



Iran's army pushed the Iraqis back into their own territory. Neither side could crack the others' defenses, and the war stretched on until 1988.

The Shiite Hezbollah militia arose in Lebanon, sparked by Israel's 1982 invasion and supported by Iran. The United States sent troops to help establish the peace, but in 1983, a suicide truck bombing, believed to be the work of Hezbollah, devastated the American marine barracks, leaving 241 Americans dead. Hezbollah evolved into a political party, representing the political aspirations of Lebanon's large Shiite minority.

After Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990, the United States sent a huge army to defeat him. The US army ousted Iraq from Kuwait in just four days of ground warfare. The fleeing Iraqis set Kuwait's oil fields on fire. Iraq's Shiites rose up against Saddam, but their rebellion was brutally destroyed. Saddam remained in power in Baghdad.

The Bush administration attacked Iraq in 2003 to oust Saddam Hussein once and for all. First during the air war, dubbed "Shock and Awe", then the land invasion, US troops reached Baghdad in three weeks.

The US invasion did not bring peace to Iraq. An insurgency erupted, waged by Sunni Arabs who opposed both the US invasion, and the rise to power of Iraq's Shiites. Last year, insurgents blew up the Golden Dome at the Askariya Shrine in Samarra, a mosque linked for a thousand years with the historical Imams of Shiism. The attacks sparked an onslaught of Shia on Sunni violence. The sectarian conflict in Iraq has spiraled out of control with no sign of ending.

Among Iraq's Shiites, there are differences over what the relationship between religion and politics will be in the new Iraq.