

Religion and Politics in Post-2003 Iraq: The Destruction Caused by the American Invasion

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The spark of the ethnic and religious civil war in Iraq was planned, motivated and fueled by the American strategy to divide the Iraq and turn it into a failed and broken state that would enable the US to control the whole country and prohibit its progress from being a vital and leading player in the Middle East and the world. The US government has tried to secure the continuation of American economic and military supremacy globally, and the US invasion and occupation of Iraq was part of this imperialistic project, which was pursued under the pretext of the war on terrorism and the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq that have never been found. This thesis explains the integrated relationship between religion and politics and it shows the abuse and manipulation of religion by politics, foreign governments and colonizing countries in order to create cascades of ethnic and religious civil wars that divide the invaded country and turn it into a failed state. Furthermore, the thesis attempts to identify what I – as an Iraqi citizen who lived in Iraq before, during and after the 2003 American invasion – believe are the real causes behind the emergence of radical Islamic groups and to present the massive destruction of the Iraqi state in all aspects after the country's invasion and occupation. It also explains the extermination of Iraqi Christians and the ongoing terrible consequences of replacing the secular social Baath Party rule with the radical Islamic Shia Coalition which enjoys American support after the country's invasion.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I decided to write this thesis to explain the sufferings that the Iraqi people have endured because of the American-led invasion (in 2003) and then occupation of the country that have led to an ongoing religious and ethnic civil war. The pain and suffering of this war will never be understood properly unless one experiences it. I am one of those who experienced it closely in Iraq and I am here to give testimony about it. I always believe, with the Apostle Paul, that “It is only just that God will repay with suffering those who make you suffer and grant relief to you who are suffering, and to us as well. This will take place when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels” (2 Thessalonians 1:6-7).

First, I would like to thank my lovely, unique parents from the bottom of my heart, who supported me for 38 years of my life and planted in my heart and soul the virtues of love, mercy, kindness, justice, and Jesus’s teachings.

Secondly, I would like to dedicate this thesis to the Iraqi people who are still suffering from a terrible bloody sectarian civil war and its consequences caused by the American invasion ever since 2003.

Thirdly, I would like to dedicate this thesis to all Iraqi Christians, including Chaldeans who are now mostly in the diaspora because of the 2003 American invasion. And for those who passed away in the recent Christian genocide in the fire of Hamdaniya wedding hall in Mosul.

Fourthly, I would like to dedicate this thesis to any population in this world that has been suffering from occupation until this moment, including the Palestinian people.

Fifthly, I would like to thank heartily my supervisor, Dr. Lucian Turcescu, for his support and teaching during my long journey on this master's degree and his cardinal guidance to finalize this thesis. I really appreciate it a lot. You are a great teacher. Moreover, I would like to thank Dr. Christine Jamieson for all her teaching, especially the first course in the master's program, which helped me a lot to love and integrate Lonergan’s method in theology in future courses. Thank you for your kindness. I would also like to thank Dr. André Gagné for his valuable notes and teaching in Biblical studies.

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## Introduction

War is an event that changes the lives of people and a turning point in any country that experiences it. In general, a war of aggression can be neither ethical nor justified by the aggressor. In the case of defensive or humanitarian wars, some justification has been found over time. “Just war theorists have proposed [as justification the satisfaction of] various requirements, such as just cause, right intention, right authority, open declaration, last resort, reasonable hope, and proportionality.... [For a war to be justified on humanitarian grounds, it has to be authorized by the United Nations and] it is a means to prevent or stop a gross violation of human rights in a state, where that state is either incapable of protecting or unwilling to protect, its own people, or is actively persecuting them.”<sup>1</sup> Yet in all other circumstances, and for many civilians who did not start it, war violates the right to life, the right to peace and leads to the loss of children’s and adults’ lives, to killed, injured, disabled individuals and a mass destruction.

The Old Testament has mixed messages about war, but eventually proclaims a day in the future when there will be no wars. In the Old Testament, when the Amalekites attacked the Israelites who were taken out of Egypt by Moses, Yahweh proved to be a warrior who helped the Israelites win the war (Exodus 17:10-17). Deuteronomy 20 offers regulations for war, including surrendering, enslavement of the enemy’s females and children, while King David is described as a “great warrior” (1 Samuel 16:18) who later came to regret the fact that he had shed so much blood. Although there is a lot of mention of wars before Jesus, the Old Testament, for example, also speaks in favor of peace “Then he [the Lord God] will judge between many peoples and arbitrate for strong nations far and wide. Then they will beat their swords into plowshares (cf. Isaiah 2:4) and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will no longer take up the sword against nation, nor will they train anymore for war” (Micah 4:3).

In the New Testament, Jesus proclaims “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9). God and Jesus’ intentions are always love, peace and mercy and anything against these notions is considered evil. As the New Testament has it, blood brings blood in the sense that violence seems like a vicious circle from which one cannot escape: “Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Matthew 26:52). Jesus refused at that time to allow his disciple to fight to liberate him from those who came to arrest him, because Jesus knew it very well that blood brings blood and he did not want to begin a fight between his beloved disciples and followers, on the one hand, and the soldiers sent by the religious authorities, on the other hand. Jesus knew that their lives would be at risk and probably that he himself would be killed at the same time. In addition, Jesus wanted to give a genuine example of peace, love, forgiveness, and mercy as he used to teach those values for his disciples and people. “You have heard that it was said, love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be

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<sup>1</sup> Tufekci Ozgur, “Can War Ever be Ethical? Perspectives on Just War Theory and the Humanitarian Intervention Concept,” *Atatürk Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Dergisi*, 32 (2018):1220, 1227. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/548370>.

children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matthew 5:43-48).

Jesus also prophesied that the future would be dominated by wars despite the salvation he brought for all humans and most probably because he knew the evil nature of human beings: “And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: all this is but the beginning of the birth pangs.” (Matthew 24:6-8). From the beginning of recorded history and even before (from various archeological discoveries) we learned that that once there is shedding of blood, reconciliation will be difficult, as humans tend to be selfish and revengeful.

There are always more losers than winners in any war. War is a most awful and terrifying event that, for both individuals and societies, leaves deep scars and influences negatively different societal aspects that go beyond the political, economic, cultural, and educational ones. War touches deeply on the religious and ethnic identities of individuals, groups, and societies, and creates a chaotic world, like the waves of a turbulent ocean. Unfortunately, the consequences of wars are a continuous tsunami of events without, for many, the hope of seeing the light of the end of the tunnel. This is how I would summarize the situation in Iraq after the American-led invasion of 2003, which the Geneva-based International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) considered a war of aggression because “a war waged without a clear mandate by the [UN] Security Council would constitute a flagrant violation of the prohibition of the use of force.”<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, the then British deputy legal adviser to the Foreign Minister, Elizabeth Wilmshurst, resigned immediately before the Iraq war started, stating in her 2003 resignation letter: “I regret that I cannot agree that it is lawful to use force against Iraq without a second Security Council resolution. Unlawful use of force on such a scale amounts to the crime of aggression; nor can I agree with such action in circumstances that are so detrimental to the international order and the rule of law.”<sup>3</sup> Then Iraqi Ambassador to the United Nations Mohammed Aldouri shared the view that: “The invasion was a violation of international law and constituted a war of aggression.”<sup>4</sup> His opinion was echoed by a number of American legal experts.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, the year 2003 marks the beginning of killing, racism, kidnapping, extermination of any culturally distinguished personality, as well as the destruction of numerous institutions and ancient artifacts. Iraq was viewed before as the cradle of civilizations but after the American

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<sup>2</sup> As discussed in International Commission of Jurists, “Iraq - ICJ Deplores Moves Toward a War of Aggression on Iraq,” March 18, 2003, [https://web.archive.org/web/20030407232423/http://www.icj.org/news.php3?id\\_article=2770&lang=en](https://web.archive.org/web/20030407232423/http://www.icj.org/news.php3?id_article=2770&lang=en).

<sup>3</sup> As explained in Jan Frel, “Could Bush Be Prosecuted for War Crimes? A Nuremberg Chief Prosecutor Says Yes.” (August 2, 2006) <https://theyee.ca/Views/2006/08/02/WarCrimes/>.

<sup>4</sup> “International Legal Experts Regard Iraq War as Illegal,” *World Socialist Website*, March 17, 2003, <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2003/mar2003/ilaw-m26.shtml>.

“U.S. Launches Cruise Missiles at Saddam; Saddam Denounces Attack as 'Criminal,’” *CNN*, March 20, 2003, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/03/19/sprj.irq.main/>; “Donald Rumsfeld: The War Crimes Case,” *Jurist Legal News and Research*, November 9, 2006, <http://jurist.law.pitt.edu/forumy/2006/11/donald-rumsfeld-war-crimes-case.php>.

<sup>5</sup> “Iraq War 2003: Question of War of Aggression, Letter from Mr. Ramsey Clark to the Secretary-General of the United Nations -- 29 January 2004,” *I.P.O. Information Service*, January 29, 2004, <http://i-p-o.org/ipo-nr-iraq-clark-29jan04>.

invasion, it descended into chaos. The most prominent phenomena now are religious extremism, the promotion of radical religious thought, the cultivation of hatred, and persecution of indigenous people of Iraq, the Akkadian influenced Aramaic-speaking Assyrians who are descendants of those who ruled ancient Akkad, Assyria and Babylonia.<sup>6</sup>

But it is not only an ethnic or religious war; it is a war against the development and building of a strong Iraq. I believe that the civil war in Iraq that began after the American invasion is the most brutal and the bloodiest one in the country's history, even more so than the war that led to the sack and invasion of Baghdad in 1258 by Hulagu Khan, a Mongolian ruler, which was considered historically one of the darkest and bloodiest events in Iraqi history.

The 2003 invasion of Iraq destroyed all the beauty in my Iraq; it burned down all the civilized institutes, the country's history, museums, but above all the country's citizens' souls and flesh. The most dramatic part of it all is that it seems impossible to find an exit and bring an end this horrific war.<sup>7</sup> This war has led to the transformation of millions of Iraqi women, men, and children into widows or widowers, orphans, migrants, refugees, and handicapped people. In addition, the incidence of cancer and congenital anomalies, but also poverty and illiteracy have increased dramatically after 2003.

By reviewing the history of wars in Iraq and other countries, we learn that the civil war is one of the worst types of wars because its cascades will likely take decades to stop. Civil wars leave a chronic conflict, struggle, strife, persecution and hostilities, and, as lived experiences, have created terrible physical, social, economic, religious, racial, ethnic, and mental distress in the communities and individuals who are experiencing and witnessing these conflicts. This thesis is an exploration of the Iraq's recent history, before and after the American invasion of 2003. While the personal experience will be an important part of the narrative, this will be supported with scholarly references and using theological and historical methods informed by the theology of Bernard Lonergan.

## **Methodology**

The methodology adopted in the thesis is a blend of historical analysis, theological method inspired by Bernard Lonergan, and personal narrative. This multidimensional approach allows me to present a nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in the relationship between war, religion, and politics.

According to Roman Catholic theologian Bernard Lonergan, "To put method in theology is to conceive of theology as a set of related and recurrent operations, cumulatively advancing towards an ideal goal.... We distinguish field, subject, and functional specialties."<sup>8</sup> The functional specialties are in the back of my mind as I collected, analyzed the data about Iraq, and attempted to formulate some answers to the above-mentioned questions, and to communicate them to the reader so they can become useful not just for academic research but to help with the articulation of future policies. The following is a summary of Lonergan's functional specialties articulated in his *Method in Theology*, that will be used in the current thesis at various stages. Research is being

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<sup>6</sup> Leon T. Hadar, *Sandstorm: Policy Failure in the Middle East* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Eric P. Garcia, "The Destruction of a Cultural Heritage: With Reference to the Problems of Iraq," *New Library World* 108, no. 7-8 (2007): 354–69. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03074800710763644>.

<sup>8</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 125.

attentive to what data are significant for answering the question one has. Interpretation seeks to understand the data or the texts and examines if what is to be affirmed are the currents of history at the time. Dialectic evaluates the different viewpoints operating within an identifiable historical context. Foundation decides the stand one takes regarding the values discovered through dialectics. Doctrine makes a judgment on what to affirm as true and valuable from the stance arrived at. Systematic is an effort to understand how what is affirmed in doctrine relates to other basic affirmations. Communication is attentiveness to how to share with others what is affirmed and understood.<sup>9</sup> At one point or another in this thesis, I will use these various functional specialties to help understand the subject matter.

Additionally, this thesis relies on autoethnography, a particular way of writing that brings together the ethnographic and autobiographical intentions, aiming to keep both the subject and object in simultaneous view. The autoethnographic method is used to illustrate and evoke rather than to state and make a claim, thus inviting the reader into the text to relive the experience.<sup>10</sup>

- **Summary of Chapters**

Chapter one: This chapter explains the Iraqi culture and history of war, religion, and relationships between different ethnic and religious populations in Iraq prior to the 2003 American-led invasion. It also discusses the loss of secularity of Iraqi society and the legislation introduced after 2003. Furthermore, the big loss of Iraqi national identity and evolution of religious and ethnic discrimination and its influence regionally and internationally are considered.

Chapter two: This chapter analyzes the failure of American policy in Iraq and the failure of Iraq as a state because of the American invasion. It also discusses the hidden strategy and policy of American invasion to divide Iraqi community and its provocative policy to spark a continuous sectarian and civil war in the country.

Chapter three: This chapter summarizes the continuous cascades of civil war and demographic changes in Iraqi regions after the American invasion of 2003 and the strategy of Iraqi governments and religious militias to exterminate Iraqi Christians and other non-Muslims groups after 2003.

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<sup>9</sup> Vernon Gregson, *The Desires of the Human Heart: An Introduction to the Theology of Bernard Lonergan*, (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988) 118.

<sup>10</sup> Carolyn Ellis, "Evocative Autoethnography: Writing Emotionally About Our Lives" in *Representations and the Text: Re-Framing the Narrative Voice*, W. G. Tierney and Y. S. Lincoln, eds (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1997) 115-142.

## Chapter 1: From A Secular Stable Iraq to A Bloody Sectarian Civil War after the American Occupation of 2003

### 1.1 – History of War and Religion in Iraq Prior to the 2003 American Invasion

History starts with the recorded history in one form or another, for example, archeological, written, or oral; before that, we talk of pre-history. Religions and faiths are closely associated with the wars of the past and modern time; and the political leaders in the world and their intelligence services try always to study the religious and ethnic background of other countries especially those which are antagonist to them.

In writing about the history of wars and religion, Paul Rowe mentioned several examples and scholars supporting the idea that at times religion, war and nationalism go hand in hand:

For two millennia, one of the most important sources of Hindu philosophy has been the *Mahabharata* – the story of an ancient war. The Sikh Khalsa was created in 1699 to defend the Sikh community against violent persecution. The Jewish scriptures describe wars between the people of ancient Israel and their neighbours, justified by divine sanction. Islam was spread through wars of conquest in the seventh and eighth centuries. Christians responded to the erosion of Western power in the Middle East by volunteering for the Crusades—a ‘holy war’ that continued at intervals from the eleventh century to the fourteenth.

Wellman makes the point that religion has always been associated with political violence because politics and religion compete for the same basic loyalties. His contributors cite case studies from the ancient Near East and the Roman world all the way through to modern America to make the point. It is frequently noted that the international system was founded in 1648 in the wake of the wars of religion that had pitted the Roman Catholic states of southern Europe against their Protestant rivals to the north. At Westphalia in 1648 world leaders agreed that religion should be laid aside as a reason for war. But in fact, religion remained an important factor both as justification for war and as a rallying point amid it.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the presumed secularity of state purposes, political leaders were never averse to depicting their opponents as godless barbarians or appealing to concerns over religious freedom. For example, throughout the eighteenth century, British efforts to prevent a return of pretenders to the English throne took the form of anti-Catholic policy and rhetoric. Even more notably, a dispute over the custody of holy sites in the Middle East ignited a crisis over Russian ambitions in the eastern Mediterranean in 1854. The result was the bloody Crimean War of 1854–6.

The intimate relationship between religion and nationalism has been observed frequently. For example, Anthony D. Smith, a renowned scholar of the history of nationalism, argues

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<sup>11</sup> James K. Wellman, ed., *Belief and Bloodshed: Religion and Violence Across Time and Tradition* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007) passim.

in a recent work that nationalism itself can become a sort of ‘religion surrogate’: the nation state replaces the deity, history assumes the role of divine providence, the leader becomes the prophet, his writings and speeches form the sacred texts, the national movement becomes the new church, and its celebratory and commemorative rites take the place of religious ceremonies.<sup>12</sup>

At the same time, religion may serve to back up the politics of nationalism, providing a sacred canopy for the actions of the nation-state. The combination of religion and national foreign policy in the major wars of the period after 1815 reached a critical point with the expansion of citizen armies and the pursuit of total war. Colonial resistance against imperial rule often expressed itself in religious nationalism, for example in Sudan from 1881 to 1885 under Muhammad Ahmad (‘the Mahdi’) or in the Caucasus from 1834 to 1859 under Imam Shamil.<sup>13</sup>

On the other side, religion was the prominent subject of new secular and democratic movements in recent centuries. Secularized Western democracies after the 1648 Peace of Westphalia are trying constantly to promote the idea that religion is the main cause for war and therefore should be excluded from the public sphere. But is this the whole truth? Political scientists of the global south have taken aim at the assumptions of secularism. As Saudi-born Talal Assad writes, “‘politics’ and ‘religion’ turn out to implicate each other more profoundly than we thought, a discovery that has accompanied our growing understanding of the powers of the modern nation-state. The concept of the secular cannot do without the idea of religion,”<sup>14</sup> while according to Indian-born T N Madan, “Secularism is the dream of a minority.... [and] therefore a social myth which draws a cover over the failure of this minority to separate politics from religion in the society in which its members live.”<sup>15</sup>

In connection with Iraq, I think the important question that we should ask is “What are the real motivations and causes for the growth of radical religious groups and movements and the violence they foster?” We notice that religious extremists evolve mainly after the wars as we could see clearly after the invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003. So, the political element is an important one in fostering religious violence. The development of religious and ethnic sectarianism has been expanded after the war and widened the gap between different religious and ethnic groups in Iraq that used to live in one harmonious and beloved society without discrimination and equal rights and duties in front of the law. The Iraqi people participated together almost as a family in their fight against British colonialism in the early 20th century and declared their independence in 1921.<sup>16</sup>

The social bonds among Iraqi people were unique and beautiful. For example, my grandparents used to explain to me how tight social relations were, and they used to exchange visits during the different religious and ethnic holidays with other families and friends; they used to dress in similar fashion with the people they visited although they were different religiously and

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<sup>12</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford University Press, 2003) 17.

<sup>13</sup> Paul S. Rowe, *Religion and Global Politics* (Don Mills, ON.: Oxford University Press, 2012), 201.

<sup>14</sup> Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003) 47.

<sup>15</sup> Triloki Nath Madan, *Images of the World: Essays on Religion, Secularism, and Culture* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006) 310.

<sup>16</sup> Adeed Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017) 74.

ethnically. Their love to build one strong Iraq that was unique in its cultural mosaic was their only goal and dream. One additional example that I could mention is that it was forbidden to ask a colleague at the university or governmental site about their religion or ethnicity, and family names were not allowed to be written in official documents to minimize discrimination against various groups. Each group was practicing freely their religion and the Iraqi government allowed unlimited permits to build worship places for different religious groups although western media tried always to misrepresent the truth of stable and friendly relationships between all the Iraqi ethnic and religious groups. Without discrimination, Iraqi Christians used to have their own religious schools and the Baath party removed the restrictions to build churches, while supporting their construction by donating multiple land plots and helping them to buy the building materials at the lowest possible price. It is important to mention that Baath Party ruling supported all worships places regardless their faith by providing free electricity, water, and basic construction materials. Moreover, during the socialist, secular Baath party ruling, the percentage of Shia members in the Baath Party was 75% in medium leadership positions and 50% were members of command council. The Shia population in Iraqi army represented 80%, while 60% with rank of officer, including military pilots. The percentage of Shia in the National Guard was 30%, their percentage in the intelligence service was 60% and in National Security Ministry was 75%. In governmental jobs occupied 80% of the positions, while representing 60% of the managers and heads of vital departments in the Iraqi ministries and institutes.<sup>17</sup> This reflects clearly that the Baath Party did not discriminate against the various groups present in Iraq, regardless their faith, ethnicity, or religion, when it came to governmental jobs. Moreover, the first prominent leaders of Baath Party were Shia who believed in the secular character of the state and in socialist ideas of prosperity, unity, and strong social services for the community. Their Ba'athist policies differed considerably from the policies of American-backed proxy parties that have been ruling Iraq after 2003.<sup>18</sup>

Iraq has approved the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (of 1966) whose article 18 is about the protection of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.<sup>19</sup> That latter article declares that this right involves the freedom, in community with others and in public, for a person to manifest his religion, observance, practice and teaching.<sup>20</sup> In addition, Iraq has ratified the 1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, whose article 6 outlines several freedoms inherent in the right to manifest one's religion including : the freedom (a) to assemble and maintain houses of worship with coreligionists; (b) to establish charitable and humanitarian institutions; (c) to make and use materials needed for rites and customs; (d) to publish religious materials; (e) to teach religion; (f) to solicit and receive financial contributions; (g) to train and appoint religious leaders; (h) to celebrate religious holidays and ceremonies; and (i) to communicate with co-religionists around the world.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> As mentioned in the following: "موقع الراصد", [www.alrased.net](http://www.alrased.net), accessed August 17, 2023, <https://www.alrased.net>.

<sup>18</sup> As mentioned in the following: "موقع الراصد", [www.alrased.net](http://www.alrased.net), accessed August 17, 2023, <https://www.alrased.net>. Cf. Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History*, 410-411.

<sup>19</sup> "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," December 16, 1966 (entry into force on March 23, 1976), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>.

<sup>20</sup> As listed in the following: "دستور الجمهورية العراقية المؤقت", [Constitution.net](https://constitutionnet.org/sites/default/files/interim_constitution_of_1970.pdf), [https://constitutionnet.org/sites/default/files/interim\\_constitution\\_of\\_1970.pdf](https://constitutionnet.org/sites/default/files/interim_constitution_of_1970.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> "Iraq: Freedom of Religion and the Status of the Evangelical Churches," *WEA*, March 25, 2019, [https://un.worldidea.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/WEA\\_Iraq\\_CCPR\\_IRQ\\_Report.pdf](https://un.worldidea.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/WEA_Iraq_CCPR_IRQ_Report.pdf); "Declaration on the

Iraq is highly diverse ethnically. The post-1921 Iraqi state adopted a heterogeneous ethnic structure to build its society and made it effective through the policy of teaching students from primary school about the important aspect to respect all ethnic and religious groups and how crucial and mandatory it is to build an Iraqi identity.<sup>22</sup> Frankly, the governments after 1921 were secular while preserving and protecting the right to religious practice. After 2003, however, the governments adopted the policy of religious divisions and abolished the Iraqi identity in favor of a religious identity of the individual.<sup>23</sup>

Historically, Iraqi women and girls have enjoyed more rights than many of their counterparts in the Middle East. The Iraqi Provisional Constitution (drafted in 1970) formally guaranteed equal rights to men and women, while other laws specifically ensured their right to vote, attend school, run for political office, and own property. After taking the power in 1968, the secular Ba'ath socialist party started a program to boost and consolidate its authority and to achieve prompt economic growth despite labor shortages at that time. Women's participation and engagement in the building of the Iraqi state was integral to the attainment of these goals, and the government promulgated laws specifically aimed at improving the status of women and increasing their role in both the public and private spheres. The main legal document advocating for and underpinning of women's equality and rights is the above-mentioned Iraqi Provisional Constitution of 1970.<sup>24</sup> The Constitution's article 19 declares that all citizens are equal before the law regardless of sex, blood, language, social origin, or religion. In addition, in January 1971, Iraq also approved the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which provide equal protection under international law to all people. The Ba'ath Party also pushed the government to establish and support further programs to enhance the country's economic development and to pass a compulsory education law mandating that both sexes attend school through the primary level. Despite the middle- and upper-class Iraqi women who had been attending university since the 1920s, women and girls from rural regions in Iraq were largely uneducated until that time. But by December 1979, the Iraqi government passed another important piece of legislation, attempting to eradicate illiteracy and to increase the educated percentage of population of both sexes.<sup>25</sup> The latter new law obligated all illiterate persons between the ages of 15 and 45 years old to attend classes at local "literacy centers," many of which were run by GFIW (General Federation of Iraqi Women). On the other hand, the Iraqi government continued to support women and passed new labor and employment laws to ensure that women were granted equal opportunities in the civil service sector, freedom from harassment in the workplace, and maternity benefits. Such laws led to a significant increase in the number of women in the workforce. The fact that the government was hiring women

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Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief," *OHCHR*, accessed August 11, 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-elimination-all-forms-intolerance-and-discrimination>.

<sup>22</sup> Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History*, passim.

<sup>23</sup> Scott Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations: The Struggle for the Soul of the Twenty-First Century* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

<sup>24</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Background on Women's Status in Iraq Prior to the Fall of the Saddam Hussein Government" November 2003, <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/backgrounder/wrd/iraq-women.htm>. Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History*, 412-413.

<sup>25</sup> As discussed in U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, "Second and Third Periodic Reports of State Parties: Republic of Iraq," CEDAW/C/IRQ/2-3, (October 19, 1998): 11-12.

contributed to the breakdown of the traditional reluctance to allow women to work outside the home and to participate in building the community and the state.

The Iraqi Bureau of Statistics reported that in 1976, women composed approximately 38.5% of those in the education profession, 31% of the medical field, 25 percent of lab technicians, 15 percent of accountants and 15 percent of civil servants. During the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88), women assumed and played greater roles in the workforce in general and the civil service and their percentage in labor market increased because of the shortage of working-age men who were drafted in the army. In addition, women attained the right to vote and run for office in 1980 and in 1986, respectively, while Iraq became one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.<sup>26</sup>

But we would have to turn to religion now and say a few words about it, in light of what the above scholars from the global south said. The physical and spiritual character of humans must be considered carefully in their different dimensions and aspects if the problem of democratic unity is to be fully understood and applied in any society. Religion can be a central part of many people's and of communities' spiritual's identity. Religion, however, remains one of the most complex and difficult subjects about which to write, understand and analyze. Lonergan can help us better understand relationship between an individual's religion and his community when he writes:

However personal and intimate is religious experience, still it is not solitary. The same gift can be given to many, and the many can recognize in one another a common orientation in their living and feeling, in their criteria and their goals. From a common communion with God, there springs a religious community. Community invites expression, and the expression may vary. It may be imperative, commanding the love of God above all things and the love of one's neighbor as of oneself.... Communities endure. As new members replace old, expression becomes traditional. The religion becomes historical in the general sense that it exists over time and that it provides basic components in the ongoing process of personal development, social organization, cultural meaning, and value.<sup>27</sup>

In other words, the religious aspect humans experience is crucial for both individuals and communities. As we will see, after the American invasion of Iraq, religion as a community's identifier came to play a very important role in dividing the Iraqi society. When we try to address the wars of the modern centuries, we realize that religion was a powerful motivator used by politicians to convince the masses to follow a certain direction in domestic or foreign policy. Also, religion has been used as an instrument in the confrontation between countries and taking advantage of its effect on the social ideology and politics whether in America, Europe, or Asia but especially the Middle East. "If religion is unimportant," writes Huntington, "it can be tolerated. If it is important, governments will insist on controlling it, regulating it, suppressing, or prohibiting it, or manipulating it to their own advantage."<sup>28</sup>

Here, I would like to point specifically to the last phrase in the above quotation that refers to manipulating religion to advantage the ruling government or use it to fight against other

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<sup>26</sup> Suad Joseph, "Elite Strategies for State-Building: Women, Family, Religion and State in Iraq and Lebanon," in *Women, Islam and the State*, ed. Deniz Kandiyoti (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), 179-84; Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History*, 410-413.

<sup>27</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 118.

<sup>28</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, "Religious Persecution and Religious Relevance," in *The Influence of Faith: Religious Groups in US Foreign Policy*, ed. Elliott Abrams (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001) 55-64.

governments and countries by justifying the conflicts between peoples. This has been done by pitting different ethnic and religious groups against each other to make political and global gain. I believe religion is a powerful weapon that produces effects more powerful than nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, religion itself is not the problem but the manipulation of religion is the worst policy that had been used by some political actors to fight against their rivals. Military war ends but religious wars will not end as easily because they are touching souls, doctrines, faith, and beliefs.

In demonstrating how the US has a history of manipulating religion, as it did in Iraq, Dianne Kirby referred to the American policy of using religion as a strategic tool to fight against its communist rivals during the Cold War:

Truman used religion effectively to reverse the wartime policy of cooperation with the Soviets and to resume the interwar practice of using religion as a stick with which to beat communist ideology and the Soviet regime, demonstrating an irreconcilable conflict that could be blamed on the Soviets. Religion helped Truman exaggerate the Soviet threat and persuade the American people to reject isolationism and accept global engagement as part of America's God-given mission to the world.<sup>29</sup>

The benefits of triggering religious conflicts and the use of Islamic extremism had been planned by the national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski who saw an opportunity to export a composite ideology of nationalism and Islam to the Muslim majority Central Asian republics with a view to destroying the Soviet system. Similarly, the Americans used religion to destroy the new national secular system in the Middle Eastern countries. This is true especially in Iraq, a country that adopted an egalitarian policy toward national Iraqi identity regardless of the religious or ethnic background of the individuals from 1921 until 2003. After the American invasion, Iraq went through the most virulently anti-communist, religious and sectarian system with American support which gravitated toward right-wing, radical forms of Islam. The consequences of using religion as a weapon have far outlived the 20<sup>th</sup>-century Cold War.

Zbigniew Brzezinski's ideologies were aimed in part at the Soviets, whom he tried to "circle and defeat" from several sides: Brzezinski was the architect of the US support for the Islamic Afghani Mujahideens' fight against the Soviet-supported Democratic Republic of Afghanistan government (1979-1987).<sup>30</sup> He also used religion when the US gave its support to the Polish Pope John Paul II in his fight against communism in his native Poland from 1978 until 1989. During his time in office as a national security advisor to American President Jimmy Carter (1977-1981), several momentous events happened, including the brokering of the Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel (in 1978), the normalization of relations with China, and the Islamic Revolution of Iran (1979). With the Americans convincing their friendly Iranian Shah (king) Mohammed Reza Pahlavi to leave Iran on "vacation," the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini returned to Iran where he began the Islamic revolution in 1979, having lived for 15 years in exile in France. Modern civil life in Iran has changed ever since, with Iran becoming a theocracy. Islamic religious life deprived the Iranians of modern social appearances externally and internally. That revolution caused a massive migration of cultured and civilized people to western countries.

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<sup>29</sup> Dianne Kirby, "The Cold War and American Religion" *Oxford Encyclopedia of Religion in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

<sup>30</sup> Conor Tobin, "The Myth of the 'Afghan Trap': Zbigniew Brzezinski and Afghanistan, 1978–1979," *Diplomatic History* 44 (2) (April 2020): 237–264.

Several declassified CIA documents revealed the support given by the American President Jimmy Carter's government to Khomeini as outlined in the following journalist's reporting for the BBC:

The documents show more nuanced US behaviour behind the scenes. Only two days after the Shah departed Tehran [on January 16, 1979], the US told a Khomeini envoy that they were - in principle - open to the idea of changing the Iranian constitution, effectively abolishing the monarchy. And they gave the ayatollah a key piece of information - Iranian military leaders were flexible about their political future. What transpired four decades ago between America and Khomeini is not just diplomatic history. The US desire to make deals with what it considers pragmatic elements within the Islamic Republic continues to this day.<sup>31</sup>

America adopted the same dishonest policy toward Iraq, and it seems that it used the religion factor again to strongly divide and subdivide the Iraqi society. The year 2003 was a turning point and I could frankly say an ominous and dismal date in the history of Iraq and humanity. America ordered the dissolution of the national Iraqi army and changed the secular governmental system and legislation that had been adopted after 1921 to a religious governmental policy.<sup>32</sup> We could see the effects of that policy two decades after the American invasion and the changing of the political system in 2003: a significant increase in the number of women who wear hijab and Islamic garb led to a dramatic decrease in the number of women who engage in advanced postgraduate education studies, a dramatic increase in illiteracy in the population, destruction of the civil and social bonds, extreme limitations and regulations for freedom, continuous killing, and struggle. Moreover, through the destruction of industrial and strategic buildings, the new Iraqi governments after 2003 took the country back centuries. Today, the gap continues to widen between Iraq and the modern civilized societies.<sup>33</sup>

## 1.2 – Loss of Secularity of the Iraqi Society and Legislation after the American Invasion of 2003

In contrast to Iraqi secular national state before 2003, following the American occupation of the country, the intended establishment of an ethno-sectarian state caused profound cleavages and long-lasting cracks in the Iraqi community, making it impossible to contemplate a “whole-nation” approach based on inclusive democracy. “The country's Shia religious parties claimed supremacy by equating their sectarian numerical majority with democracy [to the detriment of other Iraqi ethnic and religious groups].”<sup>34</sup> The main goal of the Kurdish leaders was to have more separation and greatest degree of autonomy from Baghdad and to control the wealthy resources in their region in the country's north. The Sunnis and non-Muslim populations, on

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<sup>31</sup> K. Fattahi, “Two Weeks in January: America's secret engagement with Khomeini,” *BBC*, June 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-36431160>.

<sup>32</sup> Mark Thomsson, “How Disbanding the Iraqi Army Fueled ISIS,” *Time*, May 28, 2015, <https://time.com/3900753/isis-iraq-syria-army-united-states-military>.

<sup>33</sup> Raphael Veit, “Iraq: Failed State or Phoenix?” *AQ: Australian Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (2004): 15–40, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20638257>.

<sup>34</sup> Rend Al-Rahim, “Unfinished Business: Nation-Building in Iraq since 2003,” Arab Center Washington DC, March 21, 2023, <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/unfinished-business-nation-building-in-iraq-since-2003/>.

the other hand, were marginalized as minor players with no political leverage following the invasion.<sup>35</sup>

At this point, I must mention the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) in order to facilitate the understanding of the post-2003 developments, especially why the Shia and the Kurds banded together after 2003. I would like to make it clear that I disagree with this historical scholarly narrative that attributes to the Iraqi President Saddam Hussein the beginning of this war out of the blue and his alleged use of chemical weapons against the Kurds at Halabja, a village on the border with Iran, in 1988. The following official historical narrative of the Iran-Iraq War is based on the book by an American scholar, Adeed Dawisha:<sup>36</sup> due to the 1979 Iranian Shi'ite Revolution, the Iraqi President Saddam Hussein became afraid that the sizeable Shia population in Iraq would be influenced by Islamic revolution of Iran. By the summer of 1980, a rather obscure Shi'ite radical Islamic movement in Iraq known as al-Dawa – influenced by Iran – had conducted several sabotage operations against Iraq's national security, including suicide bombing of public civil places, assassination attempts against various Iraqi ministers including the assassination attempt on Tariq Aziz at Baghdad's Mustansiriyah University in April 1980. Saddam acted against the cleric behind this movement, Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, and put him to death, while also expelling tens of thousands of Iranian Shia who had been residents of Iraq for a long time and rejected having Iraqi citizenship, although it had been offered by previous Iraqi governments since 1921 and kept supporters of Iran, in contrast to other ethnicities who had been residents of Iraq since the Ottoman Empire, including Turkish, Bahá'ís, Yazidi, Kurdish, Armenian, Syriac Christians, and others who accepted Iraqi citizenship. He put them on trucks and dumped them on the border between Iraq and Iran. Due to his authoritarian rule, the dictator Saddam distrusted the Shia now and decided to act quickly and by surprise by invading Iran on September 22, 1980. At this point, it is very important to mention “The truth, is that, although organized units of the Iraqi army were the first to cross the Iran-Iraq border on September 22, 1980, Iran started the war. It broke the peace when soon after Khomeini's return, it began active steps to export his Islamic revolution to Iraq. Using the same methods successful in bringing down Shah Mohammed Riza Pahlevi, the ayatollah and his agents proceeded to call upon Iraqis to overthrow their government and to install in its place an Islamic revolution under his jurisprudence.”<sup>37</sup> Because the Iranian military was not very supportive of Khomeini, Saddam's army did not encounter much opposition and conquered some oil-rich territory inside Iran, especially the city of Khorramshahr which was originally known as the Emirate of Muhammara, which was originally an Arabic city and autonomously ruled by Sheikh Khaz'al Ibn Jabir who was assassinated in 1936 under direct orders from Reza Shah.<sup>38</sup> However, by December 1980, the Iranians started pushing back. The war ended only in 1988, with extremely heavy losses for both countries. During the war, Saddam allegedly used chemical weapons against the Iranian army in the south and against the rebellion Kurds in the north who gave support to Iran and collaborated with Iranian forces against Iraqi army; and Saddam did so with

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<sup>35</sup> Imad K. Harb, Patricia Karam, Abdulwahab Al-Qassab, Rend Al-Rahim, “Iraq 20 Years since the 2003 US Invasion,” *Arab Center Washington DC*, May 2, 2023, <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/iraq-20-years-since-the-2003-us-invasion/>.

<sup>36</sup> Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History*, 449 ff.

<sup>37</sup> Nita M. Renfrew, “Who Started the War?” *Foreign Policy*, no. 66 (1987): 98–108. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1148666>.

<sup>38</sup> Daniel T. Potts, *Nomadism in Iran from Antiquity to the Modern Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

the knowledge and tacit approval of the US.<sup>39</sup> Dawisha writes that Saddam was vindictive against real and imaginary enemies and that “when the reckless few attempted a move against the President, the sadistic wrath of the state would descend not just on the perpetrators, but on their families, clans, and villages as well. A horrific example of this were the assaults of genocidal proportions that the state waged against the Kurds in the late 1980s, and again in 1991, this time along with the Shi’ites.”<sup>40</sup> Despite these accounts, not all scholars agree with the use of chemical weapons by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein at Halabja in March 1988, nor do they agree with the claims of Saddam’s genocides, especially against Kurds. Instead, the true evidence points clearly in the direction of the Iranians’ use of such chemical weapons, and the Iranian forces are responsible for the Kurdish genocide at Halabja (specifically, blood agents which Saddam did not ever possess), and then blaming Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi army for their use for decades throughout programmatic propaganda.<sup>41</sup> Throughout the 1990s, following the First Gulf War due to Saddam’s invasion of neighboring Kuwait in 1991, the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) spent almost an entire decade trying to eliminate Iraq’s chemical and biological weapons, while also altering his plans for the development of nuclear weapons.<sup>42</sup> As a result of these efforts, the American President George Bush and his Secretary of State Collin Powell alleged that Saddam still had weapons of mass destruction in 2003 when the US decided to invade Iraq in order to take down Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. In reality, no more such weapons were ever found, and the whole justification for the invasion of Iraq was thus based on a big lie.

After the US invasion of 2003, when Saddam was removed from power, the Kurds and the Shia tried to take revenge and seize control of the Iraqi state while marginalizing other Iraqi ethnic and religious groups. “Their actions were essentially retribution against Sunnis, who were stigmatized as Baathist sympathizers, and later as potential terrorists. Identity politics became, and to this day continues to be, the coin of Iraqi political groups, all of which present competing narratives of victimhood and entitlement”<sup>43</sup> This leads to ongoing domino effects of division, segmentation, and a broken society, all for narrow political gains that have undermined and demolished any prospects for establishing and building a presumed democratic, unified nation with equal rights and duties for all its citizens. Iraqi national identity has been lost and

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<sup>39</sup> See Shane Harris and Matthew M. Aid, “Exclusive: CIA Files Prove America Helped Saddam as He Gassed Iran” *Foreign Policy* (August 26, 2013) <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/08/26/exclusive-cia-files-prove-america-helped-saddam-as-he-gassed-iran>.

<sup>40</sup> Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History*, 449. Despite Kurdish attempts to have the 1988 attacks on them recognized as genocide, only a few countries have done so until now: the Swedish and Norwegian parliaments in 2012, and the British parliament in 2013. A 2013 attempt by the Kurdish Regional Government and the rather obscure Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) failed to convince the European Union Parliament to recognize the attacks as genocide; see “The Kurdish Genocide Achieving Justice through EU Recognition” [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009\\_2014/documents/d-1q/dv/03\\_kurdishgenocidesofanfalandhalabja\\_/03\\_kurdishgenocidesofanfalandhalabja\\_en.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/d-1q/dv/03_kurdishgenocidesofanfalandhalabja_/03_kurdishgenocidesofanfalandhalabja_en.pdf).

<sup>41</sup> Sharat Lyn, “US Lying about Halabja: Justifying the Invasion of Iraq” *Economic and Political Weekly* 42, No. 36 (Sep. 8 - 14, 2007) 3625-3632; Stephen C. Pelletiere, Douglas V. Johnson and United States Marine Corps, *Lessons Learned: The Iran-Iraq War*, Vol. I (Washington D.C: U.S. Marine Corps, 1990).

<sup>42</sup> The chronology of events can be found on the UNSCOM website <https://www.un.org/Depts/unscom/Chronology/chronologyframe.htm>.

<sup>43</sup> Al-Rahim, “Unfinished Business: Nation-Building in Iraq since 2003.”

has been fractured by the new 2005 sectarian constitution that was embraced after American invasion.

As Andrew Arato and Saad Jawad have written, unlike the post-World War II Germany and Japan (two countries that were helped by the US to become democratic), “The aim was not to build a democratic state [in Iraq]. In Iraq, the US aimed to create not a nation state but a ‘civic nation’ with a viable identity of the centrifugal main elements of Arab Shia, Arab Sunni, and Kurdish religious and secular populations hitherto held together by a succession of authoritarian states. The US ignored intentionally the history of the Iraqi state and Iraqi identity, reducing the Iraqi state to a collection of Shias, Sunnis, Kurds and other minorities.”<sup>44</sup> The term “minorities” surfaced for first time in Iraqi society after the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. This sectarian vision of the Iraqi state was quickly adopted and agreed upon only by the parties and groups that accompanied the American invader and seized the power with American, but without public, support, thus ignoring the voices and opinions of 43 million Iraqi citizens, including the lawmakers themselves. Therefore, the new constitution emphasised differences and divisive issues, dividing rather than focusing on the gathering and uniting elements of Iraqi society to build a democratic state as America claimed.<sup>45</sup>

The drafters of the constitution,<sup>46</sup> having been appointed by the American government, disregarded bringing the diverse communities into something resembling a unified state. Unlike the US Constitution, which focused on unity and liberty despite the differences that existed among the different groups forming the US society at the time, the new Iraqi constitution contains an unusually long preface (330 words), which is best described as a sectarian and divisive political communiqué which holds no relationship to the constitution itself. In his famous book on Iraq, Jawaad wrote:

As the Shiite members of the constitutional committee failed to include the role of their religious leadership (al-Marja’iya al-Diniya) in the constitution itself, its role and status were emphasised in the long preamble. This gave immediate focus on Iraq’s old (buried) religious differences and tragedies, rather than concentrating on fraternity and unity. It seems that that the idea of this preamble was taken from the US constitution, as it starts with the words, ‘We the people of Mesopotamia [not Iraq], the homeland of the apostles and prophets, resting place of the virtuous imams, cradle of civilization, crafters of writing, and home of numeration...’ But while the US preamble contained only 51 words and stressed unity, freedom and prosperity, the Iraqi version had no mention of freedom.... Considering the myriad confusions and divisions underlying the Constitution’s drafting process, it is not surprising that the document has created more problems than it has solved. The Constitution has been a major factor in maintaining the chaotic situation that pervaded most of Iraq. More than eighteen years after the invasion, and following four rounds of elections, Iraq is still one of the most dangerous and corrupt countries in the world. The security situation is fragile, and the country contains multiple

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<sup>44</sup> Saad N. Jawad, “The Iraqi Constitution: Structural Flaws and Political Implications Working Paper,” *Eprints.lse.ac.uk* (November 2013), <https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/54927>; Andrew Arato, *Constitution Making Under Occupation: The Politics of Imposed Revolution in Iraq*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009) 54.

<sup>45</sup> Jawad, “The Iraqi Constitution” 4-5

<sup>46</sup> The Iraqi Constitution of 2005, [https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Iraq\\_2005](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Iraq_2005).

mafia-like groups. Women are exposed to harassment, marginalization, killing and kidnapping.<sup>47</sup>

In addition, basic municipal services like electricity, clean water, sewage are almost non-existent in most of Iraq. Multiple authors also discussed:

The period between 2003 and 2005 Iraq was ruled by two sets of laws: the laws issued by the first US civil administrator in Iraq, Paul Bremer, who arrived in Baghdad in May 2003; and the Transitional Administrative Law for Iraq (TAL), which was issued by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and the latter was under leadership of Bremer too. Bremer had no previous knowledge of Iraqi politics, but immediately started to issue orders and regulations, approximately around 100 in total, which were issued as laws, and some of them are still in use in Iraq today. These prevented the Iraqi courts from considering claims against US security contractors or soldiers and by appointing a national security adviser and consecutively appointing a US adviser for each ministry and regulating the media. Bremer took the whole control of Iraq's financial resources, dissolved the Iraqi armed forces, and disbanded the Baath Party, which resulted in bereavement and disenfranchisement of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis from different ethnicities and religions. Bremer ordered the formation of the Governing Council (GC) which included 25 individuals, their selection based on their religious, ethnic background, and the most importantly, their loyalty to the US, not to the Iraqi state.<sup>48</sup>

This was the first time in the history of Iraq that appointments were made on sectarian, religious and ethnic bases; and this was the spark for continuous civil, sectarian war and for destroying the older Iraqi identity.

As Saad Jawad stated in his book, one calamitous result of the invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003 was the dismantling of the Iraqi state and the destruction of all the structures and processes of government, as he described thoroughly the process of writing and issuing a new Iraqi constitution after 2003:

The drafters of the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), and later the permanent constitution, were determined to weaken the central government and strengthen the provinces, or the regional entities (Article 52). There was also clear favouritism towards the Kurdish parties. For example, Articles 53, 54, and 58 acceded to Kurdish demands and further weakened the central government. Furthermore, the authority of the Kurdish regional administration was extended de facto though not de jure to provinces of what was termed as 'disputed areas', such as Kirkuk, Diyala and Nineveh (Mosul), in addition to the three recognised Kurdish provinces, Dahuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah. Other Iraqi provinces were given the right to establish their own federal status, but Baghdad and Kirkuk were barred from doing so.... In short, as Jonathan Morrow observed, 'the TAL

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<sup>47</sup> Saad N. Jawad, *Iraq After the Invasion: From Fragmentation to Rebirth and Reintegration* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021) 98, 107.

<sup>48</sup> Saad Jawad, "The Iraqi Constitution: Structural Flaws"; David Romano, "Iraq's Descent into Civil War: A Constitutional Explanation," *Middle East Journal* 68, no. 4 (2014); Lan Cao, *Culture in Law and Development: Nurturing Positive Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

process... was notoriously, if unintentionally, hasty and secretive, and was heavily influenced by US political interests'. The TAL was written by US nationals assisted by two expatriate Iraqis holding British and US nationalities, and who had not lived in Iraq since they were young children. None of the drafters was an expert in constitutional law. The document itself was written in English and was poorly translated into Arabic. It was passed (or in the words of Andrew Arato, 'imposed') on to the appointed GC for approval. However, the CPA, and most of the advisers who took part in the process insisted that the constitution was Iraqi made..... US advisors, notably Noah Feldman, played a major role in drafting a TAL. He and Peter Galbraith acted as 'advisers' in the drafting of the constitution. The Iraqi government, however, claimed that it carried out the work alone. The General Council appointed a committee of 55 people to write the draft, and it started work on 13 June 2005. The members were divided according to the quota system: 28 from the Shia coalition list; 15 from the Kurdish lists; and eight from Iyad Alawi's al-Iraqia list, which mostly consisted of Shias; a Christian, a Turkoman, a Communist and a Sunni were also added. One month later, after strong objections from the Sunni community, the GC added 14 Sunni members to the committee. The committee lacked any constitutional law experts or representatives of civil society organisations (especially women's groups) and the committee's discussions were held in secret, thus ignoring public opinion. To counter criticism of the lack of legal expertise, the committee nominated a board of law advisers, comprised mostly of foreigners whose names were never disclosed. A few days after their appointment, two Sunni members of the drafting committee and one adviser, who were well known for their strong objection to the proposed draft, were assassinated. A few days later another Sunni committee member was kidnapped and assassinated.<sup>49</sup>

According to London School of Economics political scientist Toby Dodge, the case of Iraq's Constitution and its post-occupation political system is now a case study for the literature focused on peacebuilding in post-conflict or deeply divided societies.<sup>50</sup> Referred to as "informal consociationalism," the system is inspired from the work of Dutch-American political scientist Arend Lijphart on consociational democracy. Consociational democracy emphasizes the tendency for elites in a segmented, or sharply divided, society to replace the incompatible demands of their constituent groups with pragmatic compromises that maintain the unity of society. Clearly, Lijphart was inspired by the case of his native Netherlands. But Lebanon also has a similar political system. What happened in Iraq, though, is that consociationalism does not function well, because it is informally applied. In the view of Dodge, "the ethno-sectarian proportional distribution of jobs and state resources and the ideational 'groupist' assumption underpinning the constitution, although central to consociationalism, have directly contributed to the violent instability of the political system post-regime change and the de-legitimization of the elite that runs it."<sup>51</sup>

The entire process through which the 2005 Constitution was drafted, the many external influences and interventions, the absence of honest, real Iraqi constitutional experts and

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<sup>49</sup> Jawad, *Iraq After the Invasion: From Fragmentation to Rebirth and Reintegration*, 90-91.

<sup>50</sup> Toby Dodge, "Iraq's Informal Consociationalism and Its Problems," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 20, No. 2 (2020): 145.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

lawmakers led to the unstable situation in the current Iraq. Later, many people asked to amend the constitution, but have been strongly opposed, especially by the Kurdish parties that are taking the greatest advantage of the current constitution. The Kurdish Regional Government refused to consider any modifications or revisions and they always threaten to secede from Iraq although the US administration's order was clear that a Kurdish independent state in Iraq was out of the question. Unfortunately, the harsh and bitter reality is that it will be extremely difficult or even impossible to motivate those who derived the greatest advantage and benefits from the current legislation to drop it in the fragile hope of establishing a stable, united, secure, and firm country named Iraq like it was under Baath party.

### 1.3 – Religious Discrimination and Its Influence Regionally and Internationally

Iraq is witnessing the most racist legislation and policy since 2003. For example, on the one hand, universities have been instructed to limit the number of Christians and Sunnis who could join medical schools even if they were top students at the high school level. On the other hand, the right to fight against the occupier has turned to terrorism. The occupation forces with the help of the Shia militia started to kill and arrest many members of Sunni groups and exposed them to torment as was the case in the Abu Ghraib prison when torture and prisoner abuse were widely used, according to witnesses.<sup>52</sup>

Because of this, the families of Sunni began praying more as this is one of the ways they use to ask for their rights and justice. However, they were left without choice, without hope in a desperate situation. Subsequently they directed their attention and re-oriented their loyalties to their own religious and community groups; this has made them sectarian, too. Consequently, they became more religious and as a net result, their souls ended up saturated with hate and revenge especially after they lost their jobs, rights and became motivated by their sufferings to fight in different ways, just to prove their existence. David Zucchino referred to Iraq's Sunni Arabs as struggling to reclaim their relevance and influence. After they were ousted from government jobs and from the military by the post-Saddam Hussein governments, their powerlessness and rage gave rise to Sunni militant movements like Al Qaeda in Iraq and the Islamic State.<sup>53</sup> Simply, if they had their equal rights as Iraqi citizens as was the case before 2003, they would not fight and try to take revenge on other groups that persecuted them. The situation of the Christians is not better than that of the Sunni, as Christians too had been doubly crushed amid the invasion crisis, and their great migration started, while their numbers decreased dramatically from above one million before 2003 to a few hundred thousand nowadays.<sup>54</sup>

Bernard Lonergan mentioned in chapter of human good “Religious values... are at the heart of the meaning and value of man's living and man's world.... No less than of skills, there is a development of feelings. It is true, of course, that fundamentally feelings are spontaneous. They do not lie under the command of decision as do the motions of our hands. But, once they have

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<sup>52</sup> Seymour Hersh, "Chain of Command," *The New Yorker*, vol. 80, no. 12, 17 May 2004, p. 038. *Gale Literature Resource Center*, [link.gale.com/apps/doc/A116683797/LitRC?u=concordi\\_main&sid=bookmark-LitRC&xid=87cd4da3](http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A116683797/LitRC?u=concordi_main&sid=bookmark-LitRC&xid=87cd4da3). Accessed 21 Nov. 2023.

<sup>53</sup> David Zucchino, "As ISIS Is Driven from Iraq, Sunnis Remain Alienated," *New York Times*, October 26, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/26/world/middleeast/iraq-isis-sunni.html>.

<sup>54</sup> Frank Gardner, "Iraq's Christians 'close to extinction'," *BBC*, May 23, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-48333923>.

arisen, they may be reinforced by advertence and approval, and they may be curtailed by disapproval and distraction.”<sup>55</sup> Thus, anything could motivate or touch religious values of an individual, could stimulate unpredicted decisions, behaviours, actions and could lead to exaggerated and massive consequences for the culture and community to which an individual belongs. In the case of post-2003 Iraq, we discussed how the re-writing of the country’s Constitution has led to frightening consequences for individuals and groups because of the sectarian divisions that were introduced.

On the other hand, later in the section on Doctrines, Lonergan covers the issue of pluralism in the religious sense and writes that “an exact grasp of another’s mentality is possible only if one attains the same differentiation and lack of differentiation [of consciousness]. For each differentiation of consciousness involves a certain remodelling of common sense” and provides access to a view of pluralism.<sup>56</sup> In my view, this can be applied positively to Iraq, when Muslims in particular (but Christians and other religions) could recognize and celebrate the pluralism existing there for centuries. In so doing, the various religious groups would show a conversion of their mind and willingness to understand the other person who is not necessarily of the same faith. However, what has happened, following the 2005 Constitution, is that the Iran-backed Shia religious parties have ruled Iraq without caring for the pluralism present in Iraqi society.

The sectarian, religious, ethnic, and identity-based struggles and conflicts in Iraq have fuelled and increased markedly the hatred and hostility and have given rise to armed resistance that resulted in the formation of Shi’i and Sunni extremist and paramilitary organisations and militias. Social cleavages widened between communities in many regions in Iraq, especially after many Muslim citizens, both Sunni and Shia, joined armed organisations for various reasons including their poor socio-economic level. This is the case especially among the Sunni who were removed from their jobs because of their religious faith and are being continually discriminated against.

This conflict led to the continuous armed violence and displacement, internal and external migration, and created a diaspora for hundreds of thousands of Iraqis. Iraqi minorities, including Christian and Yazidi minorities — the latter are not considered among the “People of the Book” (ahl al-kitab) as they represent the ancient Iranian religion and are found among the Kurds in northern Iraq — fell victims to the fighting and massacres perpetrated by rival groups.<sup>57</sup> The violent actions of extremist religious groups and the consequences of their rise and growing influence showed that religious and ethnic conflicts, and the failure of Islamic political parties to ensure equal rights and freedoms for all Iraqi citizens contributed significantly to the internal displacement and emigration of religious groups and minorities.

This persecution peaked in 2014 when the Islamic State (ISIS, Daesh or ISIL) seized large parts of northern Iraq, including Sinjar, the Nineveh Plain, and the rest of the disputed areas. Although Sinjar and the rest of Iraq have been liberated from the ISIS in the meanwhile, the conditions conducive to stability and a return to normal life are still missing due to the

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<sup>55</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 32.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 328, 332.

<sup>57</sup> Majid Hassan Ali, “The Forced Displacement of Ethnic and Religious Minorities in Disputed Areas in Iraq: A Case Study of the Post-2014 Yazidi Minority,” *AlMuntaqa* 5, no. 1 (2022): 76–89. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48677172>.

Kurdish and Shia militias that are still controlling the regions and forbid the original people (Yazidis and Christians) to return home.

The continuous absence of stability and security, the constant threats to national Iraqi civilians, the destruction of the infrastructure of the cities and villages; and stealing from most homes, farms, and the lack of basic civil life, as well as basic needs like water and electricity services, all of them have wreaked a lot of havoc on the Iraqis. In addition, the social tensions and hostility persist between Muslim sectarian groups that joined ISIS and the Christians and Yazidis. The continuous control by non-governmental militias and paramilitaries over Sinjar and Nineveh plain has fired the political conflict and competition due to the various beneficial and competing gains for the political agendas of each armed group.<sup>58</sup>

Frankly, so far there are no real programmes or proposed solutions for the sustainable return of Christian and Yazidi refugees who are residing in refugee camps and cities in the Kurdistan Region to their areas of origin. Most of these refugees are registered with the UN in the hope that they would be helped to find a safer country to immigrate to as soon as possible.<sup>59</sup> Thus, the permanent displacement of those religious groups outside Iraq might be the ultimate hidden strategy of the major political parties that control Iraq. The distrust in neighbouring communities has led Christian and Yazidi minorities to feel socially and politically marginalized, while the absence of true and equitable representation in state institutions, as well as the absence of social justice, led them to experience a permanent trauma arising from ISIS and militia crimes committed against them.

The Middle East region continues to have the highest levels of religious and ethnic hostilities in the world. “In 2014, the median level of religious hostilities in the Middle East and North Africa reached a level four times that of the global median.”<sup>60</sup> The types of social hostilities included in this measure varied from religion-related armed clashes to intolerant violence and other religion-related intimidation tactics or abuse. There were multiple confirmed reports mentioning the ethnic cleansing related to religion in Iraq in 2014. Islamic State militants engaged in a “systematic campaign of ethnic cleansing ... that targeted religious and ethnic minorities,” according to Amnesty International. The group massacred thousands of Christians and Yazidi civilians in August of 2014. More than 800,000 people were compulsorily displaced because of religion-related armed conflicts in 2014 than in the previous year and this number has been in an ascending trend.<sup>61</sup> “The number of countries in the region that are experiencing religion and ethnic armed conflict that led to large-scale population displacement

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<sup>58</sup> Harith Hasan Al-Qarawee , “Iraq’s Sectarian Crisis: A Legacy of Exclusion,” *Carnegie Middle East Center, and Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* (2014); “Claims in Conflict: Reversing Ethnic Cleansing in Northern Iraq,” *Human Rights Watch*, August 2, 2004, accessed on April 15, 2021; “Iraq and the Kurds: Trouble Along the Trigger Line,” *Middle East Report*, no. 88, July 8, 2009.

<sup>59</sup> Ali, “The Forced Displacement of Ethnic and Religious Minorities in Disputed Areas in Iraq.”

<sup>60</sup> Kayatoun Kishi and Angelina E. Theodorou, “6 Facts about Religious Hostilities in the Middle East and North Africa,” Pew Research Center, May 31, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2016/07/07/6-facts-about-religious-hostilities-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa>.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

remained the same ones in 2014. In contrast, exceeding 19 million people in the Middle East-North Africa region were displaced due to such conflicts, up from 18.2 million in 2013.”<sup>62</sup>

Sunni and Shia Muslims (especially since both groups are Arabic) used to live peacefully together for centuries in Iraq and other countries in Middle East. In many countries it is very common for members of the two faiths to intermarry and pray at the same mosques, even many tribes have two branches Sunni and Shia and carry the same tribe’s name without any concern. They share faith in the Quran and the Prophet Mohammed’s sayings and perform similar prayers, although they differ in some rituals and interpretation of Islamic law, but the manipulation of faith and religion by rival policies fuels religious partition conflicts in the Middle East and Muslim countries. Iraq was distinguished by its mosaic of different religious and ethnic groups that used to live side by side. Only in Lebanon and Iraq – nations where sizable populations of Sunnis and Shias live side by side – do large majorities of Sunnis recognize Shias as fellow Muslims and accept their distinctive practices as part of Islam.<sup>63</sup>

The struggles between Sunni and Shia in Iraq after 2003 has spread to feed a Syrian civil war that threatens to transform the map of the Middle East even further, catalyzed violence that is deeply fracturing Iraq in an irreversible divide and widened fissures and gaps in other tense and neighbouring Gulf countries. Growing sectarian struggles and clashes have also boosted a revival of other jihadi networks that pose a threat beyond the region. Islam’s divide into Sunni and Shia has become a mirror which reflects the underlying tensions, alongside the proxy battles among the armed militants, persuaded and stimulated by goals of cleansing the faith.

Nowadays, there are hundreds of thousands of organized religious, ethnic and sectarian militants throughout the Middle East and North Africa who can trigger a broader bloody conflict. If I were to use an analogy, I would describe the situation as being exactly like a fire hidden under the ashes, a fire ready to start at any given time. On the other hand, despite the of many efforts of numerous Sunni and Shia clerics to reduce tensions through dialogue and counterviolence measures, many experts express concerns that Islam’s divide will lead to chronically escalating violence and a growing threat to international peace and security. Then the fire of these religious conflicts would spread globally if the hidden political strategy of manipulation of the religion by rival and colonial countries would not stop.

## Conclusion

Chapter 1 provides a historical overview of the religious and political landscape in Iraq prior to the 2003 American-led invasion. It highlights the harmonious coexistence among various religious and ethnic groups within a secular national state. The chapter underscores how Iraq's diverse society, characterized by mutual respect and shared national identity, was significantly disrupted by the American invasion, although the seeds of division seem to have been introduced during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988). The American invasion catalyzed a shift from secularism to sectarianism, igniting ethnic and religious conflicts. This chapter emphasizes the loss of Iraq's secular fabric and the rise of religious extremism, illustrating how external intervention shattered the country's long-standing social harmony. Chapter 1 serves as

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

a foundational background, setting the stage for understanding the drastic changes Iraq underwent post-2003, shifting from a stable, secular state to a nation marred by sectarian violence and civil war.

## Chapter 2: Failure or Intended American Strategy to Turn Iraq into a Failed State?

### 2.1 – American Policy and Strategy in Iraq

#### a- The Adoption of Sectarian and Ethnic Legislation Policy after the American Invasion

As explained in the previous chapter, the post-2003 Iraqi governments and parliaments have adopted a Constitution that emphasizes the religious identity of various groups in the sharing of power in a form of informal consociationalism. This has favored a Shia political coalition with links and loyalties to Iran, while the Kurds also profited to create a Kurdish Autonomous Region. The mosaic of pre-2003 Iraqi culture has been destroyed and the governments that came to power after the American invasion embraced corruption and religious discrimination and created a code of conduct for job recruitment for every occupation and work permits issued in the country, including by limiting certain religious groups from entering medical schools.<sup>64</sup>

The post-Saddam governments adopted a new legislation and constitution that clearly outlined a discrimination policy by distributing the political leadership positions between Shia, Kurdish and Sunni groups.<sup>65</sup> Before 2003, the political leaders were appointed without considering their religious or ethnic background. Many prominent military officers, pilots, general managers were Shia, Sunni, Christian, Jewish and other religious and ethnic groups, such as Kurdish. Each Iraqi citizen was permitted to get the right position according to his/her qualifications and merits, without limiting access to education and employment for groups that followed certain religions.<sup>66</sup> Nowadays, however, Christians and Sunni are strictly excluded from governmental positions based on multiple aspects that are beyond the political positions. But even in teaching institutions and schools, the few remaining Christians or Sunni professionals must bribe the Shia militia or be loyal to Shia policy to be promoted in their careers.<sup>67</sup>

The sectarian divisions which have been created after 2003 are fundamentally undermining Iraq's nation-building project and are becoming more complex and embedded in society 20 years later. This explains the goal of American policy to demolish Iraq state and leave it in a broken state. It is sad to say that the Iraqi state has been changed to a collection of "components" rather than a consistent and a cohesive society with shared values, duties, rights, and a common goal to build a new democratic state as America claimed. Iraq is now on the list of "liberated and democratized" states, alongside Afghanistan and Libya; they too are failed states. Unfortunately, still missing is a national narrative that can reinforce the national identity

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<sup>64</sup> Lily Hamourtziadou, "From Invasion to Failed State: Iraq's Democratic Disillusionment," *Open Democracy*, July 23, 2021, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia/from-invasion-to-failed-state-iraqs-democratic-disillusionment>.

<sup>65</sup> Harith Hasan Al-Qarawee, "Iraq's Sectarian Crisis: A Legacy of Exclusion." Washington, DC: Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center (April 23, 2014) <https://carnegie-mec.org/2014/04/23/iraq-s-sectarian-crisis-legacy-of-exclusion>.

<sup>66</sup> "Iraqi constitution of 1970.pdf article 6,7,10,12,22,23,38,49,50,51,52," [constitutionnet.org](http://constitutionnet.org). 2003 العراق قبل

<sup>67</sup> Barah Mikail, "Nation or Religion ? Iraq's Hybrid Identity Politics," *Middle East Institute* (June 2020), <https://www.mei.edu/publications/nation-or-religion-iraqs-hybrid-identity-politics>.

and animate a healthy commonwealth. The unbalanced, religious, and unethical power-sharing arrangements subvert democracy and the idea of a nation by benefiting only a small clique of political parties while shutting out and marginalizing most Iraqi citizens.

#### b – Iraqi Demonstrations of October 2019

Most Iraqis today have simply lost faith in a system that only perpetuates itself. This disappointing and frustrating situation pushed hundreds of thousands of mostly young Iraqis to protest the existing political order. The most important such protest were the demonstrations of October 2019. The youth belonged to various ethnic and religious backgrounds, mainly from Baghdad, and risked their lives to express their disapproval of what has been happening in the country. They confronted the daily threats they received from militias and political parties, and they showed up despite the assassinations of multiple activists. They demanded a country and their basic rights like job opportunities and access to basic services like electricity, water, sewage, security, health, justice, and other fundamental rights which are seen as normal in any democratic country.

They condemned the ethnic and religious power-sharing system, the sectarian constitution and legislation adopted after 2003 and railed against the worst and biggest corruption in modern times. The demonstrators “rejected both Iranian and American intervention in Iraq’s affairs and denounced the entire political class. Their universal cry was *nureed watan*, ‘we want a country,’ to fulfill the dream of every Iraqi citizen to have a true and equal *watan* (country) for all citizens.”<sup>68</sup>

#### c – The Catastrophic Evil Strategy of the United States of America

It is worth noting and evaluating the catastrophic folly or the intentional wicked strategy that had been committed by the United States policy to destroy the Iraqi state and create continuous religious and sectarian conflicts not only in Iraq, but in the entire Middle Eastern region. The US affirmed its malicious policy in 2003 which was encouraged and enthusiastically covered by the US and western advertising and media.<sup>69</sup> “Years of investigation and inspection by American and western people produced absolutely no evidence in support of the much-cited justification for the decision of invasion and occupying Iraq as United States claimed that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. Neither did Iraq have any communications or links to al-Qaeda, the terrorist organization that initially motivated the United States to begin its disastrous war on terror, but, the opposite, Baath party’s policy was against terrorism and any radical Islamic groups.”<sup>70</sup> Overthrowing and exclusion of the Baath social and secular party in Baghdad did not create any democracy or stability, the alleged goals

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<sup>68</sup> Al-Raheed, “Unfinished Business: Nation-Building in Iraq since 2003.”

<sup>69</sup> Moustafa Bayoumi, “The Iraq War Started the Post-Truth Era. And America Is to Blame,” *The Guardian*, March 14, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/mar/14/iraq-war-9-11-george-bush-post-truth>.

<sup>70</sup> Imad K. Harb, Patricia Karam, Al-Qassab Abdulwahab, Rend Al-Rahim. “Iraq 20 Years since the 2003 US Invasion.” Arab Center Washington DC. May 2, 2023. <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/iraq-20-years-since-the-2003-us-invasion/>.

of US national interests in the region; in fact, chaos, insecurity and instability in the Middle East and North Africa have instead taken hold of the region due to ethnic and religious conflicts.

#### d – The American Replacement of a Secular Socialist Baath Party with a Radical Islamic Shia Party

The US President George W. Bush brought to power in Iraq a coalition, known as the Al-Bina Bloc, of Shia Islamic Jihadi parties with their militias (with Iranian loyalty) after 2003. The main partner in this Shia coalition is the Dawa Party, whose name indicates that it is the same as the sabotaging movement that led to the war between Iran and Iraq in 1980. The party leader is Nouri al-Maliki, Iraq's former Prime Minister from 2006 until 2014. As of 2019, the Dawa Party had “the deepest reach into Iraq’s civil service and public finances. During its final years, Al-Maliki and his party faced multiple corruption accusations and lost a third of Iraq’s territory to ISIS [Islamic State]. Although Al-Maliki won the 2014 elections, political opposition and Grand Ayatollah Al-Sistani’s refusal blocked a third term in office for him. Al-Maliki has since repaired some of his relationships with Iraq’s Sunni and Kurdish politicians, most Sunni parties have joined Al-Bina and relations with Masoud Barzani (KDP – Kurdish Democratic Party) have been normalised.”<sup>71</sup>

It is very important to mention that Nouri al-Maliki had established and formed the Shia Islamic Jihad Organization in 1981-1982 which was classified as terrorist organization which executed multiple famous terrorist operations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and continued its terror operations against Iraqi civilian people after 2003. Most Iraqis believe that he played a major role in escalating the civil war, through ethnic and religious extermination and bringing Iraq under Iranian influence.<sup>72</sup>

#### e- Nouri al-Maliki from Terrorist to Prime Minister of Iraq with American Support

Al Maliki, who was operating under the alias 'Sayyed Mohsen', was instructed by his Dawa Party to form the 'Islamic Jihad' cell in Beirut, in cooperation with some senior Shi'i militants, including Imad Mughniyeh, Abdul Halim al Zuhairi, Ali al Musawi (Haj Elias) and Sabah al Tufaili. The Islamic Jihad cell was operating under the supervision of Ali Akbar Mohtashmi, the founder of the Lebanese Hezbollah, who at the time was Iran’s ambassador to Damascus, and later Iran's interior minister. The main objective of this terrorist Shi'i cell was targeting American, Iraqi, and French interests in Syria and Lebanon. The cell carried out several terrorist operations, including:

1. The suicide bombing attack on the US Embassy in Beirut in April 1983, the blast killed 63 people, 17 of whom were Americans.
2. The bombing that targeted the US Marines headquarters in Beirut in October 1983, killing 241 US personnel forcing the US to promptly withdraw its forces from Beirut.

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<sup>71</sup> Hamzeh al-Shadeedi and Erwin van Veen, “Iraq’s Adolescent Democracy: Where to Go from Here,” Clingendael Netherlands Institute of International Relations. CRU Report (June 2020).

<https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/iraqs-adolescent-democracy.pdf>.

<sup>72</sup> As discussed in the following: “مكّن إيران من ابتلاع العراق. لائحة سوداء تلاحق نوري المالكي،” العربية،”  
<https://www.alarabiya.net/alarabiya-today/2022/07/30>.

3. The suicide car bombing that targeted the Iraqi embassy in Beirut in December 1981. The explosion levelled the embassy and killed 61 people, including Iraq's ambassador, and injured 110 others.

4. The bombing that targeted a French military outpost in Beirut in October 1983, killing 58 French soldiers who were part of the multinational forces in Lebanon.

It is worth mentioning that Nouri al Maliki was the leader of 'Haider Brigade' which was one of the factions of "The Lovers of Hussein", a vicious death squad affiliated to Amal militia in the 1980s. Haider Brigade which had 150 members who were also members of the Iraqi Dawa Party, was responsible for the assassinations of dozens of Palestinian officers during the Lebanese civil war. Most members of this militia were killed at the hands of Palestinians and several of them fled to Iran and Syria, including al Maliki who fled to Syria. In addition, On June 14, 1985, a Shi'i terrorist group hijacked TWA flight 847 on its route from Athens to Rome and diverted it to Beirut. There were 139 passengers onboard and eight crew members, in addition to the hijackers. The hijacked plane landed twice in Beirut, twice in Algiers, and once more in Beirut. The hostage crisis lasted for 17 days. All the hostages survived, except Robert Dean Stethem, a U.S. Navy diver, who was murdered by the terrorist hijackers. The terrorists had a list of demands, including the release of Shi'i terrorists involved in the 1983 bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, and the release of 17 members of the Shi'i Lebanese Hezbollah and the Shi'i Iraqi Dawa Party, who were imprisoned in Kuwait because of their involvement in attacks that killed six people in 1983. The U.S. Justice Department had charged Ali Atweh, Mohammad Hamade and Hasan Izzaldin with air piracy and murder of Robert Dean Stethem. Yet, the three Hezbollah terrorist were also members of the Shi'i Islamic Jihad Organisation, which took responsibility for a number of kidnappings, assassinations, and bombings of embassies and peacekeeping troops."<sup>73</sup>

On the other hand, Sheri Laizer wrote the following about the instructor of terror – Nouri al-Maliki:

Forty-one years ago on 15 December 1981, the Iraqi Embassy in Beirut was bombed. Who was behind it but the man the US would propel to the premiership of its 'new Iraq' twenty years later. Going by the code names of Abu Isra, Jawad al-Ali and Sayyed Mohsen al-Maliki's Shiite al-Da'wa Party (Islamic cell) had been set up by Iran to operate in Lebanon and Syria. The first major target of the Haidar Brigade in Beirut was the Iraqi Embassy and al-Maliki was in charge of the cell. The civil war raging in Lebanon (1975-1990) facilitated violent acts, but the 'kamikaze' strike was part of Iran's war with Iraq and not the civil war. In 1975, al-Dawa had issued a fatwa ordering its members to infiltrate the Lebanese Amal (Hope) Movement. In his book on Hezbollah, Sheikh Naim Qassem describes the process: The Islamists were divided between the Amal Movement, the Islamic Committees, al-Dawa Party and the independents... As political activity was limited to the Amal Movement, some Islamists chose to join it, either out of total belief in this movement or because they felt that it was only a transitional step on the way to another phase. On July 16, 1979, Nouri al-Maliki, then

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<sup>73</sup> As explained in the following: "The Picture That Indicts Nouri al Maliki, Iraq's Former PM and Election Front-Runner, for Major Terrorist Crimes," FRB-I, accessed September 9, 2023. <https://www.frbui.com/articles/the-picture-that-indicts-nouri-al-maliki-iraqs-former-pm-and-election-front-runner-for-major-terrorist-crimes>.

aged 29, fled to Iran from Iraq after being exposed as a member of the illegal Islamic al-Da'wa. The following year, an Iraqi court would sentence him to death in absentia. The party was anathema as it backed Ayatollah Khomeini and backed the Ayatollah's extreme goal of rule by the Islamic jurists. Saddam Hussein cited more than 400 violations by Iran that had spurred him to go to war a year after the Islamic revolution.

Al-Maliki was soon put in charge of a terror training camp inside Iran called the Sadr Camp, named after Mohammed Bakr al-Sadr, founder of the al-Da'wa Party, Moqtada al-Sadr's father-in-law, executed for treason by the Ba'ath Party on April 19, 1980. Al Maliki went on to head the Haidar Brigade affiliated with the Lovers of Hussein under Daoud Daoud's leadership – a faction of Lebanese Shi'a Amal that al-Da'wa was infiltrating between 1981-1982. The cell was made up of 150 core members from al-Da'wa. Going under the nom de guerre of Sayyed Mohsen, al-Maliki collaborated with top Shi'a militants, including Imad Mughniyeh, Abdul Halim al Zuhairi, Ali al-Musawi (Haj Elias) and Sabah al-Tufaili. The cell was accountable to Iran's Ambassador to Syria, Ali Akbar Mohtashami (1947-2021), responsible for helping to set up the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corp (IRGC) and the group that would later evolve into Lebanese Hezbollah. He himself became Iran's Interior Minister. Al Maliki's group was tasked with targeting Iraqi, American, and French interests in Syria and Syrian controlled Lebanon. It is also reputed to have assassinated several top PLO commanders who then went after the cell in revenge.<sup>74</sup>

Ali Khedery was one of the longest serving US officials in Iraq and he wrote:

By 2010, however, I was urging the vice president of the United States and the White House senior staff to withdraw their support for Maliki. I had come to realize that if he remained in office, he would create a divisive, despotic and sectarian government that would rip the country apart and devastate American interests. My article is headed Why we stuck with Maliki – and lost Iraq. The leader read: “To understand why Iraq is imploding, you must understand Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki — and why the United States has supported him since 2006.” Khedery even mentions the suicide bombings and al-Maliki's unfettered return to Iraq, thus: “With Iran's assistance, Da'wa operatives bombed the Iraqi Embassy in Beirut in 1981 in one of radical Islam's first suicide attacks. They also bombed the American and French embassies in Kuwait and plotted a car bomb attack on the convoy carrying the emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Jaber al-Sabah.”<sup>75</sup>

f — The Outcomes of the American Invasion and the American War Crimes in Iraq

Twenty years after the country's invasion, multiple and major failure outcomes can be noticed in Iraq. The Bush administration's brutal war on Iraq, which was justified, encouraged, and marketed by the American and western media, was designed by its neoconservative officials

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<sup>74</sup>Sheri Laizer, “The terror instructor - Nouri al-Maliki,” *Kurd Net - Ekurd.net Daily News*, <https://ekurd.net/terror-instructor-nouri-maliki-2022-12-15>, accessed September 8, 2023.

<sup>75</sup> Laizer, “The terror instructor - Nouri al-Maliki.”

who pretended that they wanted to liberate the country from its brutal dictatorship and to establish a unified democratic state. But the bitter truth was that they had ultimately other hidden strategic goals in the region, which included control of Iraqi oil and dismantling the so-called “axis of evil,” formed, according to George W. Bush by Iraq-Iran-North Korea. In doing so, the invaders did not care about destroying a complete country, violating constitutional and international laws, and turning the lives of millions of Iraqis into an enduring nightmare without hope to awaken from it.

The US government committed multiple war crimes and genocides in Iraq without getting any sanctions, judgment, sentences, or even apologizing or paying any compensation to the Iraqi people:

The US-led occupation forces have committed numerous atrocities in Iraq since the invasion of 2003. Crimes of Fallujah (America used chemical weapons in November 2004),<sup>76</sup> Haditha, Hamandiya, Sadr City, Samarra and Ishaqi have become synonymous with murder, rape and the multiple killing of civilians. While some cases have been brought before military hearings, the Pentagon has covered up most of these cases and exonerated the soldiers involved. Rather than pursuing high officials and senior officers, military prosecutors have pursued only a few low-ranking soldiers. With few exceptions, most cases have yielded relatively light punishments, while the majority has seen original charges of murder downgraded to lighter charges or even dismissed completely. The United States has repeatedly insisted that these atrocities were committed by "a few bad apples," obscuring the fact that troops are regularly committing such crimes under a system of unrestrained violence attributable to those at the top. Under the doctrine of "command responsibility," applied by the US in the post-World War II war crimes trials, high officials and senior officers must assume responsibility for grave violations of international law, even if they did not give direct orders for such violations to take place. A truly independent investigation should investigate the killings and cover-ups, to end this climate of impunity.<sup>77</sup>

Furthermore, journalists, human rights watchers and others wrote:

The American invasion of Iraq in 2003, with all its circumstances and consequences, constituted new suffering for the Iraqi people as a result of the grave breaches of international humanitarian law that were necessary and adapted as war crimes. It affected all international human rights treaties, especially Article 08 of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, which required holding Al-Ghazi and his forces accountable and assigning appropriate punishment for their actions in pursuit of international justice, conducting trials either before the International Criminal Court, or

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<sup>76</sup> George Monbiot, “The US used chemical weapons in Iraq - and then lied about it,” *The Guardian*, November 2005, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2005/nov/15/usa.iraq>.

<sup>77</sup> As explained in “Atrocities and Criminal Homicides in Iraq,” *Archive.globalpolicy.org*, June 2007 <https://archive.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/iraq/atrocitindex.htm>.

before the national judiciary, whether in Iraq or even in the United States of America, taking into account the seriousness and avoiding formal trials.<sup>78</sup>

I will list some of those failure and horrible outcomes:

The first and foremost miserable failure of the American policy is the establishing of a secular, liberal, democratic polity in Iraq which was an arrogant goal for the Bush administration, half-heartedly pursued as a cover-up for its big lies and fake stories about Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction and connections and support for Al-Qaida terrorists. The stark reality is that Iraq today is barely holding on to an electoral, religious, and ethnic system that mainly benefits limited established political forces and political parties that succeeded in inheriting the vestiges and benefits of the former Baathist regime. The only reason why those parties are in power today is because they came accompanying the American soldiers to the detriment of most of the Iraqi people. Like their American supporters, these parties are practicing killing, assassinations, threatening, and kidnapping of any civilian activist or protester who is against their sectarian policies. The world witnessed all of that very clearly during the mass protests and demonstrations in Iraq in October 2019.<sup>79</sup>

Second, the reverse of the Iraq invasion, together with the Afghanistan invasion before it (which ultimately ended in a shameful and catastrophic withdrawal in 2021), have negatively impacted the United States' strategic dominance in the Middle East and around the world and the trust of people in the American democratic and egalitarian system that its media promote globally. In addition, none of American neoconservatives who pushed for the war on Iraq have paid any price for being part of the conspiracy and the deceptive policy that led to one of the twenty-first century's most disastrous and brutal occupations.<sup>80</sup>

Third, the US claimed that one of its objectives for occupying Iraq is to remove weapons of mass destruction, but those weapons have never been found. The main objective was to remove the Saddam regime and replace it with one that complies with the US plans and strategy for the region regardless of the dreams and voices of the Iraqi people.<sup>81</sup>

Today, twenty years after the occupation and heavy US influence across the spectrum of Iraqi politics, I believe that it is becoming very clear and certain for the whole world and for the history to record the biggest lies of American alleged goals for invasion of Iraq: to build a secular and democratic model of Iraq where human rights are respected, and to transform Iraq

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<sup>78</sup> .. , 2020, "جرائم الحرب في العراق خلال الغزو الأمريكي - مجازر بلا عقاب -" مجلة الاجتهاد القضائي 12 (1): 691-710 ميمون. منى <https://www.asjp.cerist.dz/en/article/112274>; "مقالة خاصة: بعد 19 عاما.. الجرائم الأمريكية ما تزال حاضرة في ذاكرة العراقيين"; Arabic.news.cn, Accessed September 19, 2023, [http://arabic.news.cn/2022-03/20/c\\_1310522199.htm](http://arabic.news.cn/2022-03/20/c_1310522199.htm).

<sup>79</sup> "Iraq: State Appears Complicit in Massacre of Protesters," Human Rights Watch, October 28, 2020. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/12/16/iraq-state-appears-licit-massacre-protesters>.

<sup>80</sup> Harb et al., "Iraq 20 Years since the 2003 US Invasion."

<sup>81</sup> Jawad, "The Iraqi Constitution: Structural Flaws and Political Implications."

into a democratic model country with equal rights for all citizens. After two decades of invasion, we are sure that these goals are simply an ink on paper or a report in American media.<sup>82</sup>

Fourth, the deep structural, legal, and political failings of the Iraqi Constitution that had been drafted by American advisors have contributed dramatically to the continuous sectarian and religious struggle. This is due, as I have already explained, to the hidden pernicious agenda of US when they allowed for the writing and approval of such a sectarian constitution after 2003 and replaced the secular and national one.

Fifth, the travel advisories of US and Canadian governments, as well as other countries recommend avoiding visiting Iraq since 2003 because “It is a dangerous place. Avoid all travel to Iraq due to a continued volatile, unpredictable, and potentially dangerous security situation. There is a threat of terrorism in Iraq. Car bombings, vehicle ambushes, drones, mortar, and rocket attacks occur weekly across the country. Further attacks are likely, particularly during religious or public holidays. The security situation could worsen with little warning. Attacks have also targeted residential areas to maximize casualties.”<sup>83</sup> This explains the truth of Iraq’s current situation, which has been terrible, frightening, violent and insecure for twenty years, while the US still claims that it has brought peace and prosperity to Iraq.

Sixth, the marked increase in the number of women who dress in hijab and Islamic clothes, a dramatic decrease in the number of women who engage in advanced postgraduate education studies, dramatic increase in illiteracy among Iraqi population of both sexes, destruction of the community’s civil and social bonds, extreme limitations, and tight regulations for freedom of the press, freedom to write and speak in public, continuous persecution of intellectuals. Moreover, by the destruction of industrial and strategic buildings, the new governments after 2003 took Iraq back centuries. Today, the gap continues to widen between Iraq and the modern civilized societies.<sup>84</sup> I wonder how the American politicians are still insisting in their media that they bring prosperity and development for the Iraqi state and Iraqi people. In addition, we could notice a remarkable increase in the number of forced marriages for women less than eighteen years old, and women’s exposure to profound harassment and criticism if they walk or ride a bus by themselves. These are Shi’i influences coming from Iran. Nowadays, Iraqi women are no longer equal to men when it comes to jobs, opportunities to learn, and freedom to decide their own future. Women are under pressure from Islamic politics, tribal and religious leaders unlike before 2003. Iraq used to have a high number of educated women in different scientific fields and the previous governments used to give equal opportunities for scholarships and grants to support the distinguished students regardless their sex, ethnicity and religious background. Women had lower literacy rates than men on average and the Ba’athist Iraqi government made education mandatory for everyone regardless of sex, ethnicity and religious roots.

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<sup>82</sup> Carrol Doherty and Jocelyin Kileya, “A Look Back at How Fear and False Beliefs Bolstered U.S. Public Support for War in Iraq,” Pew Research Center (March 14, 2023) <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2023/03/14/a-look-back-at-how-fear-and-false-beliefs-bolstered-u-s-public-support-for-war-in-iraq>.

<sup>83</sup> “Travel Advice and Advisories for Iraq,” Government of Canada, Global Affairs Canada, [Travel.gc.ca](https://travel.gc.ca/destinations/iraq). Updated on October 26, 2023, <https://travel.gc.ca/destinations/iraq>.

<sup>84</sup> Raphael Veit, “Iraq: Failed State or Phoenix?” *AQ: Australian Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (2004): 15–40, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20638257>.

Furthermore, the post-invasion Iraqi government voided a 1957 law that made completion of basic education mandatory for women - which was a step meant to encourage women to study and complete their education. In addition, after 2003, many Iraqi women have been exposed to forced prostitution, abductions and killings by militia and other unknown groups.<sup>85</sup> Regrettably, since the invasion, abuse of women's rights has become a normal attitude, and any solutions are yet to be found.<sup>86</sup>

Seventh, the U.S. military failed to protect the Iraqi museums, ancient and historical sites during the post-combat phase of the 2003 war. This disastrous strategy impacts every sector of Iraqi society. The failure to take steps to prevent the looting of the National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad and the less publicized, though far more devastating, ongoing looting of Iraq's archaeological sites must be understood within this larger short-term context of failure to protect any number of arguably more important assets. The coalition invading forces conquered Baghdad on April 9, 2003 and left it as well as other Iraqi cities in a status of chaos, ruin, lawlessness in which stealing, looting, and destruction were rampant and allowed by American, British, and other western allies without any human responsibility to history and ancient Mesopotamia which is known to this day as the cradle of civilizations. They left to looters the National Museum of Iraq which was considered the home the finest collection of antiquities in the world and in the history of humanity, without any protection or caring for its ancient, historical, and cultural value. Its ransacking became the first disaster of the American invasion of Iraq as most media, prominent historians and archaeologists declared. It took less than 72 hours for the museum to be plundered and destroyed; this is the biggest catastrophic robbery in the history of ancient civilizations and humanity as the first known writing was born in Iraq. More than 270,000 artifacts carried away by looters and others by American soldiers. Everything that could be carried out has disappeared from the museum. The world was united in declaring this tragedy in outrage and grief. The pillaging and stealing of the Baghdad Museum are the top crimes and catastrophes in the twentieth-first century that have no parallel in world history. The US is responsible in front of history and law because the American forces permitted and helped the looters to access those precious sites without any attempt to prevent them from doing so.<sup>87</sup>

The American invasion is the worst, wicked, and brutal occupation in the history of Iraq. It took the country back centuries when the Mongols invaded Baghdad in 1258, destroying, looting and burning the city of ancients. Many historians and writers documented the brutality of Mongolian invasion started first by destroying the libraries of Baghdad upon invasion and the American invasion did simply the same. Many modern scholars, authors and historians described with grief how the Mongol soldiers looted and then destroyed libraries, mosques, palaces, and hospitals. Precious and oriental books from Baghdad's thirty-six public libraries were burned or torn apart, the barbarian looters used the leather covers of priceless books as sandals. The Mongols burned the grand buildings that had been the birthplace for knowledge

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<sup>85</sup> Nadjie Al-Ali and Nicola Pratt, "Women's Organizing and the Conflict in Iraq since 2003," *Feminist Review*, no. 88 (2008): 74-85, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30140876>.

<sup>86</sup> Troy McMullen, "Iraqi Women Targeted by Campaign of Violence," *abc NEWS*, February 12, 2009, <https://abcnews.go.com/International/story?id=3870202&page=1>.

<sup>87</sup> Andrew Lawler, "National Museum, Bagdad: 10 Years Later," *Archeology Magazine* <https://www.archaeology.org/exclusives/articles/779-national-museum-baghdad-looting-iraq>.

and the hard work of generations. They destroyed and burned them to the ground. The House of Wisdom (the Grand Library of Baghdad), contained countless valuable and priceless historical scripts, articles, documents, and books in different fields, ranging from medicine to astronomy – all were destroyed. Several historians described that the colour of water of Tigris River ran red from the blood of the scientists and philosophers killed. Images of violence toward books appear in the 14th century; and other historians described that the destruction of books thrown into the Tigris made the water turn black from the ink that seems to originate from the 16th century.<sup>88</sup>

Eighth, the education system in Iraq prior to 2003, was one of the best systems in the region; with enrolment rate roughly 100% for primary schooling and high levels of literacy for both of men and women. The educational system in Iraq, including its universities, colleges and schools were well recognized with international reputation. Today, the prominent Iraqi figures are living only in diaspora, while others were abducted or assassinated in Iraq. The Higher Education System, especially the scientific and technological institutions, were of an international standard, staffed by high quality teachers and professors. But, following the American invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003, today Iraq is more illiterate than it was 150 years ago, because the American occupying power began its occupation by destroying every civilized and developed aspect of Iraq's culture. Illiteracy is on the rise, and I am still wondering and asking American governments, "Where is the promised prosperity and advancement for the Iraqi state?"

Multiple reports have been published by UNESCO that addressed the terrible situation of the educational system in Iraq after 2003. One of them, published in March 2011, verified the urgency of the situation presently faced by Iraqi preceptors and scholars. According to UNESCO, several Middle Eastern countries, including Iraq, are far behind when it comes to reaching the education-for-all Millennium Development Goals due to nonstop instability and conflict. Decades of military and civil wars, UN warrants, instability and profitable decline have negatively affected education in Iraq.<sup>89</sup> Ignorance situations have risen dramatically over the once two decades after American irruption in 2003. According to data produced by UNESCO in September 2010, at least five million of Iraq's nearly 30 million people are illiterate, and this number will multiply in the coming decades if the same rotten political parties will continue to rule Iraq.<sup>90</sup> The International Medical Corps published reports that populations of teachers in Baghdad have fallen dramatically by 80%. The exodus and the assassination of academics has dramatically lowered educational standards and participated in the rapidly deteriorating conditions and a complete failure to establish a functioning educational system. Nowadays Iraq is one of the top countries with higher level of illiteracy, its educational system lost its accreditation and recognition which it had before the American invasion because of low standards, and the United States of America is the first to withdraw its recognition for Iraqi

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<sup>88</sup> Stuart Murray, *The Library: An Illustrated History* (New York: Skyhorse Pub, 2012) 54; Frazier I., "Invaders: Destroying Baghdad," *New Yorker Magazine*, April 25, 2005; Kallie Szczepanski, "How the Mongols Took Over Baghdad in 1258," *ThoughtCo*, April 20, 2019. <https://www.thoughtco.com/the-mongol-siege-of-baghdad-1258-195801>; James Raven, *Lost Libraries: The Destruction of Great Book Collections Since Antiquity* (Springer, 2004); Michal Biran, "Libraries, Books, and Transmission of Knowledge in Ilkhanid Baghdad," *Brill*, March 18, 2019.

<sup>89</sup> "UNESCO National Education Support Strategy: Republic of Iraq," Unesdoc.unesco.org, 2010-2014, accessed August 11, 2023, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark>.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*.

educational system although it used to recognize it before 2003, that is to say during the era of Baath party ruling.<sup>91</sup>

Ninth, the emergence of multiple radical Islamic movements and organizations, the most infamous of which is probably is ISIS (sometimes also referred to as ISIL, abbreviations used for the Islamic State). The big question is: where has the base of ISIS been established? Who fueled and fed those individuals to become professional extremists? Who trained and supported them? And where? Several journalists, Iraqi and American military officers from the prison of Camp Bucca in the south of Iraq, specifically in the Basra governorate at Umm Qasr, spoke on several occasions that ISIS had been born and organized in the prison of Bucca.

US soldiers used various torture methods on Iraqi prisoners as a Red Cross representative said that “their report documented a ‘broad pattern’ of abuse, as opposed to isolated incidents.”<sup>92</sup> A 2006 report by Amnesty International contained alleged violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention by U.S. military personnel at Camp Bucca when it stated : “These allegations include that ‘internees at Camp Bucca are alleged to have been exposed deliberately to extremes of both heat and cold, by being made to wait for hours in the heat of the sun while their accommodation was searched and forcibly showered with cold water and exposed to cold air conditioners.’ In 2007, a Canadian citizen and U.S. resident who had been a prisoner at Camp Bucca described abuse by military personnel. The prisoner, Hossam Shaltout, called Camp Bucca a ‘torture camp’ and said that prisoners were beaten and sexually humiliated. Shaltout said that his arms and legs had been hogtied by US soldiers who then placed scorpions on his body.”<sup>93</sup>

Later, the American authority team at the Camp motivated the detainees emotionally, psychologically and promoted them to be more radical in their faith, to be more hateful and hostile to other faiths and encouraged them to take revenge on other faithful and religious groups. It is important to mention that the famous leaders of ISIS had been graduated from Camp Bucca and under supervision of American soldiers.

The camp now represents an opening gate and a mysterious pool for many questions and analyses around the evolution, the history of the Islamic State as many of its leaders, including Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, were detained and trained there. Several former prison commanders, analysts, officers, soldiers belonging to several nationalities who preferred to remain anonymous for security reasons, but who worked at Camp Bucca, provided confirmation that this camp used secretly a particular behavioral and psychological regime meant to feed and stimulate thousands of Sunni detainees to become radicalized in their faith and thinking.

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<sup>91</sup> “The Destruction of Iraq’s Education System,” Accessed June 20, 2023, [https://www.gicj.org/iraq\\_conference\\_speeches/Dirk\\_Adriaensens\\_Presentation.pdf](https://www.gicj.org/iraq_conference_speeches/Dirk_Adriaensens_Presentation.pdf).

<sup>92</sup> “Americas | Red Cross Saw ‘Widespread Abuse,’” *BBC News*, May 8, 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/3694521.stm>.

<sup>93</sup> As explained in the following: “Beyond Abu Ghraib: Detention and Torture in Iraq,” *Amnesty International*, March 2006, Amnesty International, August 17, 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE14/001/2006/en/>; “U.S. resident who was detained in Iraq alleges abuse | McClatchy ‘’, accessed June 20, 2023, <https://www.mcclatchydc.com/latest-news/article24440587.html>.

Many sources referred to Camp Bucca as the primary base today's most potent jihadist force in the Middle East region was nourished. "A US compound commander stationed at that prison—and other military officials—have in recent weeks wondered whether Baghdadi's stint there radicalized him and put him on the path to taking over ISIS in 2010 and guiding the movement to its recent military victories. James Gerrond stated: Many of us at Camp Bucca were concerned that instead of just holding detainees, we had created a pressure cooker for extremism."<sup>94</sup> The strategy behind establishment this Camp Bucca is not surprising me, neither is it a new strategy, but it looks like a repetitive scenario of the Camp Ansar. The latter had been established by Israeli forces for Palestinian detainees in southern Lebanon in 1982 after the Israeli invasion there<sup>95</sup>; several years later, a radical Islamic movement emerged from that camp and it was named Hamas.<sup>96</sup>

The critical question is whether or not this is just a coincidence or an organized hidden strategy used by invading countries for decades to stir religious conflicts in the region in order to convert the invaded countries into broken and fragile states.

In addition, Curtis writes also that relationship between the UK and radical Islam started as the British government looked for a way to counter the rise of nationalism in the Middle East and maintain Western dominance over the wider Muslim world. Curtis argues that the British state has secretly supported Islamic extremist groups since the early 20th century in order to further their foreign policy goals in the Muslim world. Britain's policies in the Middle Eastern region aimed at maintaining in power and installing governments that will promote Western-friendly oil policies. This is especially the case in those rich countries with huge energy resources especially after the UK discovered the oil fields in Iraq and other Gulf countries which were British colonies in early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>97</sup>

Historically, military invasions have often been launched in order to create puppet states headed by pliant proxy leaders. They have also been a means to annex territory – the ruthless game plan used by Hitler and Stalin. In the case of Iraq, those who believe that the U.S. is after the country's oil often reduce the Bush administration's game plan to conquest, occupation, and economic exploitation. Their view is fuelled by the argument of neoconservatives who believe that U.S. military occupation will silence the armed opposition and allow the U.S. once and for all to secure strategic resources in the region. By contrast, radical critic Noam Chomsky holds that the U.S. has long harbored a plan for global empire and Iraq's occupation is one part of it.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Jenna McLaughlin, "Was ISIS Chief Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi Radicalized in a US-Run Prison in Iraq?" *Mother Jones*, <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/07/was-camp-bucca-pressure-cooker-extremism/>.

<sup>95</sup> Salah, Ta'mari, "Memories of an Ansar Prisoner," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 7, no. 2/3 (1985): 120–22, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41857774>.

<sup>96</sup> "Hamas Israel's Own Creation," [Blogs.timesofisrael.com](https://blogs.timesofisrael.com), accessed September 11, 2023, <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/hamas-israels-own-creation/>; "Blowback: How Israel Went from Helping Create Hamas to Bombing It," n.d. *The Intercept*. <https://theintercept.com/2018/02/19/hamas-israel-palestine-conflict/>.

<sup>97</sup> Mark Curtis, *Secret Affairs: Britain's Collusion with Radical Islam* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2018).

<sup>98</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Failed States: The Abuse of Power and the Assault on Democracy* (New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt, 2006).

Analytical and logical thinking can conclude certainly that the situation in Iraq after the invasion in 2003 represents not only an American failed policy but that it was a planned policy to deepen religious, sectarian war in the whole region beyond Iraq solely and to bring backward Iraq by several centuries.

When gauging the role ethnosectarianism would play in an occupied Iraq, the Bush administration may have fallen for one of two opposing fallacies. The first was the U.S. “greatly exaggerated traditional hostility between the various ethnic/religious communities in Iraq, and has consciously sought to exacerbate such divisions following the percept of *divide et impera* (divide and rule), the traditional formula for imperial rule from the Roman Empire to the British *raj* in India”<sup>99</sup>

## 2.2 – Failure of the State of Iraq after the American Invasion

The year 2003 was not only a turning point in history of Iraq, but I would frankly say an ominous and dismal date in the history humanity. America ordered the dissolution of the national Iraqi army and changed the secular governmental system and legislation that had been adopted after 1921 to a religious and sectarian governmental policy.<sup>100</sup> We could see the continuous consequences of American policy two decades later. Iraq cannot recover from its numerous crises, conflicts, and cleavages, has lost its intellectuals, scholars and professional in almost all the fields including medicine, sciences, engineering, chemistry, energy, physics, biology, astronomy, and others because they are exposed to intimidation through violence, kidnapping and assassinations. Human right reports refer to thousands of Iraqi scientists having been killed and consecutive post-2003 Iraqi governments have not been able or not willing to solve the murders and bring the perpetrators to justice, nor willing to even register all the assassinations by unknown groups to this day.<sup>101</sup>

Today, Iraq is a failed state, it is a state of crises and conflicts. The continuous spread of non-governmental and unauthorized weapons, including the heavy and advanced weapons, has reached frightening levels in Iraq. It is simply a state of multiple private armed militias that compete against and beat the weak governmental forces, alongside a huge economic crisis because of the propagation of dangerous corruption at financial, judicial, political, and administrative levels. Corruption is rampant and has become a concrete reality and an inherited legacy in all the Iraqi institutions. This massive corruption devastates the articulations of the Iraqi state on different levels and affecting large segments of the workforce, leaving a large percentage of Iraqi youth without employment opportunities – especially government jobs – if one is without a political or religious affiliation and connection. Corruption also leaves Iraq in the worst financial and

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<sup>99</sup> “U.S. Divide-and-Rule Politics Provoke Sectarian Conflict: Colonial ‘Constitution’ Farce in Iraq,” *The Internationalist*, October 2005, <http://www.internationalist.org/iraqconstitutionfarce.html>.

<sup>100</sup> Mark Thompson, “How Disbanding the Iraqi Army Fueled ISIS,” *Time Magazine*, May 28, 2015, <https://time.com/3900753/isis-iraq-syria-army-united-states-military>.

<sup>101</sup> “International News,” American Physical Society, accessed August 16, 2023, <https://www.aps.org/publications/apsnews/200805/international.cfm>.

economic crisis since its establishment in 1921 despite its wealth and its huge revenue from selling petrol after 2003.<sup>102</sup>

Corruption is present in Iraqi armed forces, too. A culture of greed encouraged and condoned the politicians has led many in the armed forces to engage in looting and stealing most of the country's resources, either directly or indirectly in an organized and systematic way and more without any accountability to the judiciary or Iraqi people as the legal institutes and the courts are themselves obedient to the political parties.<sup>103</sup> Even, the government weapons that are allegedly controlled by the military and state institutions are under the command of the Commander-in-Chief of non-authorized and non-governmental armed forces.<sup>104</sup>

The sectarian political parties have contributed dramatically to the collapse of state institutions through appointing incompetent but loyal clients to leading and sensitive positions. All that matters in these appointments are religious and ethnic loyalties. As a net result, the state appointment in Iraqi institutional and governmental ministries does not depend on professional experience and specialization, but on the obedience, alliance and loyalty to the political party or militia. This has prevented the hiring of competent people and the reconstruction and development of the country.<sup>105</sup> In addition, the Kurdistan region, which advertises itself as a safe region, the reality is no better than in other regions. The Peshmerga forces are directly linked to the Kurdistan autonomous region's president and their loyalty is pledged to their leader and not to the Iraqi state. "They are divided into two parts: the first is led by the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the second is led by the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. Their loyalty is not to the Iraqi state, but for Kurdish leaders' benefits only, as occurred in Kirkuk and its outskirts in 2017."<sup>106</sup> Their loyalty to their Kurdish leaders and their entourage led them to use their weapons to suppress, arrest and kill hundreds of thousands of Kurdish protestors over the past five years.<sup>107</sup>

The American government and its allies kept silent on the aggressive repression of protests and demonstrations in the Kurdistan region, exactly as they were silent when hundreds of thousands of Iraqi people, especially in Baghdad and southern Iraq who had been exposed to violent repression, arrest, torturing, kidnapping, and killing by the ruling political parties and their militias. In addition, many journalists from different nationalities were killed because they were

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<sup>102</sup> Azhar Al-Rubaie, "The Price of Corruption in Iraq: Kadhimi Faces the Challenge of Systemic Reform," *The Washington Institute*, November 10, 2020, [www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/price-corruption-iraq-kadhimi-faces-challenge-systemic-reform](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/price-corruption-iraq-kadhimi-faces-challenge-systemic-reform).

<sup>103</sup> Zaid Al-Ali, *Struggle for Iraq's Future: How Corruption, Incompetence and Sectarianism Have Undermined Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014); Reva Dhingra Alshamary and Marsin Alshamary, "Corruption Is the Forgotten Legacy of the Iraq Invasion," *Brookings*, April 3, 2023. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2023/04/03/corruption-is-the-forgotten-legacy-of-the-iraq-invasion/#:~:text=Iraq>.

<sup>104</sup> Michael Knights, Alex Almeida "Militias Are Threatening Public Safety in Iraq," *The Washington Institute*, Aug 14, 2019, accessed August 11, 2023. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/militias-are-threatening-public-safety-iraq>.

<sup>105</sup> T. Y. Ismael, and Jacqueline S. Ismael, *Iraq in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Routledge, 2017), <https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1304&context=jigs>; Farhad Alaaldin, "A State in Collapse: Iraq's Security and Governance Failures," *The Washington Institute*, June 2, 2021. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/state-collapse-iraqs-security-and-governance-failures>.

<sup>106</sup> Alaaldin, "A State in Collapse: Iraq's Security and Governance Failures."

<sup>107</sup> "Iraq - United States Department of State," United States Department of State, March 20, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/iraq/>; "Iraq 2020: Human Rights Report," <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/IRAQ-2020-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf>.

reporting the truth about the situation in Iraq. It is sad to mention that many thousands of Iraqis are still missing, and their families are trying to find out whether or not they are still living. Today, Iraq is classified as having the fifth largest armed forces in the world, and is one of the most corrupt countries in the world, according to Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index.<sup>108</sup>

Any visitor to Iraq before 2003 and after 2003 would clearly discover that “any city in Iraq, including the Kurdistan region, shows the extent of the decline, devastation, and failure in civil sectors. This reflects the absence of social justice and shows the deterioration level of education in teaching, schools, and universities.”<sup>109</sup> In addition, any visitor would notice the underdevelopment of the health and educational sectors, the failure to solve problems of forcibly displaced people and to secure their return to their homes; and absence of real plans to reconstruct the areas which were reportedly liberated from ISIS occupation.<sup>110</sup>

It is not surprising for me or anybody who visited or lived in Iraq before 2003 to realize that all the current government buildings in Iraq from north to south, east to west, the roads connecting cities, the bridges in the capital Baghdad and the other provinces, hospitals, public universities and others were all built in the past era, mainly during the ruling period when the Baath party “modernized the countryside and rural areas of Iraq, mechanizing agriculture and establishing farm cooperatives (Iraq's economy was based almost exclusively on agriculture until the 1950s, but after the 1958 revolution economic development was considerable. By 1980 Iraq had the second largest economy in the Arab world, after Saudi Arabia, and the third largest in the Middle East and had developed a complex, centrally planned economy dominated by the state.)”<sup>111</sup> Saddam's organizational prowess was credited with Iraq's rapid pace of development in the 1970s; growth, development and evolution went forward at such a swift and fevered pitch that more than two million persons from other Arab countries, European countries including western and eastern such as Romania and even Yugoslavia, worked in Iraq to meet the growing demand for labor.”<sup>112</sup> Iraqi government's successful industrialization and infrastructure development started in the 1970s, and included a broad spectrum of projects to boost Iraq's rankings internationally in medical, scientific, technological and other sectors. These diverse programs included irrigation projects, railway and highway construction, rural electrification, building of hospitals, building of schools and universities, scholarship programs, industrial factories, pharmaceutical, medical factories; and other accomplishments, since the Baath party ascended to power in 1968.

Since 2003, the successive governments have not built any new buildings, neither reconstructed nor expanded any infrastructure of the state although the huge federal budgets that exceed more than \$150 billion per year since 2003. The reason is simple: all the money coming

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<sup>108</sup> Transparency International, “Corruption Perceptions Index,” <https://www.transparency.org>.

<sup>109</sup> Alaaldin, “A State in Collapse: Iraq's Security and Governance Failures.”

<sup>110</sup> “Iraq | History, Map, Flag, Population, & Facts,” Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed on August 9, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Iraq/Economy>; Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists, Ba'athists, and Free Officers* (Princeton Studies on the Near East. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978); Hamasaed Sarhang, and Garrett Nada, “Iraq Timeline: Since the 2003 War,” *United States Institute of Peace*, May 29, 2020, <https://www.usip.org/iraq-timeline-2003-war>

<sup>111</sup> “Iraq | History, Map, Flag, Population, & Facts.”

<sup>112</sup> Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, 223.

from the energy revenue has been stolen and pocketed by the ruling parties and militia groups that have enriched themselves and use it to continue to fund their parties.<sup>113</sup>

Yes, Iraq is a failed state, and it has been shut down in all respects: security, financial, economic, scientific, educational, political, legislation, democracy, freedom, infrastructure, basic civil life needs and other sectors. Moreover, the continuous failure of state makes it unable to provide protection and equal rights for different ethnic and religious populations and especially for minorities ever since 2003 which is frustrating for those marginalized groups. Most of the minorities who were forced to escape during the Islamic State occupation have not returned yet because of the presence of the many non-governmental militias (Shia and Kurdish) still active in their areas of origin that are controlling, occupying their lands and houses instead of ISIS since 2014 till now.

Furthermore, many Sunni men in western provinces, who were kidnapped and arrested by the militias, are still missing after being arrested. To this day, their families have no information on them, as the families themselves live in miserable circumstances, and they are not allowed to go back to their homes and lands because the militias have been occupying their regions after ISIS left. Iraq's sectarian political parties who came to power after 2003 are keen on practicing all the aspects of dictatorship to maintain the current religious, ethnic power-sharing legislation, to keep the same sectarian constitution that they adopted with American blessing in 2005. They lead Iraq to be a collapsed and demolished state and still the American policy supports and keeps them in power.<sup>114</sup>

Thus, the hope to have a real, equitable, secular, stable, unified and democratic country named Iraq is a dream that would never become true if successive American governments continue to support those parties without listening to the voice of the Iraqi people or a real American interest to support the building of a strong, democratic, secular and united Iraq as it claimed. Yes, Iraq is a collapsed and failed state, very much unlike the state that was united, stable, secure and a home for all Iraqis before the American invasion in 2003. Iraq has become a symbol for the American imperialistic strategy. It is painful, distressing, and grievous to see one of rapidly growing developing country in twentieth century turned into a ruined and fractured state after the 2003 American invasion.

## Conclusion

Chapter 2 critically examines the American policy in Iraq, suggesting that it may have been a calculated strategy to turn Iraq into a failed state. It delves into the post-invasion changes, particularly the adoption of sectarian and ethnic legislation that replaced Iraq's previously secular

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<sup>113</sup> Alaaldin, "A State in Collapse: Iraq's Security and Governance Failures."

<sup>114</sup> Raphael Veit, "Iraq: Failed State or Phoenix?" *AQ: Australian Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (2004): 15–40. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20638257>; Anthony H. Cordesman, "Iraq as a Failed State," *CSIS*, accessed June 20, 2023, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/iraq-failed-state>; "From Invasion to Failed State: Iraq's Democratic Disillusionment." *OpenDemocracy*, July 23, 2021, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia/from-invasion-to-failed-state-iraqs-democratic-disillusionment/>; "The 'Non-State' State in Iraqi Political Discourse and Action," Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, April 21, 2021, <https://dayan.org/content/non-state-state-iraqi-political-discourse-and-action>.

governance. The chapter discusses how the U.S. influenced the restructuring of Iraqi society and governance, leading to an ethno-sectarian state with deep divisions. It further argues that this restructuring not only undermined the nation-building process but also entrenched divisions that have had lasting negative impacts on Iraqi society. The chapter provides evidence that the American policy, far from establishing democracy, actually demolished the Iraqi state's cohesion, favoring a small political elite while marginalizing the majority. It concludes that the American intervention, rather than fostering a unified democratic Iraq, resulted in long-term instability and societal fragmentation.

## Chapter 3: Cascades of Civil War in Iraq and the Extermination of Christians after the American Invasion

### 3.1 – The Continuous Cascades of Civil War and Demographic Changes in Iraqi Regions after 2003

The Constitution of 2005, emphasizing the sectarian division of power in the country, has sparked and maintained an ongoing civil war that has deepened day by day, year by year, decade after decade and will widen the wounds and the divisions inside Iraqi society. All Iraqi provinces, Iraqi cities and villages are affected markedly by this heinous tsunami of civil and sectarian war that has left no single region immune to it. The civil war in Iraq has forced millions of Iraqis to seek refuge abroad while millions of others have become refugees in their own country and home without rights, living in miserable conditions with no support.

Iraq has witnessed the emergence of multiple private Shia militias with Iranian loyalties that continue to seek revenge and engage in retaliation attacks against the Arab Sunni, Christian and other non-Muslim populations. The militias conducted barbarian attacks on civil Iraqi citizens and, worst of all, is that the governmental Iraqi forces covered up and supported them because they too are run by Shia political groups.

The civil sectarian war in Iraq led to the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives of Iraqi people and continues to claim more souls as the cascades of this civil war are running without any true and honest attempt from the Iraqi or American governments to quell it. Moreover, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis had been killed by American troops since the invasion of Iraq in 2003.<sup>115</sup> Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians, mostly Arab Sunni and non-Muslim religion, were forced to leave their homes under Shiite militia threats. These crimes are a new chapter in the history of human genocide and religious extermination that will leave a stigma not only on current generations but will propagate to future generations and to the whole region.<sup>116</sup> Iraqi people lost faith in God's justice and any hope to retrieve their former country. This will lead to a continuous cascade of conflicts. Lonergan explained the negative influence of losing one's and society's faith in his *Method in Theology*: "Most of all, faith has the power of undoing decline. Decline disrupts a culture with conflicting ideologies. It inflicts on individuals the social, economic, and psychological pressures that for human frailty amount to determinism. It multiplies and heaps up the abuses and absurdities that breed resentment, hatred, anger, violence."<sup>117</sup> Despite claiming to belong to different religious groups, the various religious denominations in Iraq seem to have lost their faith. They self-victimize themselves and thus always blame the other for their misfortunes, in order to take revenge on them. Divided loyalties have seriously disrupted the Iraqi culture. People have stopped seeing any humanity in the other, and, as Lonergan has it, these abuses and absurdities have bred resentment, hatred, anger, and violence toward the other.

Many of Baghdad's historically mixed communities and families underwent planned and major demographic changes because of the forced evacuation of local residential populations. The continuous presence of weak central governance and religious, sectarian political parties has

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<sup>115</sup> Catherine Lutz, Neta Crawford, and Stephanie Savell, "Iraqi Civilians," The Costs of War Project, accessed June 30, 2023, <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/human/civilians/iraqi>.

<sup>116</sup> Joe Stork, "Iraq: Possible War Crimes by Shia Militia," *Human Rights Watch*, October 27, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/31/iraq-possible-war-crimes-shia-militia>.

<sup>117</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 117.

allowed for the capturing of the power of ruling Iraq after 2003 under the blessing of American governments and the Coalition Provisional Authority. Their ruling power, which is based on ethno-sectarian power-sharing arrangements similar to the consociational system in Lebanon that I mentioned in Chapter 2, has not worked. Instead of bringing society together, it further fragmented it, which in turn will lead to continuous cascades of religious and sectarian conflict with the loss of any common Iraqi national identity.<sup>118</sup>

The various ministries of the Iraqi state have been converted into ethno-sectarian fiefdoms. This means that security, social justice, welfare, and job prospects have become organised according to sect-centric corruption, party loyalty, and favouritism. Many Iraqi officials bemoan the fact that Iraq does not have ministries and institutions but fiefdoms that belong to individual parties, which is the net result of ethno-sectarian fights for power that have filled a political and security vacuum after the American invasion in 2003 and, of course, it is done with American agreement and support.

### 3.2 – Extermination of Iraqi Christians after 2003

#### a – History of Christianity in Iraq

Historically, modern Iraq corresponds to ancient Mesopotamia, the land between the rivers Tiger and Euphrates. After the emergence of Christianity, Iraq was mainly Christian until the birth of Islam in the mid 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>119</sup> “Although the starting of predominancy of Arab Muslims in the 7th century, Assyria or Chaldea (also known as Athura and Assuristan) was dissolved by the Arabs as a geopolitical entity, however, native Chaldean, Assyrian scholars and doctors played an influential role in Iraq.”<sup>120</sup>

It is worth mentioning that the period prior to the establishment of Abbasid rule in AD 750, pastoral Kurds moved into north region of Iraq (Mesopotamia) from Persian Azerbaijan, taking advantage of an unstable situation in the region at that time. “Many villages, cities in northern and northeastern ancient Assyria and Babylonia were attacked violently by the Kurds of Persian Azerbaijan, ‘who looted, killed and enslaved the indigenous population,’ and the Kurds were moving into various regions in the east of ancient Assyria.”<sup>121</sup> The chronicler Ibn Hawqal spoke about the state to which the region of Shahrzoor had been reduced, describing it as a “town, which was overpowered by the Kurds, and whose environs as far as Iraq had been enjoying prosperity”. Another modern source described the region of Adiabene, the plain of Hadyab, was totally inhabited dominantly by the Nestorians (followers of the former Patriarch of Constantinople who was condemned as a heretic at the Third Ecumenical Council of Ephesus in 431 AD) but the Kurds

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<sup>118</sup> Amna Nawaz and Dan Sagalyn, “The Long-Lasting Impact of the U.S. Invasion of Iraq,” *PBS*, March 29, 2023, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/the-long-lasting-impact-of-the-u-sc-invasion-of-iraq>.

<sup>119</sup> Shak Hanish, “The Chaldean Assyrian Syriac People of Iraq: An Ethnic Identity Problem,” *Digest of Middle East Studies* 17, no. 1 (2008):32–47. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1949-3606.2008.tb00145.x>.

<sup>120</sup> Suha Rassam, *Christianity in Iraq* (Grace Wing Publications, 2009).

<sup>121</sup> Rassam, *Christianity in Iraq*; Hirmis Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans: Intercommunal relations on the periphery of the Ottoman Empire* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2008).

have occupied it and depopulated it of its original indigenous people by brutal persecution and forced them to leave their regions.<sup>122</sup>

Later, “another Islamic group, the Seljuks, invaded the Mesopotamian regions with the support of Kurdish tribes. They destroyed whatever they encountered, captured, and enslaved the Christian women. Nineveh, historically a Christian city after the second century, was repeatedly attacked.”<sup>123</sup> “The historian Ibn Khaldun wrote that ‘the Kurds spoiled and spread horror everywhere’ to make the demographic change and to force Iraqi Christians to leave.”<sup>124</sup>

Hirmis wrote in his book:

By the end of the 13th century there were twelve Nestorian dioceses in a strip from Peking to Samarkand. Northern Iraq remained predominantly Assyrian, Eastern Aramaic speaking and solid Christian who were ready to sacrifice their lives to keep their faith in Jesus. By reaching the 14th-century Muslim warlord of Turco-Mongol descent, Timur (Tamerlane), made a huge damage, devastation, and vandalism after he conquered Persia, Mesopotamia, and Syria; the civilian population was decimated, and the ancient city of Ashur was finally desolated by the Assyrians after a 4000-year history. Timur had 90,000 Assyrian Christians beheaded in Baghdad and 70,000 in Tikrit city. Once again brutal genocides took place against the Iraqi Christians to eradicate them from their original homeland. These Christians never thought to deny Jesus or fight by sword to defend themselves and they put their total trust with confidence in their Lord. They followed Jesus’ teachings to love and pray for their enemies even if their enemies took advantage of their solid beliefs in Jesus’ teachings and considered them a weak population. Tamerlane rewarded the Kurds for their support by settling them in the wrecked regions, which had been inhabited originally by the followers of the Church of the East.<sup>125</sup> In the 16th century, the Ottomans reinforced their eastern border with what they considered loyal Sunni Kurdish tribes. They settled Kurdish tribes in the Christian regions and in 1583 Sultan Murad IV gave huge provinces to the Kurdish tribe of Mokri.... Many regions with numerous Assyrians, Chaldean and Armenian monuments and monasteries became completely populated and captured by the Kurds after the Battle of Chaldiran and Kurdish historians wrote that "the land was ethnically cleared at this time from its indigenous inhabitants who were expelled by force."<sup>126</sup>

Hirmis also mentioned in his book that:

The Kurdish historian Ali al Qurani affirmed that Sarsink had “been an Assyrian town and that the Kurds who settled there were immigrants from Persian Azerbaijan.” Phebe Marr noted that “in the north too, many of the Kurdish tribes of Persia migrated to Iraq.” British traveler, James Rich, observed in northern Iraq the "rapid influx of Kurds from Persia and that their advance never ceased". He noted that "some ten thousand families, comprising seventy thousand souls, were constantly moving across the border". Southgate also

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans*.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

observed the "rapid advance and settlement of the Kurds from Persia into northern Iraq" around that time. Dr. Grant gave an eyewitness account, he stated: "Beth Garrnae (the region of Arbil-Kirkuk) once contained a large population of Nestorian Christians, they are now reduced to a few scattered villages under power of Kurds at that time. In 1933, the Kurds began a campaign of looting against Christian settlements and expropriated their lands. The Christians fled to Simmele, where they were also persecuted."<sup>127</sup>

## b – The Life of Iraqi Christian Population Before and After the American invasion

Under the Baath Party rule from 1968 until 2003, Iraqi Christians enjoyed security, protection, and equal rights with the country's Muslim majority. It is important to mention also that Iraqi governments granted Iraqi citizenship to many immigrant and refugee Christians who came to Iraq searching for security and protection after they escaped Ottoman and Persian persecution in the first decades of twentieth century.

After the invasion of Iraq in 2003, Iraqi Christians were among the first groups targeted amid the breakdown in security and sectarian bloodbath that prevailed for years. Multiple planned persecutions and violence against indigenous people rose dramatically with multiple reports of abduction, bombings, and killings. Many Christians were pressured to convert to Islam under threat of death or expulsion, and women were ordered to wear Islamic dress and they were forced to marry Muslim men. Many reports from several organizations explained that the people in Iraq and specially in Mosul, were stopped by force in the streets, asked for their identity cards, and shot if they had a first or last name indicating Chaldean, Assyrian, or Christian origin. Hundreds of people, "including 41 hostages and priests, were killed after an attack on an Assyrian Catholic church in Baghdad. A group affiliated to Al-Qaeda, Islamic State of Iraq, stated that Iraq's indigenous people were a 'legitimate target'."<sup>128</sup> The Chaldeans consider land as part of their identity and they see themselves as an indigenous people of Iraq from the North to South.<sup>129</sup>

The series of bombings and mortar attacks targeted Christian-majority regions of Baghdad to push the indigenous people (Chaldeans, Assyrians, Syriac, Aramaic, and others) to leave Iraq. Yet even more terrible events happened when the ISIS in Iraq began a campaign of savage and harsh persecution against indigenous peoples of Iraq by issuing a decree that all Christians in the area of its control must pay a special "protection tax" of approximately \$470 per family or convert to Islam or die.<sup>130</sup> Today, the population of indigenous people has diminished from about 1,500,000 in 2003 to about 150,000 due to their continuous exodus and immigration because of religious and political persecution. Frankly, today the Chaldean people are exposed to the worst

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> "Iraqi Christians' long history," BBC, November 1, 2010, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-11669994#:~:text=Christians%20have%20inhabited%20what%20is,they%20numbered%20about%20one%20million>.

<sup>129</sup> "Iraqi Christians' long history.," Sargon Donabed, *Reforging a Forgotten History: Iraq and the Assyrians in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015); Frances Harrison, "Christians Besieged in Iraq," BBC, March 13, 2008, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7295145.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7295145.stm).: "Who are the Chaldean Christians?," BBC, <http://news.bbc.co.uk>, 2008.

<sup>130</sup> "Iraqi Christians Flee after ISIS Issue Mosul Ultimatum," BBC, July 18, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28381455#>.

attacks, fighting and challenges if they decide to stay in their homeland which belonged to them for thousands of years. Many historians consider this extermination policy after the American invasion in 2003 as one of the most drastic in the nation's history since the establishment of ancient Mesopotamia. Iraqi Christians had been exposed to a planned strategy of extermination and relocation similar to that applied to the Sunni population in Iraq. The remaining ones who continue to live in the north of Iraq, specifically in Iraqi Kurdistan region, are suffering from massive pressure and persecution of their culture and language, and they have been forced in schools to learn and speak Kurdish.

In addition, they are facing discrimination and difficulty to find jobs because of their faith. On the other hand, they cannot return to their lands and homes in Nineveh because that territory is still under the occupation of Shia and Kurdish militias after ending the ISIS war in 2014. Their ancestral lands had been transferred from one militia named ISIS to another type of militia that is controlling and holding their lands by the same “language,” which is the language of weapons and power.<sup>131</sup> It is sad to mention that most historians and statistical analysts are predicting that Iraqi Christians are in danger of extinction and probably the twentieth-first century is the last century for their presence in the country. Their historical Aramaic language with ancient versions that were born thousands of years ago will likely go extinct. The programmed attacks against Iraqi churches, Iraqi Christians, and Christian institutions started before ISIS. It was begun by Shiite militias who are working to convert the Iraqi population to the Shiite faith and displace other religious populations from the major provinces of Iraq, including Baghdad. Moreover, their displacement from the Nineveh plains has long term demographic, economic, strategic and political sequels because these areas are rich in minerals, petrol, water and Kurdish militia planned to control these regions for centuries in order benefit from that fortune.

#### c – The Most Recent Attempt to Marginalize Iraqi Christians

It is important to mention that the most recent programmed attack against Iraqi Christians is the decision of current president of Iraq, Abdul Latif Rashid, to revoke a 2013 decree by his predecessor, President Jalal Talabani, by which he recognized Louis Raphael I Sako as the Patriarch of the Chaldean Church in Iraq. Sako reacted by threatening to take up residence in Iraqi Kurdistan and accusing Rashid of favoring a militia with Iranian ties that was trying to steal Iraqi Christian possessions and properties throughout Iraq not only in Nineveh. Louis Sako is a prelate who had been appointed by Synod of Bishops of the Chaldean Catholic Church in January 2013.<sup>132</sup> This decision to interfere in church affairs in an attempt to remove the leader of Chaldean Church reminds us again of the Mongolian era when the invaders occupied Baghdad and interfered in the appointment and removal of the leaders of Church of the East in Iraq to secure their silence and to control their church. For years, Louis Sako spoke fearlessly and honestly about the miserable circumstances and the systematic discrimination policy against Iraqi Christians in all aspects, including jobs, university admissions, looting and occupying their lands and houses in the Nineveh Plains and elsewhere. In addition, he speaks transparently about the policy of political Shia Islamic

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<sup>131</sup> Yousif Kalian, “The Nineveh Plains and the Future of Minorities in Iraq,” *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, February 7, 2017, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/nineveh-plains-and-future-minorities-iraq>; “Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) authorities, 2.15.3. Christians,” European Union Agency for Asylum, June 30, 2023, <https://euaa.europa.eu/country-guidance-iraq-2021/2153-christians>.

<sup>132</sup> “الكلدان يعدون سحب المرسوم من ساكو قراراً كيدياً” Azzaman, accessed July 10, 2023, <https://www.azzaman.com>.

parties and militias with Iranian loyalty that try to marginalize and persecute Iraqi Christians after 2003.<sup>133</sup>

Although most Iraqi Christians are living now in diaspora, they continue to keep their Aramaic language and heritage abroad. Their insistence and firmness come from their love for their ancient history and land.

## Conclusion

Chapter 3 focuses on the aftermath of the American invasion, particularly the continuous civil war and demographic changes in Iraqi regions. It explores the strategies employed by Iraqi governments and religious militias post-2003, highlighting their role in exacerbating sectarian divisions and ethnic conflicts. The chapter provides a detailed analysis of how these divisions led to the extermination of Iraqi Christians and other non-Muslim groups, significantly altering the country's demographic composition. It describes the transformation of Iraq into a battleground for various factions, each vying for power and control. The chapter also examines the consequences of these conflicts, including internal and external displacement of populations, the rise of extremist groups, and the profound impact on Iraq's social fabric. It concludes that the American invasion and subsequent policies fundamentally altered Iraq's demographic and social landscape, leading to continuous conflict and suffering.

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<sup>133</sup> "الكلدان يعدون سحب المرسوم من ساكو قراراً كيدياً"، Azzaman, accessed July 10, 2023, <https://www.azzaman.com>

## Summary and Conclusions

The current thesis presents a critical examination of the interplay between religion and politics in Iraq following the 2003 American-led invasion. This comprehensive analysis not only delves into the historical and cultural contexts but also scrutinizes the ramifications of foreign intervention in Iraq's socio-political fabric. The thesis stands out for its depth, drawing from my personal experiences as an Iraqi citizen and my academic insights into the broader geopolitical dynamics.

### American Strategy and Its Impacts

I begin my thesis by articulating a bold premise: the American invasion of Iraq was a strategic maneuver aimed at dividing and ultimately controlling the country. I argue that this was part of a broader imperialistic agenda of the United States to maintain its global economic and military supremacy. The invasion, justified under the pretexts of combating terrorism and disarming Iraq of its non-existent weapons of mass destruction, resulted in profound socio-political upheavals.

The thesis profoundly critiques the U.S. government's role in dismantling the secular Baath party and facilitating the rise of a radical Islamic Shia party and favoring Kurdish autonomy in a federal state, as opposed to the earlier national-unity state. This shift, in my view, was a calculated move to incite ethnic and religious discord, thereby weakening the state's coherence and its regional influence. The analysis here is notable for its directness in linking American foreign policy to the escalation of sectarian conflicts in Iraq.

### War and Its Ethical Implications

The thesis delves into the moral dimensions of war, drawing on theological perspectives from both the Old and New Testaments. It contrasts the often-conflicting messages about war and peace in religious texts, highlighting the ethical complexities surrounding wars of aggression. The thesis underscores the severe human costs of such conflicts, particularly on civilians, and questions the justifications often provided for them.

This exploration serves as a critical backdrop to understanding the 2003 Iraq War, suggesting that it was neither ethical nor justifiable under the traditional criteria for a 'just war.' The thesis intricately connects these ethical considerations to the broader narrative of war and peace, making a compelling case for re-evaluating the moral grounds of military interventions.

### Research Questions and Methodology

The thesis is structured around pivotal questions that explore the interconnections between war, religion, and extremism. It probes whether wars incite religious extremism, the extent to which religion can be a driving force for war, and the transformation of military conflicts into civil wars. Furthermore, it investigates the development of radical religious groups because of wars and contemplates the hypothetical trajectory of Iraq's secularism in the absence of American

intervention. The methodology adopted in the thesis is a blend of historical analysis, theological study, and personal narrative performed in an autoethnographic mode. This multidimensional approach allows me to present a nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in the relationship between war, religion, and politics.

### Cultural and Societal Transformation in Iraq

One of the most poignant aspects of the thesis is its portrayal of Iraq's transformation post-2003. It paints a vivid picture of the pre-invasion era, marked by a rich cultural mosaic and ethnic-religious harmony. The invasion, it argues, upended this harmony, leading to the loss of Iraqi national identity and the rise of sectarianism and religious discrimination. My personal anecdotes, coupled with historical data, provide a powerful narrative of how the invasion disrupted the social fabric of Iraq. I underscore the tragic irony of how a country known for its cultural plurality became a battleground of ethnic and religious conflicts.

### Religious Discrimination and Sectarian Conflicts

A significant portion of the thesis is dedicated to discussing the intensified religious discrimination and sectarian conflicts post-invasion. It argues that the policies implemented by the post-invasion governments exacerbated these divides, marginalizing certain religious and ethnic groups, particularly Sunnis and non-Muslim populations. The thesis provides detailed accounts of how these policies affected various aspects of life, including education and employment, leading to a deeply fragmented society. My analysis reveals the extent to which religious identity became a determinant factor in the post-invasion Iraqi society, driving wedges between communities that once coexisted peacefully.

### Failure of American Policy in Iraq

I am unequivocal in my assessment of the American policy in Iraq: a failure that resulted in a fractured state with deep-rooted sectarian divisions. I critique the American administration for its lack of foresight and understanding of Iraq's complex social dynamics. The thesis argues that the U.S. policy was more focused on geopolitical and strategic interests rather than the welfare of the Iraqi people. This section of the thesis is particularly significant as it challenges the narrative of the invasion being a liberating mission. Instead, I depict it as a myopic policy that destabilized an entire nation and left it grappling with internal conflicts and an identity crisis.

### War Crimes and Legal Accountability

My thesis does not shy away from addressing the alleged war crimes committed by U.S. forces in Iraq. I call for legal accountability for these actions, citing specific instances such as the use of chemical weapons and the killing of civilians. This segment of the thesis is a poignant reminder of the often-overlooked human costs of war and the necessity for international legal mechanisms to address such atrocities.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the thesis offers a profound and critical examination of the consequences of the American invasion of Iraq. My analysis, grounded in personal experience, academic research, and ethical considerations, presents a compelling narrative of the invasion's ramifications. The thesis is not just an academic exercise; it is a poignant reminder of the human costs of political decisions and the enduring impact of war on societies. My work stands as a significant contribution to the understanding of modern Middle Eastern politics, the complex relationship between religion and politics, and the ethical dimensions of war. It is a valuable resource for scholars, policymakers, and anyone interested in the intricacies of international relations and the profound consequences of military interventions.

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