

Pearson Edexcel GCE

Global Development

Advanced Subsidiary

Unit 2: Global Development Challenges

ADVANCE INFORMATION

June 2015

Paper Reference

6GL02/01

Information

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The issue: Conflict has had negative impacts on economic, social, political and environmental aspects of development



(Source: © United Nations Publications)

Figure 1

The Millennium Development Goals

At the Millennium Summit in September 2000 the largest gathering of world leaders in history adopted the UN Millennium Declaration, committing their nations to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty and setting out a series of targets, with a deadline of 2015, that have become known as the Millennium Development Goals.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are the world's first quantified targets for addressing extreme poverty in its many forms – income poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter, and exclusion – while promoting gender equality, education, and environmental sustainability.

Each country was set specific targets. Progress in reaching these targets has been variable. There have been successes in many global regions but a very disappointing set of results for Sub-Saharan Africa and, significantly, war affected countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan and Sudan.

	Arab region as a whole	Iraq
Living on less than \$1.25 a day	7.4%	14.2%
Human Development Index	0.65	0.64
GDP (per capita PPP in US\$)	8104	4272
Life Expectancy	71	69.6
Average years of schooling	6	5.6
Labour Force Participation Rate	74.1	65.5

Figure 2

**Development data for Iraq compared with the Arab region
as a whole in 2013**

The Arab region consists of 22 countries in Northern Africa, the Middle East, including Iraq, and the Arabian Peninsula stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean. The region has a population of about 350 million people; more than 50% are under the age of 25.

Socially, the Arab region is facing a period of transition. The Arab Spring brought to the surface a growing tension between authoritarian regimes and their citizens. Frequently, corrupt social, political and administrative systems have resulted in the neglect of large parts of the population, especially the poor and women. These nations face the challenge of forming new, accountable governments that reflect popular hopes and aspirations.

Gender inequality across the region is prevalent. Maternal mortality rates are high when compared to other regions with similar incomes. Statistics show that only 25% of Arab women participate in the labour force, half the average for developing nations. Because of the male-centric culture in many Arab societies, many women experience limited roles outside the home.

Poverty frequently reflects the coming together of social, economic and political exclusion, which deprives the poor of a voice. Many of the poor belong to the 50% of the population who are rural. Agriculture, the primary occupation in rural settings, accounts for only 15% of the Arab GDP. High unemployment rates prevail.

Conflicts have had a significant impact across the region, not least in Iraq, once one of the richest countries in the region but now 131st on the Human Development Index rankings and, some have argued, women have borne the brunt of this conflict.

Millennium Development Goals		Data for Iraq (1990)	Millennium Development Goals for Iraq (for 2015)	Data for Iraq (2013)
Goal 1	Proportion of population below \$2.5 (PPP) a day	28%	14%	11.3%
Goal 2	Net enrolment ratio in primary education	91%	100%	89.1%
Goal 3	Women in national parliament	13%	50%	27%
Goal 4	Infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births)	50	17	31.9
Goal 5	Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel	50%	100%	90.9%
Goal 6	Proportion of population aged 15–24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS	No data	100%	91.5%
Goal 7	Proportion of population using an improved drinking water source	81%	91%	86.8%
Goal 8	Personal computer ownership	4%	10%	17.2%

Figure 3

Iraq's progress in meeting its Millennium Development Goals

The issue: Iraq has been damaged by the war of 2003 and its development has been affected

The Iraq war of 2003 was controversial before it began, controversial on the ground as American and British combat troops took on a regime accused of having 'weapons of mass destruction', and has remained controversial ever since. History books will suggest that it lasted from 2003 until 2011 when United States troops withdrew, but a broader view would probably give it an earlier starting date when in 1990 strict trade sanctions were imposed on the country and suggest that, in one form or another, it is still continuing. One of the main targets of the allied invasion was Iraq's President, Saddam Hussein, who after the end of hostilities was executed for war crimes. Ironically he was, earlier in his period in office, a close ally of the two main countries engaged in the military operation, especially during the Iran-Iraq war when the UK and USA provided him with both arms and military advice.

Whatever the motives for the Iraq war, and many have raised oil as a significant issue given Iraq's status as a major supplier, the view of most people is that the outcome of the war has been largely negative, especially for women. Economic growth might return but the war was also supposed to bring peace to the country, democracy to its people and freedom to the oppressed, of whom the majority were women.

So, where is Iraq and where are Iraqi women today, now that the war is officially ended? Not in a good state is a fair summary. The international community is largely ignoring a country resting on an unstable foundation. Iraq was in a civil war before the war, with Sunni and Shia Muslims in significant clashes. The United States and coalition forces took sides in the civil war to stop it, but the conflict only increased refugees and didn't resolve Iraq's internal conflicts, only postponing them. Roughly 1.5 million were internally displaced during the fighting, and many remain displaced today. According to Refugees International, there are as many as 2.8 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) within Iraq today. With foreign troops withdrawn from Iraq, long-simmering conflicts and the civil war's fallout are rearing their heads. And with the Syrian civil war next door, the risk of the fighting spilling over could reignite Iraq's own civil war. Already, over 115,000 Syrian refugees have registered with the United Nations in Iraq. Meanwhile, reconstruction efforts in Iraq remain inconsistent. Projects are abandoned halfway to completion. With the focus on the troubles of the global economy or current conflicts such as Syria, the world has forgotten Iraq. Meanwhile 26% of Iraqi women are illiterate, compared with 11% of Iraqi men. Girls are less likely than male students to continue their education beyond the primary level, and their enrolment numbers drop sharply after that. The new constitution repealed existing laws and in concordance with Islamic sharia law and other religious codes in Iraq re-established 'traditional values'. In other words, – it made women vulnerable to all forms of inequality and social discrimination and makes them second class citizens, lesser human beings.

Source A: Why do they hate us? A history of US mistakes

Even the word *disaster* fails to really describe what an utter failure the Iraq war was from the U.S. standpoint and the subsequent despair it has caused for the citizens of Iraq, which continues today. Of course, this is excluding the oil industry and all their shareholders, who profited immensely from the invasion.



Figure 4

One view of the reason for the invasion of Iraq

The biggest issues:

According to the UN, corruption in Iraq's government is on the rise, with the average civil servant paying more than 4 bribes per year.

Women are less free now than they were during Saddam's reign.

Sectarian violence is still raging, with May of 2013 topping the list as the deadliest month since 2006. Over 1,000 people were killed and the rule of law is very limited.

Iraq's infrastructure is a shambles, with power outages still the norm, no new schools, few modern homes and a water supply that has been decimated since the war.

Much of the environment is badly damaged by dioxins and depleted uranium, just two of the worst contaminants in soils and the water supply, with no government plan to clean it up.

Furthermore, the \$60 billion in American taxpayer funds that went towards reconstruction was more or less a complete waste, according to the U.S. Special Inspector General for Iraq.

U.S. influence in Iraq is virtually non-existent. It is Iran that is now calling the shots.

China, our greatest diplomatic opposition, now owns most of the oil coming out of Iraq, and is making moves on the oil fields themselves.

Finally, gas and commodities in the U.S. still cost more than ever, terrorism has increased, and it has cost U.S. citizens \$700 billion.

(Source adapted from: <http://news.rapgenius.com/Walter-crunkite-why-do-they-hate-us-a-history-of-us-mistakes-lyrics#note-2232274>)

Source B – '10 years on, Blair say Iraq decision was right' – News Wire

Tony Blair formed an unlikely alliance with George W. Bush to send British forces into Iraq and, 10 years on, the former prime minister is adamant he took the right decision. The Labour Premier and the Republican US President were both convinced of the need to act against Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein and his alleged weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

However, these weapons never materialised and although Saddam was ousted within weeks of the March 2003 invasion, Iraq soon descended into chaos at the hands of insurgents and militia groups.

"I still believe it was right to remove Saddam," Blair told Britain's ITV television.

"We sometimes forget now what the regime was actually like and the devastation it caused. Hundreds of thousands of people died in his wars. He used chemical weapons against his own people."

Blair admits conventional wisdom has now solidified on the invasion being a mistake. In his 2010 autobiography, "A Journey", he accepted he will never change some people's minds – while most do not want to listen any more. "I have often reflected as to whether I was wrong. I ask you to reflect as to whether I may have been right," he urged readers before presenting his case.

"To the question 'Is Iraq better now than in Saddam's time?' there really is only one sensible answer: of course. All I know is I did what I thought was right."

Since the invasion, at least 112,000 Iraqi civilians and several thousand more policemen and soldiers have died in the carnage, according to British NGO Iraq Body Count. Blair insists poor post-invasion planning was not responsible for Iraq's descent into sectarian bloodshed. "That's an easy way for people to park the argument in a place they feel comfortable," he told ITV.

The pre-invasion fears of humanitarian and ecological disaster did not materialise, he said, pinning the chaos on terror groups seeking to destabilise the state.

A decade on, Blair admits there are still "big challenges" in Iraq. But while he accepts responsibility for his decisions, he stresses the price of inaction, saying Iraq today "would at least arguably be much worse" if Saddam and his family still ruled. "People never ask to atone for the acts of omission," he said, citing massacres in Rwanda, Bosnia and Syria. "Inaction also has its consequences."

(Source: <http://www.france24.com/en/20130317-ten-years-blair-says-iraq-invasion-was-right-decision>)

Source C – ‘How do Iraqis view the effects of the war’ – The American Conservative.

The Zogby poll of Iraqi and other opinions about the consequences of the U.S. invasion should be required reading. The responses to one question in particular deserve close attention. The question was, “Since the U.S. entered Iraq, how do you feel the following areas of life have been impacted?” Consistent with other surveys, Kurdish opinion tends to be extremely positive, because Iraqi Kurds experienced almost none of the upheaval and violence during the eight and a half years of U.S. occupation. For the most part, Shia and Sunni Arabs perceive almost every aspect of life to have become worse or not changed.

When asked about political freedom, 53% of Shias and 54% of Sunni Arabs say that things are worse now, and less than a third of each group believes that things have improved. As for personal security and safety, there is an overwhelming consensus among both groups (81% of Shias, 88% of Sunni Arabs) that it is worse than before, which is hardly surprising. The responses on economic development/employment are almost as lopsided and negative: 74% of Shias and 80% of Sunni Arabs say that things are worse. In every category except religious freedom, Shia and Sunni Arabs are in agreement that things have become worse since the U.S. invaded. Overall results show that there is only one category (religious freedom) in which there are more respondents reporting improvement over the pre-invasion state of affairs, and even this is just a 39% majority. Keep these numbers in mind when you next hear some dead-ender complaining about how ungrateful the Iraqis are for all that “we” have done for them.

The majority of Iraqi respondents say that the impact of the war has been negative with respect to their personal safety and security (72%), economic development and employment (66%), administration of government services (59%), and relations with neighbouring countries (54%). One-half feel there has been a negative impact on political freedom (as opposed to one-third who say that political freedom has advanced). Similarly, almost one-half of Iraqis feel the impact on education has been negative. The results are more mixed in terms of women’s rights (26% positive, 37% negative, 26% no impact).

Americans and Iraqis are far apart in their assessment of who benefited the most from the war. While 39% of Americans said that the Iraqi people gained the most, only 4% of Iraqis said the same. In fairness, another 40% of Americans answered that no one gained from the war, which is at least closer to the truth. Iraqis answered that Iran and the U.S. benefited the most. 22% of Americans agreed that the U.S. benefited most. There is finally some agreement among Iraqis and Americans that withdrawing from Iraq is good for their respective countries: overall 60% of Iraqis and 74% of Americans see withdrawal as a positive development.

(Source: <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/larison/how-do-iraqis-view-the-effects-of-the-iraq-war/>)