

## Chaos, Disorder and Uncertainty: US Misplaced Priorities Behind the Rise of Militancy in Iraq

Abdul Wali Maooz,<sup>1</sup> Mati Ullah Tareen,<sup>2</sup> & Abdul Wadood<sup>3</sup>

### Abstract:

*Chaos, disorder, and uncertainty in Iraq is the result of various events and misguided and misdirected American policies that brought Iraq to the brink of instability. This article highlights the causes that fueled sectarian-based violence in Iraq after the United States (US) led coalition forces overthrew Saddam from power. It explores how coalition forces' policies in Iraq helped in the marginalization of Sunni minority, who later tested their luck through an organized armed struggle and joined the anti-states forces. Through content analysis methodology, the study investigated how the Iraqi leadership indiscriminately handled the volatile scenario of Iraq. The research uses case studies to investigate the de-Baathification process that led Iraq to a breeding ground for militants to operate. The internal divide in the era of chaos under the rule of PM Maliki has been analyzed to examine militancy based on sectarian lines in between Shia and Sunni that spread and took over Iraq's key cities.*

**Key Words:** de-Baathification, regime change, detention, sectarian divide, security, turmoil

### INTRODUCTION

“Regime change did not begin with the administration of George W. Bush but has been an integral part of American foreign policy,” says Kinzer (2006) who questions, why powerful states strike the weaker one? He answers this that they do it to impose their ideology, increase its power, or gain control of valuable resources. Seeking regional or global hegemony, the United States (US) has long been backing extremist organizations and toppling regimes at home (regional) and abroad.

This article discusses US-led coalition forces invasion of Iraq in 2003 and its subsequent formation of the Shiite-led political administration under Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki. Content analysis method has been used to investigate the policy framework designed by the indigenous and foreign officials during the post-Saddam regime in Iraq. Case studies have been used as a research design to show, how US-led policies in Iraq instigated mistrust in the Sunni sect that militant organizations consequently fully exploited in their fight against the foreign forces and their local supporters. Hence, regime change in Iraq could not pacify the turmoil created during the process of occupation.

### US Policy of Regime Change

The phrase “regime change” remained one of the features of US foreign policy. Regime change generally led to either of the two consequences; either they installed a puppet system, or they left with nothing but chaos, disorder, instability, and uncertainty without any meaningful outcome for the betterment of the state and society at large. Every time the US tried to justify it through the rhetoric such as emphasizing human rights, democracy for all, and securing the world from militant organizations, and making it a safe zone for humanity to survive (Norton, 2015).

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<sup>1</sup> MS student, Department of International Relations, Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences (BUITEMS.), Quetta-Pakistan.

<sup>2</sup> PhD candidate at Centre for Defence and Security Studies, Massey University, New Zealand

<sup>3</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of International Relations, BUITEMS, Quetta, Pakistan.

Once Iran, being a constitutional monarchy (democratic state), was ruled by a legitimately elected prime minister Muhammad Mossadegh (1951-53) who was overthrown by American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) with the help of the United Kingdom (UK).not being communist and socialist but for nationalizing Iranian oil. In 1951 New York Times published an article “British warn Iran of the serious results if she seizes oil.” This made them remove Mossadegh and bring Reza Shah Pahlavi (Norton, 2015).

Far from American shores, Chile in the 1960s posed no military threat to the Americans. In 1970 the presidential elections in Chile confirmed the victory of Salvador Allende who was anti-imperialist and inspired by Fidel Castro. Born in 1908, he became the founding member of Chile’s socialist party. Allende by the Nixon administration was considered as a threat to democracy in Latin America. After his victory in the presidential election, Nixon summoned Richard Helms, CIA chief at that time, to unseat Allende or prevent him from coming into power. Allende's crime was not different but the same as was committed by Saddam Hussein in Iraq. He threatened to nationalize American owned companies in Chile. Nixon was not ready to afford another Fidel Castro in the same hemisphere. Nixon pumped \$10 million secretly to make sure Allende is overthrown from power. Campaigns for coercing and blackmailing army personal and congressmen started. Rene Schneider, chief of Chile’s armed forces, was assassinated owing to his refusal of coup resulting in a democratic derailment. Nixon lost his temper when in 1971 Allende started nationalizing American-owned copper mines and a large US-run telephone company. CIA plotted and succeeded in turning most of the Chileans against Allende who was brutally murdered in a coup on September 11, 1973, replacing him with General Pinochet, a repressor of his kind (Colum, 2020).

Since 2001, the regime changes in Afghanistan, Libya, and Iraq produced nothing more than chaos and turmoil. In Iraq, the Islamic State (IS) is one of the sectarian militant groups that held a vast area of the country. According to United Nations, in Afghanistan opium production increased manifold (UN Office on Drugs and Crime, 2010). According to Roggio (2018), the American hopes of defeating the Taliban has shattered. The Long War Journal estimates that the Taliban in Afghanistan controls large territory exercising direct control over 48 districts and continued fighting in further 197 districts for more influence. The civil war in Libya today finds its roots in the popular uprisings of 2011 against 42 years of Qaddafi’s authoritarian rule.

### **US INVASION AND MISPLACED PRIORITIES IN IRAQ**

The plan for regime change worked and Saddam’s ouster was made possible. Landing on Iraq the coalition forces banked on some policies pretending to make Iraq stable, a prerequisite to the peaceful Middle East. Iraq was dragged into turmoil with the arrival of Paul Bremer in May 2003. As an administrator to coalition forces, Bremer had the assignment to govern Iraq bringing democratic amelioration to the state replacing decades old dictatorship of Saddam Hussian. Bremer’s political solution to the Iraqi crises was de-Baathification and disbanding the Iraqi army propagating further calamity. In early May, it was decided to send Zalmay Khalilzad and Paul Bremer to Iraq with the task to supervise American reconstruction efforts in Iraq and to form an assembly, respectively. The Bush administration at that time had no whims to transfer power to the Iraqi people. Leaving Khalilzad at home only Bremer was sent even without taking secretary of the state Collin Powell into confidence. According to Powell “the plan was for Zalmay to go back. He was the one who knew

this place better than anyone. I thought this was part of the deal with Bremer. But with no discussion, no debate, things changed. I was stunned” (Piffner, 2010).

Before Bremer’s arrival the American think tank saw either to extend the occupation or to hand over authority to a non-elected successor regime. After deliberate discussions, an interim government was seen as reliable as a toy in American hands. Arriving in Baghdad, Bremer started consultation with the Iraqi leaders for the governing council. Bremer also advocated an extended occupation barring leadership from exercising full authority (Dobbins, Jones, Runkle, & Mohandas, 2009). On June 1, 2003, the Iraq governing council was dissolved leaving space for Iraqi interim government. The government was concluded by the joint efforts of United Nations (UN) special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, Paul Bremer, head of coalition provisional authority, Robert D. Blackwill, and Condoleezza Rice (Otterman, 2005).

In fact, when a country is in turmoil and foreign occupation administration thinks for a new setup it left some out of it and brings others into its folds. The same was the case when an interim government in Iraq was formed. Many members of Sharif Ali’s Constitutional Monarchist Movement, the Arab Nationalist groups, the pro-Iranian Da’wa Party-Iraq Organization, and Muhammad Taqi al Mudarissi’s Islamic Action Party as well as an assortment of other Baghdad-based political groups criticized the government for its narrow texture and claimed their place in it. Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) deviated from the suggestions to involve grassroot domestic organizations like the business community and human rights institutions in the process. Isam al-Khafaji, a revered Iraqi exile after writing in his resignation letter from the Iraqi Reconstruction and Development Council (IRDC); “Sitting together to consider the future of Iraq is 25 representatives, hand-picked by the U.S.-led coalition. The composition is not a bad one, but few of the members have substantial domestic constituencies.” Preventing elections in localities, cities, and towns Bremer added “I’m not opposed [to self-rule], but I want to do it in a way that takes care of our concerns” (Booth, Ch., & Rasekaran, 2003).

After the fall of the Baathist government, several people who had been in exile or those who survived Saddam’s atrocities came in front to permeate the new political setup. Iraq at the moment had several political parties, some with national voices and others advocating the sectarian agendas. United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution 1483 on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2003 provided and recognized “the right of the Iraqi people to determine their political future.” The limit of the council’s power of decision-making and appointing cabinet members was not defined. Bremer wanted no limitation in authority he had. An interim government was consulted with the UK too. The interim government and its diverse membership largely reflected western selection. It had no public representation because it was not an elected body. The same had nothing to do with appointing members of the cabinet based on their skills. It had most of its portfolios and key position with sectarian heavyweights and exiled figures. It was authorized to dismiss ministers, setting national policy goals, reforming electoral laws, education and health but to all these CPA’s consultation was a prerequisite. The government lacked a public mandate and a deep social insight into the country. Bremer and CPA’s interim government had sectarian and ethnic posture. Slightly more than half of the Interim Governing Council’s members were Shiites. The sectarian division of

the Interim Governing Council (IGC) brought angry reactions among some Iraqis (Jacoby & Neggaz, 2018; International Crises Group [ICG], 2003).

### **Chalking Out the Plan, CPA's Order. No.1**

With his vivid role in the interim government, Bremer's next blunder to introduce CPA order no.1, also familiar with de-Baathification, further pushed Iraq into ruins. In May 2003, the CPA order 1 was issued by Bremer to exclude people with Baathist affiliation from the government. This was to prevent those who held the top three positions of each ministry during Saddam's rule. This plan of purification of new governmental setup from Baathist shadows was approved by Bush himself when he was briefed in the National Security Council's (NSC) meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2003 by Douglas Feith. Bremer told that a draft of an order of de-Baathification of Iraqi society by Feith was shown to him on 9<sup>th</sup> May and the final memo from Rumsfeld came on the same day. Bremer said that "The White House, Department of Defense, and State all signed off on this." The military understood that the order was only to exclude the top two layers of each ministry in whom they saw a real spirit of Baathist leadership. Contradictory to the military Bremer analysis of the order was to exclude the top four layers (Piffner, 2010).

The term de-Baathification refers to the series of measures taken by CPA after 2003 to prevent Baathist's return to power. The process of de-Baathification was indiscriminately carried without the individual assessment based on their role in human rights violations. Instead, it proved to be a vetting programme that resulted in the dismissal of government servants owing to their ranks both in the party and the government. The CPA's order 1 provided the exclusion of the top four ranks of Baath party membership. The order banned the display of Saddam Hussein's images. Rewards for any information about senior Baathist leadership were fixed. The larger scope of de-Baathification hit the backbone of the state hard. The education department suffered the most. Schools and varsities had functional hardships. Lack of transparent reporting made it difficult that choose those who need to be kept and excluded? On the grounds of data collected by the higher national de-Baathification commission (HNDC) 45,111 civil services employees (who were thought to be senior party members) and 111,144 civil servants were targeted for dismissal. The most affected portfolio was that of education consisting of 18,064 senior party members. The ministry with the next highest dismissals was higher education, depriving it of the services of 4,361 members. With 2,367 the health department secured the third position. HNDC records show that 574 senior civil service bureaucrats (at the level of director-general or above) were dismissed by October 2005 (ICG, 2003).

### **Blunder after Blunder Fades Away Stability in Iraq**

After 2003, the seeds of disorder in Iraq were sown following the CPA's introduction of order 1 and 2. The first was primarily concerned with the exclusion of people from civil services as discussed earlier and the second was to disband the Iraqi army. The order (no.2) became one of the disputed decisions. Dissolving the Iraqi army in part was to show the Iraqi people that Saddam's influence is gone and will never return. The order to disband the army became controversial in the sense that Bush blamed Bremer for it who (Bremer) fought back providing two letters to the New York Times. The first one unleashing the activities of Bremer about which Bush was taken into confidence. And

the second one was a reply from Bush to praise Bremer for his good job. With this secrecy behind it, Bremer issued CPA's order 2 on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2003. It dissolved the Iraqi security forces. It included 385,000 armed forces, 285,000 in the interior ministry, and 50,000 in presidential security. Saddam's top forces like Special Republican Guard were stopped from working. The decision brought humiliation, hostility to the West, and unemployment to the people (Pfiffner, 2010).

Before Iraq's invasion in 2003, the US lacked a clear vision and understanding of Iraqi society. During the Ottoman rule, as a British mandate, and under Saddam's reign, Sunnis remained the dominant group. Shiites, constituting the largest portion of Iraq's population, were dominated by Sunnis, and they (Shiite) saw in their lives different layers of atrocities. The war planners did not think of the monster coming right after the invasion. A dominant group saw their marginalization accepted and their role in the new democracy as a minority was misjudged. During Saddam's rule, the Shiite filled the lower ranks in the army while the higher positions were kept by Sunnis. The hasty abolition of the Iraqi army left thousands of armed unemployed men, making them a recruiting target (O'Connell, 2008).

The Americans had a wrong belief about the existence of sectarian rivalries in Iraq. During the Iraq Iran war, 65 percent of army rank-wise was Shiite, who were distrusted by the Baath party for changing sides, fought with patriotic sentiments finally winning Baathist trust. Shiite and Sunnis intermarried, had residual proximities in cities and no high-level sectarian clashes were witnessed (Pelletiere, 2007).

The planning for the Iraqi interim government proved flabbergasting when it massively encompassed the exiles as the likes of Ahmed Chalabi, one of the strong proponents of de-Baathification who played his cards while the invasion of 2003 was architected. IGC rotation of representation was twice conferred to two Sunnis and once to non-exile. Demonstrating his anger at coalition forces Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani's demand for expeditious elections proved inaudible. The adjustment of non-exiles, having the partial mandate of deciding Iraq's future, portrayed the US as the oppressor of many in Iraq particularly Sunnis. Coalition forces alongwith Kurds and Shiite's intense advocating of de-Baathification flared the insurgency. The stage for an insurgency was furthered when indiscriminate IGC was followed by a series of faulty decisions like disbanding the army and exclusion of skilled masses.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 2003, the CPA order no.2 abolished the security apparatus in Iraq. Soon after this, some of the ground American forces felt that the debarred Iraqis, who demonstrated against the coalition forces turned into Sunni militancy. One former officer and protester told Al Jazeera at the time, "the only thing left for me is to blow myself up in the face of tyrants." One of the largest protests occurred on June 18 and included almost 2,000 former Iraqi military members threatening to take up arms against the Coalition. CPA's orders and the efforts to build a new army from the remnants led to the insurgency and civil war. Sunni resentment and anger, and popular opposition to any form of Western occupation were fueled by the actions of both Shiite and Kurdish leaders and the CPA (Cordesman & Davies 2008).

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, a Sunni-hegemonic state was crafted from the remains of the British in the 1920s. Hopes for consolidating patriotic sentiments under the banner of Iraqi

nationalism with times shattered due to harsh Shiite and Kurdish treatment and the flawed democracy which replaced Saddam passing political hegemony into Shiite hands.

### **Maliki Doubles the Cost**

In the Iraqi town of Hindiya on June 20, 1950, Nouri Kamil Mohammad Hassan Al-Maliki opened his eyes in a middle-class family. Earning his masters in Arabic literature in the 1960s, he joined the Islamic Dawa party and voiced against Saddam. He fled Iraq in 1979, going into exile, leaving Iraq via Jordan and moved to Syria and Tehran, where he managed to have some role in anti-Saddam activities. In 2005 Maliki secured his seat in the transitional national assembly. In 2006 Maliki was chosen to replace Ibrahim al-Jaffari, an interim government's prime minister at the time whose policies, pushed Iraq into unrest (Khedery, 2014).

After the fall of the Baathist regime in Iraq, al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) comprising mostly of Sunnis emerged to resist coalition forces and the Shiite populated government. AQI appeared for the first time in Iraq under the leadership of a Jordanian, Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi. Pledging their allegiance to Osama bin Laden (OBL), Zarqawi came with a plan to attack security forces, institutions, and civilians particularly Shiites. Intending to deepen sectarian divide into a war-torn country, the religious properties like al-Askariyya mosque in Samara (one of Shiites' holiest sites in Iraq) in 2006 were targeted. After the death of Zarqawi in 2006 al-Qaeda in Iraq became weak due to the emergence of awakening councils (Fishman, 2006).

Praising the role of awakening council initially known as al-Anbar awakening Gen. David H. Petraeus, the top US, and coalition forces commander in Iraq admitted on April 8, 2008, before the Senate Armed Services Committee that "These volunteers have contributed significantly in various areas." He said. "With their assistance and with a relentless pursuit of al-Qaeda-Iraq, the threat posed by AQI, while still lethal and substantial has been reduced significantly." Initially, AQI got support from the members of Saddam's regime who were loyal to Saddam and those who were hit hard by the CPA's orders. AQI used for its support in Iraq the Sunni's desire for revenge and a deep sense of humiliation felt by those who had long considered themselves the only people capable of running the affairs of the Iraqi state. The same support started diminishing due to AQI's expectations of compensation for the security they provided to tribal allies and their coercive attempts to wed women as a means to strengthen their hold. By August 2006, Sheikh Abdul Sattar Abu Risha, a prominent tribal leader, issued a manifesto denouncing AQI) and pledging support to US forces. Coalition forces went for the replication of awakening councils at the national level owing to its credible efficiency (Karsh, 2010).

As the world witnessed that recently the IS lost their grip they had in 2014 on key cities like Mosul. Apart from coalition forces blunders, the discriminatory policies of Nouri al-Maliki gave rise to militancy. IS which rose to prominence in 2014 existed under several names and shapes since the 1990s. As discussed above that the insurgents who after CPA's orders demonstrated resistance against coalition forces turned into the awakening of Anbar, cutting down AQI's influence. The Sunnis, mostly the part of the initial insurgency and awakening tide with some expectations like immunity from prosecution, from previous crimes and government contracts to rebuild devastated Sunni areas fought AQI back. Before withdrawing from Mesopotamian heartland the US political

and military discussed possible means of dialogue between Sunni and Shiite to repair the rift created by Zarqawi's bombing of Shiite sacred places. The US concluded that Maliki was more inclined on widening the sectarian gap. Salaries of the awakening council members or sons of Iraq were denied. Contracts of reconstruction were not given to tribal leaders which deepened mistrust and suspicion making them once again vulnerable to AQI's consolidation (Ghosh, 2014).

The members were paid as they have been promised. The Guardian reported on 21 March 2008 the grievances of 80,000 Sahwa or awakening council members who threatened to quit all the activities till they are not paid (O'Kane & Black, 2008).

Abu Abdul-Aziz, the head of the council in Abu Ghraib Iraq said, "We know the Americans are using us to do their dirty work and kill off the resistance for them and then we get nothing for it." He added "The Americans got what they wanted. We purged al-Qaida for them and now people are saying why should we have any more deaths for the Americans? They have given us nothing" (O'Kane, & Black, 2008).

Many in the awakening council expressed their frustration with the government of Iraq and questioned its dull nature to integrate the awakening members into security forces. Maliki just incorporated a handful of Sunnis. The frustrations increased with the integration of Shiite militias into army and security services at a great pace as compared to the integrations of those who played a vital role in wiping AQI out (Senanayake, 2008).

Climbing the ranks swiftly Maliki led the Dawa branch in Damascus in his exile. Returning to Iraq after the invasion, he chaired the de-Baathification committee. The US supported Maliki's candidacy for the premiership of Iraq with the belief in his dexterity of bridging the sectarian divide that was seen and left before his arrival during the reign of Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jafari (Khedery, 2014). Turning the electoral slogans of "reuniting Iraq" into reality, Maliki's policies and decisions became sectarian. Retired General David Petraeus stated that "Prime Minister Nouri Maliki, whose highly sectarian action alienated the Sunni-Arab population and created fertile fields for the planting of the seeds of extremism which the Islamic State then used." Middle East scholar Toby Dodge argues that the "failure to build a sustainable and inclusive political system after the regime change in 2003 and the authoritarianism of Maliki explains the rise of ISIS" (Morgan, 2016).

### **Prime Minister Maliki's Sectarian Policies and Rise of Militancy**

One of the errors Maliki committed was the non-integration of Sunni tribal leaders of Anbar and other areas into the national security apparatus who gave a tough time to AQI. The estimated 100,000 awakening fighters wanted to be integrated into Iraq's regular security. The awakening councils against al-Qaeda in Iraq were the results of an infuriated response to the habits dangerous philosophy and indiscriminating assassinations, which AQI wanted to be forcibly imposed ("Q&A: Iraq's Awakening," 2010). Throughout 2007 coalition forces sought the reliable assistance of Sunni tribes and praised its worth for turning the tide against al-Qaeda. Americans promised to not "walk away from them" but the Shiite-led government refused to incorporate all of them into security forces fearing the difficulty of commanding the newly integrated sons of Iraq in comparison to Shiite units. In reality, Maliki was convinced that the awakening was nothing more than a collection of insurgents, who needed time for retaining back to the posture they had before awakening

(Lynch, 2008). According to Hoshyar Zebari, former Iraq's finance minister, Maliki and the panel of his advisors felt no need to merge sons of Iraq into regular security as they believed the threat posed by AQI had perished (Boghani, 2014).

### **Deepening of the Sectarian Divide in Iraqi Society**

By 2008 the collective security services provided by coalition forces, Iraqi security forces, and the tribal leaders limited the space for AQI to exercise its authority. But the social threats still threatening the state were corruption and improper public services. Before the elections in 2010, Maliki introduced de-Baathification laws to bare candidates, who were speculated of being affiliated to Baath's perspective before the US invasion, from contesting elections. The candidates of a dual character, those who in past had links to the Baath party and were now in the ranks of Maliki, could contest (Al-Ali, 2014).

The IS took advantage of the sidelined and oppressive Sunni community. The disenfranchisement of Sunnis started for the first time by the Americans in 2003 when they invaded Iraq. The dissent was further cemented when American withdrawal left Iraq to Maliki. The election of 2010 in Iraq also proved discriminatory. In February 2010 before the elections, Iraq's election commission announced the disqualification of 515 candidates from the parliamentary elections due to the allegations that the candidates had retained links to Saddam's Baath Party. The disqualification was appealed by 171 candidates to the accountability and justice commission, a parliamentary body charged with purging the loyalist to Baath Party. The disqualification was postponed. In his meetings with senior parliamentarian leaders and chairman of the supreme judicial council, Maliki paved the way for the rejection of 145 candidates leaving 26 eligible to contest and against whom the decision was reversed. This was one of the steps that deepened the sectarian divide. As Saleh al-Mutlaq, a parliamentarian from 2006 and a former Baathist party member who had been one of the main Sunni representatives during the process of writing the Iraqi constitution, Said in an interview to Arabia, a private television channel based in UAE, "the international community should not recognize any government that emerges of it" (Myers, 2010).

### **The Arrest of Sunnis and its Ramifications**

One day after the withdrawal of U.S troops the Shiite-led government of Iraq issued the arrest warrant of key Sunni leaders including the then Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi accusing him of being involved in terrorist activities such as conspiracies to assassinate government officers, supporting Sunni involvement in Iraq's security and elimination of de-Baathification. A warrant of arrest against such a high profile leader furthered the tension ("Iraq's Sunni leader," 2011). Hashemi and other moderate Sunnis were credited for helping to end the violence which coalition forced faced in the form of Sunni insurgency. Iraq was dragged into turmoil after the arrest warrant of Hashemi was issued by the state. The conditions deteriorated and tension escalated when parliament was asked to hold a no-confidence vote allowing Maliki to dismiss Saleh al-Mutlak, the Sunni Deputy Prime Minister (Blomfield & Mcelroy, 2011).

In 2008 the New York Times reported the arrest of 35 officials in the interior ministry of Iraq who were placed behind the bars on the allegations of working to reconstitute Saddam Hussein's Baath Party and chalking out a coup to replace the Shiite government with a one, having Sunni posture



(Maher, 2008). In December 2012, the protests erupted in Sunni-dominated areas of Iraq over the arrest of 10 bodyguards of Rafi al-Essawi, a top Sunni leader and finance minister. Ahmed Hashim, a shop owner in Adhamiya, a Sunni neighborhood in Baghdad, told “Hashemi is gone, now Essawi, we have no Sunni leader left to follow” (Arango, 2013).

Targeting Hashemi, Essawi, and other prominent Sunni leaders followed by wide-scale protests turned into a deteriorated security situation. The discontent among Sunnis started increasing when Maliki’s security forces under the banner of counter-terrorism harshly treated and politically marginalized Sunnis. After years of perceived violence and marginalization, Sunnis demonstrated themselves as oppressed who took to the streets. The demonstrations starting from Anbar spread to Ninewa and Salah ad-Din. Protestors chanted “down Maliki down” (Wicken, 2013). Starting from the city of Fallujah, the violence escalated in April 2013 when security forces cracked down on protestor’s camp in the northern city of Hawija leaving many dead and several others wounded. Sunni gunmen fought governmental forces throughout the day. At least 42 people including 39 civilians were killed, and more than 100 others wounded (Arango, 2013).

Martin Smith, writer and producer for Frontline documentary “The Rise of ISIS” says that “Maliki saw American departure as an opportunity to allow himself remove the sectarian fears he had.” He started sidelining Sunnis, as he considered them plots. The pressure exerted on Sunnis resulted in wide-range of demonstrations which for the first time were forcibly tried to settle at Hawija, in Kirkuk. Such a clash was one of the turning points. This was the occasion that aided IS which was already looking for Sunni recruits (Smith, 2014).

Shiite peace brigades formerly known as Mahdi Army backed by Iran were accused of committing violence against Sunni minorities. A Shiite political party and paramilitary force, Badr Organization committed atrocities against the Sunnis (“Sunnis in Iraq Face,” 2017). The group of Sunni scholars accused the government and Shiite militias of driving Sunnis out of Baghdad and its vicinities. Khaldun Abdulaziz Karkheh, an Iraqi political analyst, said that Iraq’s Shiite leaders were changing the demographics and architecture of the city “in a way that suits their own political ideology.” The same accusations at the time were rejected by Muhammad Naji, an Iraqi Shiite MP (“Group accuses Iraqi,” 2014).

Between December 2012 and April 2013, human rights watch (HRW) interviewed 27 women and 7 girls, both Sunni and Shiite, their families and lawyers, medical service providers in women’s prisons, civil society, embassy officials, interior ministry and reviewed court documents. Compiling a report they found that the security forces illegally arrested the women and tortured them. Israa Salah (not her real name) told HRW in an interview before her execution that after nine days of beating she was left disabled. Some female prisoners reported a lack of protection from male security guards in prison. Others were forced to accept the crimes they were not involved in threatening them to hurt their loved ones (Human Rights Watch, 2014). Heba al-Shamary (name changed for security reasons) who was released from an Iraqi prison after four years, told Aljazeera “I was tortured and raped repeatedly by the Iraqi security forces. I want to tell the world what I and other Iraqi women in prison have had to go through these last years. It has been hell. I now want to explain to people what is occurring in the prisons” that Prime Minister Maliki and his

gangs were running. Heba added. "I was raped over and over again, I was kicked and beaten and insulted and spit upon" (Jamail, 2013).

Initially, the US was not interested to eliminate IS. The US did not respond when loads of IS fighter well equipped raising guns and black flags entered Syria from Iraq. Until the death of Saddam Hussein Sunnis ran the show and were the custodian of the land of Iraq. Backed by US Maliki's policies strengthened the Sunni-Shiite divide allowing IS to exploit and recruit Sunni fighters. Glorifying its cause and agenda, the Sunni reservations were well exploited. According to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy's Michael Knights "governments persecution of the Sunnis played right into their hands. Maliki made all the ISIS propaganda real, accurate. That made it much, much easier for ISIS to replenish its fighting stock" (Beauchamp, 2017).

### **US Detention Facilities: Militancy Breeding Centres in Iraq**

One of the reasons for the rise of militancy in Iraq was the presence of the US run detention centers where the main leaders of IS spent several years. Baghdadi spent five years while Abu Muslim al-Turkmani, Abu Louay, Abu Kassem, Abu Jurnal, Abu Shema, and Abu Suja spent long time in the US detention facility. The process of apprehending terrorists started with the coalition forces' invasion. About 100,000 detainees passed through the gates of Camp Bucca, a detention center along the border of Kuwait. People were arrested and put behind the bars without detailed interrogation. Some detainees were culprits and the others innocent. Space for extremist to share their motives and message was provided when the prisoners were segregated on sectarian lines. The prison became a hotbed of terror and its advocates. Emirs controlled the prison. Moderate detainees suffered physical assaults from radicals. When they responded they were punished by the prison guardians. By December 2009, Bucca encampment was closed and thousands of insurgents were left to roam into the streets of Iraq (Thompson & Suri, 2014).

Chulov noted down the revelations of IS' high ranked and senior member Abu Ahmed, an alternative name used for security reasons. Abu Ahmad as quoted by Martin told that how Camp Bucca in Iraq, a US detention facility became the breeding or birthplace for IS. He told that he first met Baghdadi at the same camp. The behaviour of the forces with Baghdadi was of a relaxed nature. Baghdadi was assessed as a conciliatory person. He added that when the prisoners were released, they contacted and established a network using contact numbers of high-profile criminals written on the elastic of their boxers (Chulov, 2014).

### **CONCLUSION**

To sum up, different factors fueled and gave birth to militant waves and insurgency in Iraq in the shape of IS rise. One of the prime factors which can be attributed to militancy in Iraq was the American invasion, based on the rhetoric that was to liberate the Middle East from dictators like Saddam Hussein. The invasion partly paved the way for the insurgency, later transformed into the making of the organization such as IS. Although Saddam was not liable to be praised for the atrocities he committed towards Shiite and Kurd citizens, but his ouster was a fault for which the Middle East and the whole world paid the price. Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 gifted Al Qaeda to the international community and American military adventure in Iraq gifted us IS.

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