

## INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

The war in Iraq demonstrates both the extent and limitations of US power. Discuss

Since the collapse of the USSR, the United States has emerged in the post Cold-War period as the sole superpower. Its superior military capacity, economic capabilities and diplomatic power has allowed it to firm itself as a hyperpower. The US invasion of Iraq saw the American government take this power and ~~then~~ attempt to use it to ~~set up a democratic Iraqi government~~ <sup>obtain a quick victory</sup>. However, the unpredictable nature of this conflict has highlighted the military capacity of the US in continuing the war in Iraq. The war has also cost the US economically as its financial resources reach its limit. Furthermore, the war ~~in Iraq~~ also indicates the political and diplomatic power of the US as the subsequent 'War on Terror' has allowed tensions to emerge. The US power has been firmly tested in Iraq where its military capacity has been stretched <sup>to its limit</sup>.

The United States is undoubtedly a military contender with vast military bases set up globally. The invasion of Iraq highlighted the 'military muscle' of the US as it removed Saddam Hussein from power, along with his hostile regime and ~~the~~ eliminated the threat of weapons of mass destruction. The US military power successfully achieved these goals but <sup>the</sup> continuing war in Iraq has seen its military stretched. The lack of troop numbers has become a limitation in its ability to deal effectively in the increase of insurgencies and sectarian group conflict. The US invaded with approximately 150,000 of its own troops plus another 25,000 from other forces in the coalition. However, the Bosnia situation recommended 1 soldier for every 50 people which in Iraq would equate to



Some of  
information?

500,000 soldiers. Its military is clearly stretched and thus the US has been ineffective in quelling the increasing sectarian violence. Furthermore, the lack of troop numbers have made it unable to seal the Iraq border with Iran which has led to a Shi'a insurgency being supported by Iranian intelligence agents. The military incapacity has meant there is an increased threat to US power as Iran has become a greater threat through links with Iraqi terrorist networks. The American occupation also demonstrates the limitations to the US conventional military system as it has consequently been ineffective in dealing with insurgencies and sectarian violence. The Opinion Research Business in London estimates the total war casualties in Iraq since 2003 are around 1/2 million deaths with 4000 US dead since March 2003. The military power of the US is clearly being expended and thus it does not have the capacity to take on the other two members of the Axis of Evil - North Korea and Iran as the Iraq invasion has limited its military. The military limit of the US is clearly evident ~~and it has also~~ <sup>which</sup> has also impacted on the financial ~~at~~ capacity of America.

The United States has the largest economy in the world in which it spends more on military than the next 5 major powers. The US military budget is currently set at around \$711 billion (Travis Shapp, US defense spending 2001-2009) and its spending accounts for 48% or almost half, of the world's total military spending. (US defense spending 2001-2009). America has a great economic reach but the invasion of Iraq has plunged the US into major debt and highlights the true limitation of its economic power. Economist Joseph E Stiglitz estimated that the war in Iraq will cost a conservative figure of <sup>hundreds of billions</sup>



\$3 trillion in which the US government spends \$16 billion a month on running costs alone (ie on top of the regular expenses of the Department of Defence). Its severe debt has hindered its ability to effectively fund its continued war in Iraq, as it has put pressure on the US economy back home. The invasion of ~~Iraq~~ has resulted in increased pressure on US healthcare, social services and with speculation of whether a recession occurred earlier this year. According to a CNN/Opinion Research Corporation poll 7 out of 10 Americans think government spending on the war in Iraq is partly responsible for the economic troubles of the US. The war ~~in Iraq~~ has clearly demonstrated the limits to economic power as economic advisers Joseph E Stiglitz and Linda J. Bilmes agree that "the combination of the war's cost and a Bush-backed tax cut led to deficit borrowing and a predicted economic fallout of that spending which would result in the nation's largest economic downturn since the Great Depression." The limitation of the US in effectively managing its spending ~~is~~ is clear in its major debt and economic downturn due to the Iraq war. The invasion of Iraq has also allowed tensions to emerge between America and different parties.

The US government demonstrated <sup>from 2001</sup> its diplomatic and political ~~power~~ power in its ability to gather initial support for the war in Iraq, by convening over 40 countries including Britain, Italy, Poland and Australia (US liberals). <sup>The</sup> US government claimed Iraq would be easy to overcome, after ousting the Hussein regime, which <sup>grew</sup> support for a quick victory. However, the invasion of Iraq turned out to be an unpredictable conflict in which Al-Qaeda <sup>was</sup> perpetuated as a terrorist network with US presence. The



political and diplomatic nature of the US in taking aggressive policies against Al-Qaeda and ~~and~~ any group associated saw US anti-sentiment ~~more~~ grow in Iraq. The US diplomatic approach was limited by not investing in a 'soft power' approach which <sup>with Al-Qaeda</sup> may have yielded communication and understanding, instead of taking up arms. The US <sup>diplomacy</sup> ~~approach~~ based on the 'with us or against us' approach has made ~~it~~ ~~perpetuated~~ it difficult for the US to find support ~~as the war continues~~ because of the lack of common ground on which to base talks. Its unilateralist approach has hindered its political and diplomatic power to deal with other groups. Poland announced it would remove 600 of its 1500 troops by March and the South Korean parliament voted to pull out 1000 of its 3,200 soldiers (Christian policy). As the European Union grows, European countries have become less reliant on the US for protection since the demise of Eastern European communism. Countries such as France and Germany firmly oppose the war in Iraq and have not committed troops. The US has been viewed by some as the aggressor in Iraq and its ability to gather support through political and diplomatic efforts is dwindling. Excerpt. Note, on 4 yesterday

(116) Australia is withdrawing its troops. Before the invasion of Iraq, the US were seen as firmly cemented in its superpower status with vast military, economic and political capabilities. This status has not disappeared but the invasion of Iraq has outlined clear limitations to US power. The unpredictable nature of the conflict in Iraq hindered the US in its capacity to quell increased insurgencies and sectarian group violence. In effect, its presence may have seen increased terrorism and as its military ~~has~~ is stretched so to ~~is~~ is its economic input into the war. The

In fact, in the region  
invasion has resulted in the US being plunged into  
major debt in the trillions which has affected the US  
economy with criticism arising. Tensions have ~~also~~ also  
risen in the political and diplomatic tactics the US has  
used in dealing with Al-Qaeda. The strategies used  
have been limited in their capacity to effectively manage  
~~the~~ the conflict and ~~the~~ international support is  
decreasing. The war in Iraq has demonstrated  
the ~~extent~~ ~~the~~ of US reach in all facets but it  
has also illustrated the limits which this superpower  
has as it continues its war. ~~It will be~~ The question is  
how far the US government is willing to go and whether  
it will have the resources necessary to sustain a  
commanding presence and deal with the number of  
insurgencies and sectarian groups.

Excellent essay style.