the war in Iraq, Liza's response was typical: "I'm ashamed to say this, but I literally know very little to nothing." I had taught about the war for several years, but this was the first time that more than half of my students claimed to know "little to nothing" when we started the unit. Since U.S. troops were pulled out in 2011, news coverage of Iraq has all but disappeared from the mainstream media and, consequently, from the minds of most high school students, including the ones I teach at Madison High School in northeast Portland, Oregon.

The war in Iraq spanned most of my adult life. The largest protests I have attended were against the war in Iraq. The war shaped my political life and changed many in my generation. But for my students, the war was history—history that they had never learned.

Of course, like every war, there is a battle over what version of that history is passed on. My school district's adopted textbook is Holt McDougal's *Modern World History*. As Bill Bigelow pointed out in a Zinn Education Project column, the section on the U.S. war in Iraq "might as well have been written by Pentagon propagandists."

Modern World History presents the Iraq invasion as reasonable and inevitable, repeats the Bush administration's lies about weapons of mass destruction and 9/11, and ignores the antiwar movement and all Iraqi voices. The section's only "critical writing" activity asks students to write a victory speech for then-President George W. Bush.

Perhaps the most misleading statement made in *Modern World History* is this one: "After less than four weeks of fighting, the coalition had won the war. Despite the coalition victory, much work remained in Iraq. With the help of U.S. officials, Iraqis began rebuilding their nation."

It is true that U.S. taxpayers were on the hook for billions of dollars handed over to corporations in the name of "rebuilding" Iraq, but the promised reconstruction never materialized. The U.S. invasion, following 13 years of sanctions and military blockade, devastated the infrastructure of what had been one of the most techno-

logically advanced countries in the Middle East. As Banen Al-Sheemary, a young Iraqi American activist, wrote about her 2012 trip to Iraq: "Both the Iraqi and American governments promised many things for the people, like building a



Erik Ruin

sewage system. They could not even fulfill this basic necessity. Inadequate water resources have caused massive death and disease in several cities. The two-hour electricity limit halts any work that needs to be done for the day.”

One essential flaw in Holt McDougal’s description of the Iraq war—and a familiar theme in the portrayal of any war—is that it is depicted as a purely military affair. When we teach about wars, even from a critical standpoint, too often we focus only on the military aspects. But whether it’s Vietnam, Afghanistan, or Iraq, there is always an economic dimension. And in many cases, the war itself is inexplicable without examining these economic dynamics.

Iraq is the perfect example: The violence perpetrated by the United States was not just from guns and bombs, but also from the neoliberal economic policies that allowed international corporations to feast on Iraq’s economy. And it was the resistance of the Iraqi people to the U.S. attempts to impose this economic and social violence that helps explain why troops remained in the country for eight years after the “the coalition had won the war.”

“Baghdad Year Zero”

Inspired by Naomi Klein’s groundbreaking article for *Harper’s Magazine*, “Baghdad Year Zero,” I wrote a role play that examines the economic dimensions of the Iraq war. The role play takes place in 2004, shortly after Bush declared “mission accomplished” in Iraq. This was a key moment in the history of the war, as Klein explained, when Iraq’s fate was decided through a series of controversial orders put in place by Paul Bremer, head of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). The CPA was established as a transitional government following the invasion of Iraq, and the hundreds of laws it enacted served as the foundation for the country’s new political economy.

Before jumping into the role play, students scrutinized key moments in U.S.-Iraqi history using Portland teacher Hyung Nam’s

“The United States and Iraq: Choices and Predictions” lesson plan. Students examined the lead-up to the war by critically reading Bush’s State of the Union speech, in which he made his case for the invasion (see Resources for both lessons). Students also read several descriptions of the experiences of Iraq war protestors and watched the trailer for *We Are Many*, a documentary about Feb. 15, 2003, when more than 15 million people marched against the war in Iraq. According to the *Guinness Book of World Records*, this was the largest protest in human history. The next time I teach this unit, I plan to include sections from Riverbend’s *Baghdad Burning: Girl Blog from Iraq* to give students some sense of the specific impact of the war on women’s lives.

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Iraqi Reconstruction Conference Role Play

I started the role play by telling students: “Despite the enormous antiwar protests, the U.S. military invaded Iraq on March 20, 2003. After four weeks of fighting, Saddam Hussein fled the country. The United States set up a new government called the Coalition Provisional Authority, led by a man named Paul Bremer. If you want to know why billions of our tax dollars have been spent in Iraq and why U.S. troops remained in Iraq for nearly a decade after the initial invasion, this is probably the most important moment in the history of the war to understand.”

I told students that we would look at this moment through the eyes of five different social groups: Iraqi Businessmen, Iraqi Farmers, Iraqi Trade Unionists, U.S. Corporate Executives, and the U.S. Government. After dividing students into these groups, I explained to them that they were invited to the Iraqi Reconstruction Conference, where they would be presenting to Paul Bremer (me) their vision for how to rebuild Iraq.

I distributed roles to the groups and encouraged them to highlight or underline important sections as they read. When they finished reading, I asked students to write brief interior



Lloyd Francis

Brick workers in Iraq, December 2001.

monologues—their inner thoughts—on their hopes and fears for the future of Iraq. This helped them to better connect with their roles and clarify their groups’ concerns.

After reading about CPA Order 81, which prevented Iraqi farmers from saving seeds and essentially forced them to buy genetically modified varieties from giant agricultural corporations like Monsanto, Xiao wrote from the perspective of an Iraqi farmer:

Does the United States think we don't know how to farm? My parents and grandparents farmed here. We Iraqi farmers have been here for more than 10,000 years. We developed the rich seed variety for almost every strain of wheat used in the world today. Now we can't even grow our seeds. Instead, we have to buy them from major corporations or we could be sued! Corporations are immune to our laws and can do whatever they want, while we Iraqi people are stuck with the consequences. We want justice!

As they shared their interior monologues, students heard about the other social groups for

the first time. I asked them to listen carefully and identify which ones were potential allies.

Then I read a speech I wrote as Paul Bremer, outlining several of the key CPA orders and, as much as possible, using Bremer’s actual language from various speeches. Students were introduced to a few of the orders in their roles, but now they were able to see the whole U.S. plan. In the name of “de-Baathification,” CPA Orders 1 and 2 fired 500,000 state workers, many of them soldiers, but also doctors, nurses, teachers, and engineers. CPA Order 17 gave foreign corporations and contractors full immunity from Iraqi laws. To ensure the implementation of these new laws, Orders 57 and 77 placed U.S.-appointed auditors and inspectors general—with five-year terms and authority over contracts, programs, employees, and regulations—in every government ministry of Iraq.

But the centerpiece of the U.S. economic strategy was Order 39: (1) Privatization of Iraq’s 200 state-owned enterprises, including the oil industry, responsible for more than 90 percent of the Iraqi economy and the largest oil reserves in the world; (2) Up to 100 percent foreign ownership of Iraqi businesses; (3) “National

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treatment" of foreign firms; (4) Unrestricted, tax-free remittance of all profits and other funds; and (5) 40-year ownership licenses.

"Thus," as Antonia Juhasz, project director at the International Forum on Globalization in San Francisco, has pointed out, "[Order 39] allows the U.S. corporations operating in Iraq to own every business, do all of the work, and send all of their money home. Nothing needs to be reinvested locally to service the Iraqi economy, no Iraqi need be hired, no public services need be guaranteed, and workers' rights can easily be ignored." Or, as my student Naima succinctly put it after learning about the orders, "The U.S. wants to control Iraq."

To help the students digest all the various orders, I asked them to discuss a series of questions in their groups:

Describe what you see as the purpose(s) of the U.S.-led reconstruction in Iraq:

1. Do you support the CPA orders? Why or why not? If not, how do you propose to deal with the reconstruction of Iraq?
2. What do you think are the reasons these orders are being put in place? What do they say about the role of the United States in Iraq?
3. Are there particular orders that you really like or dislike? How do you lose or benefit from these orders?
4. If you don't get your way, what actions would you take to influence the CPA?

After students finished discussing the questions, I asked them to use their answers and their interior monologues to craft a presentation for the Iraqi Reconstruction Conference.

During the conference, each group made their case for why the orders should or should not be put in place. After each presentation, the other groups had a chance to ask them questions. The various Iraqi social groups spoke against the CPA orders. Speaking for the Iraqi businessmen, Britany criticized the United States from a pro-business position: "All we see is the United States coming in and trying to steal our country from under our feet. The orders that are set to 'reshape' our economy are really just a plot to give more money to America. . . . International investment is good, but not when our country and our businesses aren't making a profit." Laura, representing an Iraqi farmer, attacked both the U.S. government and the large agricultural corporations: "Large companies like Monsanto and Cargill are trying to make us buy their GMO seeds, while making it illegal for us to save our seeds for next year. . . . They claim they are here to help hungry Iraqis, but we would be doing fine if the U.S. hadn't bombed our national seed bank in Abu Ghraib."

Speaking for the Iraqi trade unionists, Raúl blasted the U.S. government and threatened a strike:

The laws that are being considered are primed to erase Iraqi workers from our own economy. . . . Order 39 will give control of Iraq's economy to U.S. business owners and CEOs—CEOs who will bring in a cheaper labor force to replace Iraqi workers such as myself. And Orders 57 and 77 make a clear and obvious statement: The United States is in control of Iraq. . . . This shows blatant disregard for Iraqi civilians. These laws inhibit Iraqi workers from doing our job, which is necessary for reconstruction. Instead of replacing Iraq workers, we would rather these laws be shredded and the United States leave. The United States is only a hindrance to Iraq. Workers have an advantage that can't be ignored. How will your businesses run if you have no Iraqi workers to bring you oil? So a warning to the United States: Back off and leave, or face the consequences.

Channeling then-President Bush, Mia defended the U.S. government:

We have come to discuss the laws we will be enforcing in order to progress and convert Iraq to democracy, distributing the freedom [the Iraqi people] deserve after being oppressed for decades under the tyrant king, Saddam Hussein. The United States will continue to have a fervent dedication to our Iraqi brothers and sisters until we can successfully reconstruct their constricting government. Putting these orders in place will help further such endeavors. It will bring much needed foreign companies into Iraq, providing more jobs and helping the economy expand. Lowering Iraq's corporate and individual tax rate will help some families rise out of poverty and help Iraqi businessmen to flourish.

But Raúl was not going to let the U.S. government off so easily. He asked, “So is having complete control over a country really freedom?”

David replied, “We’re not controlling you, we’re trying to save you.”

“What are you saving us from?” asked Raúl.

“Saddam Hussein,” answered Alan.

“But didn’t the U.S. government support Saddam Hussein and give him weapons to fight Iran before you decided he was your enemy?”

“No comment,” said David.

Xiao fired another question: “You say that we need your help to rebuild our country, but isn’t it more accurate to say you need our oil?”

As the U.S. government group began to flounder under this pressure, I decided to step in as Paul Bremer: “All we want is to help transition Iraq from this horrible socialist dictatorship to a democracy. Along the way, you’re going to need some help from people who have experience in democracy and freedom, and that is why we’re here.”

But Raúl wouldn’t budge. “So how many years do you think it would take to transition a country out of war into a normal democracy? In Order 39 you give foreign corporations 40-year

ownership licenses over Iraqi businesses. Is that because you think it will take 40 years to make that transition?”

As I struggled to answer, Robert blurted out, “Ooooooh, he just schooled you!”

When we finished the role play, I asked students to step out of their roles to discuss what they had learned. I asked them what they thought of Bremer’s orders and why they thought they were important to the United States.

“The United States took down Saddam’s regime and replaced it with their own.”

“The United States got complete control of Iraq and their oil. They are rebuilding Iraq for the United States and not for the people of Iraq.”

“How can Iraq have freedom when another country has them in their grip?”

“Maybe the United States thought it was doing a favor for Iraq and thought these orders would actually help.”

“If I lived in Iraq as a worker, farmer, or businessman, I would disagree with most of these laws.”

“We should have let the people of Iraq have a say and rebuild their own country the way they want to.”

I asked students why they thought the laws were put into effect even though a majority of the groups in Iraq opposed them. Some pointed to the power of the U.S. military. As Liza said, “The United States was just bigger and badder with their weapons and money.”

But others thought that a lack of unity amongst the Iraqi social groups might have played a role. “I think if they all opposed the U.S. rules and worked

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together to reject Bremer’s proposal they could have benefited,” Alan said.

“Greed Is Good”

After our debrief discussion, we read an excerpt from Klein’s “Baghdad Year Zero” to reinforce what the students had learned. Klein argues that the war’s ideological architects believe that “greed is good.” She continues:

Not good just for them and their friends but good for humanity, and certainly good for Iraqis. Greed creates profit, which creates growth, which creates jobs and products and services and everything else anyone could possibly need or want. The role of good government, then, is to create the best conditions for corporations to pursue their bottomless greed, so that they in turn can meet the needs of the society. The problem is that governments rarely get the chance to prove their sacred theory right: Even George Bush’s Republicans are, in their own minds, constantly sabotaged by meddling Democrats, unions, and environmentalists.

Iraq was going to change all that. In one place on Earth, the theory would finally be put into practice in its most perfect form. A country of 25 million would not be rebuilt as it was before the war; it would be erased, disappeared. In its place would be a showroom for free market economics, a “utopia” such as the world had never seen.

In their written responses to Klein, students spoke against the idea that greed is good. Michael summed up the feelings of many of the students: “Greed is only good for those who benefit from it.” Marcela elaborated on this theme, condemning all wars as imperialist: “Greed is the only rule most ‘ideological architects’ of war play by.”

As we wrapped up the role play, I felt confident that students left the lesson with a deeper understanding of the war’s economic objectives. Throughout their lives, they will continue to witness and experience this economic war, waged both in Iraq and here in the United States, in different forms. As Marcela commented during our debrief discussion, “Lowering the tax rate for wealthy individuals and CEOs in Iraq is an idea that the United States is intimately familiar with.



www.strongerunions.org

IndustriALL Global Union organizing workers in Iraq after the 2003 U.S. invasion.

The wealthiest 1 percent of our country pays a ridiculously small amount of taxes compared to their income.” As students “connect the dots” of the origins of the modern world, one of the most important “dots” is the effort of global elites to incorporate every corner of the world into a global capitalist economic system that benefits the 1 percent at our expense. Whether we are talking about climate change or the war in Iraq, the modern world is inexplicable without this larger framework.

“How can Iraq have freedom when another country has them in their grip?”

Today, the people of Iraq continue to struggle with the horrendous political, social, and economic consequences of the U.S. war against their country. If our students only learn the textbook’s distorted history of war, they will be unequipped to critically inspect current and future justifications for militarism and imperialism. As historian Howard Zinn pointed out, it was precisely this “absence of a historical perspective” that fooled so many people into supporting the war in Iraq. On the war’s third anniversary, he wrote, “If we don’t know history, then we are ready meat for carnivorous politicians and the intellectuals and journalists who supply the carving knives.”

Resources

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Artist **Erik Ruin**’s work can be viewed at erikruin.com.



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Iraqi Trade Unionists

YOU ARE MEMBERS OF IRAQI TRADE UNIONS. You didn't support Saddam Hussein when he was in power, but now that he has been overthrown, you want the U.S. to leave. You do not believe the U.S. has brought freedom for Iraqi workers. The new laws that are being proposed by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) prove that the only freedom the United States wants to bring to Iraq is the freedom for U.S. corporations to make big profits.

The unemployment rate in Iraqi cities is 50%, but instead of hiring Iraqis, the new CPA laws allow U.S. contractors to bring in workers from all over Asia who will work for almost nothing. U.S. contractors hire cheap labor from Kuwaiti subcontractors who trick workers into coming to Iraq. In one case, a subcontractor promised workers from Nepal jobs at a fancy hotel in Jordan, but instead they were brought to work in Iraq, where they took jobs that should be going to Iraqis. This is typical of the behavior of the huge U.S. companies that get all the rebuilding contracts in Iraq. They hate unions and try to fight them everywhere they operate. This is Bush's "freedom": freedom for his rich pals to get richer.

In 1987, Saddam Hussein classified everyone who worked in large state enterprises as "civil servants." He made it a crime for all so-called civil servants to organize unions and negotiate for better conditions and wages. This applied to 70% of all workers in Iraq. When the United States invaded Iraq it tore down statues and portraits of Hussein and is now in the process of abolishing several of his laws, but they plan to keep Hussein's anti-union labor laws. This means that even if you're lucky enough to have a job in Iraq, in most cases you don't have a legal right to organize, and your wages are kept very low.

The Americans want to privatize Iraq's 200 state-owned businesses and sell them off to the highest bidder. The new laws make it legal for foreigners to own 100% of any business in Iraq and take all of their profits out of the country. Nothing needs to be reinvested locally to help the Iraqi economy, no Iraqi need be hired, no public services need be guaranteed and corporations can take out their investments at any time.

At the same time, the U.S. is planning to pass a regulation keeping workers' wages at the same low rate as under Saddam Hussein (about \$60 a month for most workers). Hussein at least gave workers health coverage, bonuses, profit sharing, and food subsidies. The United States plans to give workers no overtime pay and no benefits. Under Saddam Hussein, a workday was 7 hours, under the Americans a day shift is 11 hours and a night shift is 13.

What's even worse is that the new laws make it impossible for Iraqis to ever get justice. CPA Order 17 gives foreign contractors full immunity from Iraqi laws. Even if they, say, kill someone or cause an environmental disaster, we have to take them to court in the United States!

Where is the freedom in Iraq? There is more poverty than ever before. Children sleep on sidewalks, raw sewage pours into the Tigris River. The United States must leave Iraq. It has brought only poverty, violence, misery, and injustice. From the very first days of the occupation, the United States showed its true colors: it protected the oil fields and allowed the museums, universities, and other government ministries to be looted. It cares only for its own power and for the rich corporations it represents. It cares nothing for ordinary Iraqis.

Iraqi Farmers

YOU ARE AN IRAQI FARMER. Your parents and grandparents were also farmers and you want to continue their important tradition. Iraq is part of Mesopotamia, the cradle of civilization, where the fertile valley between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers created ideal conditions for crop cultivation. Iraqi farmers have existed for more than 10,000 years and have developed the rich seed variety for almost every strain of wheat used in the world today. They did this through saving a share of the seeds and replanting, developing new naturally resistant hybrid varieties.

For years, Iraqis held samples of such precious natural seeds in a national seed bank, located in the city of Abu Ghraib, but following the U.S. occupation and various bombing campaigns, the historic and invaluable seed bank in Abu Ghraib was destroyed.

If the Americans truly wanted to re-establish Iraqi agriculture for the benefit of the Iraqi people they would seek out the knowledge of Iraqi farmers. The United States, however, has decided that, despite 10,000 years of practice, Iraqis don't know what kind of wheat works best in their own conditions, and would be better off with some new, imported U.S. varieties. Under the guise of helping get Iraq back on its feet, the United States is trying to re-engineer the country's traditional farming systems into a U.S.-style corporate agribusiness.

The key concern you have with the new Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) Orders is a chapter in Order 81 on "Plant Variety Protection" (PVP). This deals not with the protection of biodiversity, but with the protection of large seed corporations' ability to profit. To qualify for "protection," seeds have to meet the following criteria: They must be "new, distinct, uniform, and stable." It is impossible for the seeds developed by the

people of Iraq to meet these criteria. Their seeds are not "new" as they are the product of centuries of development. Nor are they "distinct." The free exchange of seeds practiced for centuries ensures that characteristics are spread and shared across the different seed varieties in Iraq. And they are the opposite of "uniform" and "stable" by the very nature of their biodiversity. They cross-pollinate with other nearby seeds, ensuring they are always changing and always adapting.

Order 81 would give large foreign corporations that hold certain genetically modified (GM) seed patents absolute rights over use of their seeds in Iraqi agriculture. Iraqi farmers would no longer be able to save their seeds because Order 81 prohibits reusing seeds that show similar characteristics to the PVP "protected" varieties. In other words, if a corporation develops a seed that is resistant to a particular Iraqi pest, and somewhere in Iraq a farmer is growing another variety that does the same thing, it's now illegal for that farmer to save that seed. Instead, they would have to buy it from a large seed corporation.

Iraqi farmers would become servants, not of Saddam Hussein, but of huge U.S. agricultural corporations like Monsanto, Cargill, and Dow.

What's even more outrageous is that CPA Order 17 gives foreign corporations and contractors full immunity from Iraqi laws. So while you have to buy their products, they don't have to follow any of your laws. For example, even if they kill someone or cause an environmental disaster, any charges against them must be brought to U.S. courts! With full immunity from Iraqi laws, corporations would have the ability to do anything they want, while your people are stuck with the consequences.

Iraqi Businessmen

YOU ARE IRAQI BUSINESSMEN. You are deeply concerned that in reconstructing the Iraqi economy the United States did not consult you. After more than 40 years in a state-run economy, you and other Iraqi entrepreneurs have finally won the freedom to start a business, but now face a new threat: competition, especially from wealthy foreigners who now have almost complete access to the Iraqi market.

Most Iraqi investors aren't millionaires. You worry whether you're going to stay in business or whether someone from outside the country is going to arrive and put you out. Your anxiety stems from CPA Order No. 39 that turns Iraq's state-run system into the most open economy in the Arab world. This order allows 100 percent foreign ownership of Iraqi businesses. It allows, for instance, foreign banks to open branches and buy Iraqi banks. You think foreign investors should be forced to enter a partnership with an Iraq-based firm. After all, this is Iraq. Foreign corporations don't care about developing Iraq like you do, and under the new law they can take all of their profits out of the country. Nothing needs to be reinvested locally to service the Iraqi economy and no Iraqi need be hired.

On the other hand, there are some laws being proposed that you like. In particular, CPA Order No. 37, which sets the top personal income and corporate tax rates at only 15 percent. Under Saddam Hussein, your income and your businesses were taxed heavily—between 40 and 45 percent—which made it difficult for your company to survive. As Michael Fleisher, CPA's head of private sector development, said, "The entire Republican Party in the United States would like to have the new Iraq tax law."

But at the same time you are also furious that rather than consulting your expertise, the CPA

put Jay Hallen, a 24-year-old Yale graduate with no finance background, in charge of revamping Baghdad's stock exchange.

This blatant disregard for Iraqi knowledge and the increasing difficulties of doing business in your home country have forced some of you to consider funding the resistance to the occupation.

If foreign companies are able to buy up factories for very little, take all their profits out of the country, and flood the market with cheap foreign goods, how are you supposed to survive? Maybe violence is your only competitive edge? It is simple business logic: The more problems there are in Iraq, the harder it is for outsiders to get involved. If these new laws pass, this might be the only option the U.S. occupation has left you.

Why is the CPA giving contracts to inefficient U.S. corporations that have little interest in actually rebuilding Iraq? Although more than \$15 billion U.S. taxpayer dollars have been paid out to reconstruct Iraq, 20 percent of the health projects remain incomplete, as do nearly 50 percent of the transportation and communication projects. Even among the projects considered "complete" by these foreign companies, many are poorly built and badly run. In fact, the U.S. Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction found that when Iraqi companies receive contracts, their work is faster, less expensive, and less likely to be attacked by insurgents. There are literally hundreds of both private and public Iraqi companies—and millions of Iraqi workers—ready, able, and willing to do this work. All they need is money and opportunity.

The answer to Iraq's reconstruction nightmare is simple: Turn the contracts over to Iraqi companies and Iraqi workers. Or at the very least, force international corporations to partner with local businesses to rebuild Iraq.

U.S. Corporate Executives

YOU ARE AN EXECUTIVE with a large and prosperous U.S. corporation. Although the war in Iraq has been devastating for some, it has been good for business. More than 150 U.S. companies have received contracts worth up to \$48.7 billion for work in postwar Afghanistan and Iraq.

Here are a few examples of corporations that have benefited from the war:

1. **Halliburton/KBR:** Halliburton's KBR Inc. division billed government agencies for \$17.2 billion in Iraq war-related projects from 2003 to 2006. Halliburton was hired to construct and maintain military bases, repair oil fields, and work on various infrastructure rebuilding projects across Iraq. This is just the latest in a long string of military/KBR wartime partnerships.
2. **DynCorp:** DynCorp received \$1.44 billion from the government to train new Iraqi police forces.
3. **Bechtel:** The San Francisco-based construction and engineering giant received one of the largest no-bid contracts—worth \$2.4 billion—to help coordinate and rebuild a large part of Iraq's infrastructure.
4. **Monsanto:** As a large agribusiness corporation and one of the biggest producers of “terminator” seeds—i.e., seeds that do not give birth to more plants and can only be used once—Monsanto directly profits from CPA Order 81. Order 81 prohibits Iraqi farmers from reusing seeds that have similar qualities to patented seeds like Monsanto's genetically modified seeds. This will force some Iraqi farmers to buy seeds from Monsanto.
5. **Chevron, ExxonMobil, and Other Oil Companies:** CPA Order 39 lays out the framework for privatizing and selling off Iraq's oil.

Iraq has the world's fifth largest oil reserves, which up until now have been owned and operated by the Iraqi government. Because only 20 out of Iraq's 80 known oil fields have already been developed, there are billions of dollars that could be made if Iraq's oil were not under government control.

Although many people think that you are coldhearted for profiting off of war, you are simply trying to help rebuild Iraq's broken economy. Iraq is still a very dangerous place to do business, so you need to be reassured that your investments will be safe before helping to reconstruct the country. A key reason your companies have been able to profit from the war is the orders put in place by the Coalition Provisional Authority.

These orders grant your companies immunity from Iraq's laws. So any charges must be brought to U.S. courts. This limits the amount of damages you might have to pay for getting the job done in a war zone. You also benefit from the low corporate tax rates and the orders that allow you to take all your profits back to the United States without reinvesting them in Iraq. Previously, under Saddam Hussein the Iraqi government had so many restrictions that you couldn't invest freely.

All this may sound harsh, but these new laws are about getting inefficient state enterprises into private hands in order to rebuild Iraq's economy. Iraq's economic system was so contaminated that it needed to be wiped out and rebuilt from scratch. The combined GDP (the total of a country's goods and services) of all Arab countries is smaller than that of Spain. Their peoples have less access to the Internet than the people of sub-Saharan Africa. Across the globe, free markets and trade have helped defeat poverty, and taught people the habits of liberty. It is time we brought these habits to Iraq.

U.S. Government

YOU ARE A U.S. GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL. Major combat operations in Iraq have ended and the United States has won. Thanks to the might of the U.S. army, a tyrant has fallen and Iraq is free. The war in Iraq has shown that men and women in every culture need liberty like they need food and water and air.

Now the U.S. government must secure and reconstruct Iraq. Though official combat operations have ended, there is still difficult work to do. While the U.S. military is bringing order to parts of Iraq that remain dangerous, the Coalition Provisional Authority, headed by L. Paul Bremer, is drafting laws that will set the foundation for Iraq's new political and economic system.

You want to ensure that Iraq's new political freedom is accompanied by economic freedom. There is a unique opportunity to push through rapid changes that will transform Iraq's economy.

Put simply, Saddam Hussein's regime destroyed the Iraqi economy. Even before the war more than 50 percent of Iraqis were unemployed. Still today over 60 percent depend on government food rations. Between militarization, misguided central planning and outright theft, for decades Iraq has experienced economic devastation.

In modern economies, companies supply what consumers want. In Iraq, state owned enterprises were forced to produce what central planners demanded. Without the discipline of the market, state-owned enterprises not only failed to create value, they destroyed it. Getting inefficient state enterprises into private hands is essential for Iraq's economic recovery.

The experience of the United States shows us that when companies are free to pursue profits without restriction, the economy thrives. Competition creates economic growth, which creates

jobs and products and services and everything else anyone could possibly need or want. Therefore, the role of good government is to create the conditions for corporations to pursue profits so that they in turn can meet the needs of the society. The U.S. government has a chance to help turn Iraq from a brutal socialist dictatorship into a free-market utopia, where capitalism can bring prosperity to all.

Of course in the short term, the people of Iraq might have to endure some pain: assets, previously owned by the state, will have to be given up to create new opportunities for growth and investment. People will have to be fired from the state-run businesses so they can be free to work in the private sector. And local businesses and family farms might not be able to compete with larger foreign companies. But this would be a small price to pay for the economic boom that will explode once the proper conditions are in place.

Some claim that these laws are being put in place to allow U.S. companies to profit from Iraqi reconstruction, but this couldn't be further from the truth. Resources like oil fields need capital to make use of the oil; selling to wealthy foreigners will not only bring needed investment into Iraq, but putting property into the hands of those who can afford to develop it will create jobs for those who can't.

Furthermore, we sacrificed our troops and our money to depose Saddam, so we have the right to ensure that the country we rebuild is rebuilt along the principles of free enterprise— which allows Iraq to join the civilized world. Only the United States can help bring about an Iraq that is both free and economically prosperous, and only then will we truly improve the lives of the Iraqi people.

L. Paul Bremer's Statement on Reshaping Iraq's Economy

NOW THAT COMBAT OPERATIONS IN IRAQ are over, a time of historic opportunity has arrived. A dictator in Iraq has been removed from power. Reformers in the Middle East are gaining influence, and the momentum of freedom is growing. We have reached a moment of tremendous promise, and the United States must seize this moment to help Iraq transition from a brutal socialist dictatorship to a democratic government with an open market economy.

As head of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), I have been empowered to craft laws that will establish the new basis for Iraq's economy. Here are a few examples of the new laws I will put in place:

- CPA Orders No. 1 and No. 2 begin the process of de-Baathification in Iraq. The Baath Party had been one of the primary instruments of Saddam's control and tyranny over the Iraqi people for decades. With these initial orders the Baath Party will be outlawed and we will rid the state of Saddam loyalists. We will do this by firing 500,000 state workers: soldiers, doctors, nurses, teachers, and engineers who were loyal to Saddam.
- CPA Order No. 17 grants foreign contractors, including private security firms, full immunity from Iraq's laws. Rather, any charges against them should be brought to U.S. courts. This will help attract contractors to Iraq that would otherwise feel reluctant because they might be punished under Iraqi law. These contractors will bring with them jobs, and help Iraq's economy thrive.
- CPA Order 37 lowers Iraq's corporate and individual tax rate from roughly 40 percent to a flat 15 percent. This will open Iraq for business and attract foreign investors. The lower individual tax rate will allow Iraqi entrepreneurs to flourish.
- CPA Order No. 39 will help promote an international investment in Iraq's new free market economy by allowing for: (1) privatization of Iraq's 200 state-owned enterprises; (2) 100 percent foreign ownership of Iraqi businesses; (3) 40-year ownership licenses; (4) no preferences in ownership for local over foreign businesses; and (5) unrestricted, tax-free remittance (transfer) of all profits and other funds in and out of the country. Allowing the free market to govern these previously state-owned companies will help quickly reconstruct Iraq by attracting U.S. contractors.
- Orders No. 57 and No. 77 ensure the implementation of the orders by placing U.S.-appointed auditors and inspectors in every government ministry, with five-year terms and with authority over contracts, programs, employees, and regulations. This is the only way U.S. and international corporations can ensure their investments are safe.
- Order 81 opens the way for patenting (ownership) of plant forms, and facilitates the introduction of genetically modified crops or organisms (GMOs) to Iraq by prohibiting Iraqi farmers from reusing seeds from patented plant varieties.

Iraq Reconstruction Meeting Questions

Be prepared to explain the following in your presentation at the Iraq Reconstruction meeting.

1. In one or two sentences, describe what you see as the purpose(s) of reconstruction in Iraq.
2. Do you support the Coalition Provisional Authority's Orders? Why or why not? If you don't support them, how do you propose to deal with the reconstruction of Iraq?
3. What do you think are the reasons these orders are being put in place? What do they say about the role of the United States in Iraq?
4. Is there a particular order that you especially like? Are there ones you especially dislike? How do you either lose or benefit from this order?
5. If you don't get your way, what actions would you take to influence the Coalition Provisional Authority? Why do you think these would be effective?

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This lesson was previously published in [Rethinking Schools magazine](#).

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As a teacher and researcher, I rely on *Rethinking Schools* for information, insight, and inspiration. — Sonia Nieto, Professor Emerita, University of Massachusetts Amherst

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