

U.S. preemptive attack ends in lonely departure from Iraq

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BEIJING: The U.S. military formally concluded its combat operations in Iraq on Tuesday, marking the end of a seven-year-long war that was neither popular in Iraq, the United States, nor the world at large.

In terms of time, the Iraq War lasted longer than the American Civil War. It also lasted longer than U.S. participation in World Wars I and II.

The war cost huge amounts of social wealth, led to the deaths of more than 4,400 U.S. soldiers and over 100,000 Iraqi civilians. It also created a dangerous precedent that a global superpower resorted to force against another sovereign state without a United Nations mandate.

Over the last seven years, the United States has failed to find evidence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, the U.S. pretext for waging the war against the regime of Saddam Hussein.

Failing to cool insurgent attacks, which peaked at 25 attacks in one day, the U.S. military also could not secure the safety of Iraqis, and protect Iraqi museums and cultural spots that were damaged in the chaos and looting.

Photos of torture and prisoner abuse in the Abu Ghraib prison that were published worldwide totally ruined the image of U.S. troops and laid bare the U.S. administration's lies of freedom and democracy.

It is no exaggeration to describe the U.S. exit as a lonely departure. Few Iraqis cheered the American withdrawal. Former military allies have quietly phased out of the invasion.

Moreover, 53 percent of U.S. respondents think history will judge the Iraq War to have been a mistake, according to a recent Gallup survey.

Former U.S. national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski said earlier that the American course in the Middle East is a political mistake. In the short run, it damages America's principles and international legitimacy; in the long run, it is dangerous for America.

Each war will leave a legacy. The Iraq War is not an exception.

The architectures of the Iraq War such as former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul D. Wolfowitz have retreated from the political

stage while Barack Obama won the voters' recognition during his presidential campaign because of his promises of making changes and reforms.

When asked about the Bush administration's failure to find any WMD, U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates said that the lesson drawn in Washington was that the rationale for any future American offensive will have to meet stricter criteria.

The current American administration as well as those that follow it will exercise extreme caution before launching a preemptive military strike against an enemy state, Gates said.

History often repeats itself. The trauma caused by the Iraq War reminded many people of the U.S. war in Vietnam. If we compare the Vietnam War to a modern Apocalypse, then the Iraq War should become a contemporary revelation that warns people against flexing military muscle without moral support.

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