

I. INTRODUCTION

More than seven years after the military operation known as the US invasion of Iraq, the March-April War of 2003 or the American led Operation Iraqi Freedom, the process of state reconstruction in Iraq still faces tremendous obstacles. Historically speaking, there have been only two democratic countries in the Middle East, Turkey¹ and Israel². Regardless of the US invasion and occupation of Iraq, the post-Saddam regime is in the process of democratization which means that Iraq could become the first Arab democratic state.

However, the major challenge to Iraqi state reconstruction is ethno-religious conflicts among the Sunnis, the Shiites and the Kurds that emerged from the birth of Iraq in 1921. Although Iraqi Christians are one of the country's religious groups, they are the smallest minority population in Iraq as well as in the Middle East.³ In addition to the conflicts between two religious groups, the Kurds as the third player are participating in Iraqi politics for their autonomy within the border of Iraq. In this sense, these conflicts among the Sunnis, the Shiites and the Kurds have had a negative

¹ William L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004), 275.

² *Ibid.*, 355.

³ Mirjam E. Sørli, Nils Petter Gleditsch, Håvard Strand, "Why Is There so Much Conflict in the Middle East?," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (2005), 147, <http://0-www.jstor.org.lib.aucegypt.edu/stable/pdfplus/30045102.pdf>.

effect on political cohesion in Iraqi history, but most importantly since the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. This is why the reconstruction of Iraq with careful consideration of the ethno-religious conflicts is a significant issue to be studied through this thesis.

This thesis explores what factors caused the failure of the reconstruction of the Iraqi state after the 2003 war. As a result of the US invasion in 2003, Iraq was devastated. Reconstructing a state in Iraq was imperative for all Iraqis who suffered from the widespread damage of the war in 2003. Regime change was carried out and political security could come with the establishment of a unified or federalized state in Iraq. Although more than seven years have passed after the US invasion in 2003, Iraq is still in the process of rebuilding, meaning that processes of democratization have had little effect on the Iraqi state.

Ethno-religious conflicts have been the most serious challenge facing state rebuilding in Iraq since 2003. Indeed, Iraq maintains a long history of violence. In the past, this occurred because of Iraq's minimal experience with statehood in which constructive civil order reigned.⁴ As compared to the past, the current violence stems more from brutal and internal Iraqi conflicts between Arabs and Kurds, and between Sunnis and Shiites. These ethno-religious conflicts in Iraq can be traced to three historic experiences.

⁴ William R. Polk, *Understanding Iraq: A Whistlestop Tour from Ancient Babylon to Occupied Baghdad* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), 3.

The inception of the Iraqi state embodies the first historic experience, whereby Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds were brought together to form the state of Iraq under the British mandate of 1921. The national unification of these three groups was the beginning of ethno-religious conflicts in Iraq since each ethno-religious group struggled to achieve its own political goals. Second, the Saddam regime's policy of discrimination and suppression against certain ethnic groups and religious factions further caused ethnic and sectarian tensions in Iraq, particularly following the Ba'ath party takeover in 1968. The third historic experience is the failure of US "Pre-War Reconstruction Plan of Post-War Iraq"⁵ as it gave rise to more internalized Iraqi ethno-religious conflicts since Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003.

On October 29 2009, CNN reported that Iraq's national elections would be delayed because the nation's lawmakers failed to assemble an official session to adopt an election law. Too few politicians were present to form a quorum. This was mainly because of disagreements over voters' apportionment and their registries among the Kurds, Arabs and Turks in Kirkuk. The elections were supposed to be held on 16 January 2010 and the constitutional deadline for the elections was January 31 2010. Iraq's election commission needed more than 90 days to carry out elections after the passage of the election law. Indeed, the national elections should have delayed

⁵ Roger Mac Ginty, "The Pre-War Reconstruction of Post-War Iraq," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (2003): 601-617, <http://0-www.jstor.org.lib.aucegypt.edu/stable/pdfplus/3993427.pdf>.

because of the failure of the official session.⁶

Furthermore, the delay of national elections affected the withdrawal of the US forces from Iraq by the end of 2010 since the success of these elections would contribute to Iraq's political stability. This also exemplifies a case in which ethno-religious conflicts negatively affect Iraq's political integration and security. As well, ethnic conflicts that blocked electoral legislation play a negative role in representing ethnic and factional interests in national elections and withdrawing the US troops from Iraq. This thesis will study how ethno-religious conflicts emerged and developed in Iraqi history. Furthermore, the increase of political participation among ethno-religious groups will be addressed as a way for the development of political cohesion to reconstruct the state in Iraq.

1.1 RESEARCH QUESTION(S) AND HYPOTHESIS

The research question that will be addressed in this thesis examines the effect of ethno-religious conflicts in Iraq on the reconstruction process of the state since 2003. By analyzing the emergence of brutal ethno-religious conflicts since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, this thesis argues that the failure of the "Pre-War Reconstruction Plan of Post-War Iraq" and the influence of "the Israel Lobby" gave rise to the current ethno-religious conflicts and the state's political insecurity. These

⁶ Muhammed Tawfeeq and Muhammed Jamjoom, "Iraqi Elections Facing Possible Delay," *CNN.com*, 29 October, 2009, <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/meast/10/29/iraq.elections/index.html>.

two forces have directly contributed to the failure of the state reconstruction up to the present.

First, Iraq's political insecurity and economic distress have been increased by the US misguided program for Iraqis' future which shows that the goal of the United States was not humanitarianism, but the elimination of Saddam's regime. Since the Iraqi regime change and the ensuing democratization, the United States has lacked reasonable solutions and systematic programs to protect the economic infrastructure and political security of the state. The US weak vision of the Iraqi reconstruction process suggests that another power influenced the United States' decision to attack Iraq. This suggestion merits attention because credible evidence supports the fact that Iraq was not a direct threat to the United States. When it comes to weapons of mass destruction of Iraq, it was also possible for the US to consider Iran and Israel as direct threats. Rather, other factors encouraged the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Furthermore, this research hypothesizes that ethno-religious conflicts directly have a negative effect on rebuilding the state. This is because each ethnic and religious group has its own political goal that has caused the decentralization of Iraqi political power and hindered Iraq's reunification. The recent Iraqi ethno-religious conflicts have been exacerbated by the failure of Bush's Iraqi future program and American misunderstanding of Iraqi political realities. As such, the Iraqi ethno-religious conflicts seem undeniably linked to the US invasion of Iraq and the US

future program for the Iraqis was an attempt doomed to fail. As a result, these ethno-religious conflicts stand in the way of a bright future for Iraq, dividing the state into mainly three ethno-religious entities based on the Shiite, the Sunni and the Kurdish populations of Iraq.

1.2 RESEARCH FOCUS

In order to analyze the effect of ethno-religious conflicts, to explore their negative role in rebuilding the Iraqi state and to study the emergence of these conflicts in Iraq, it is important for this thesis to scrutinize the three historic experiences that have fuelled these conflicts. This is because the US invasion of Iraq was not the root of Iraqi Arab-Kurd and Sunni-Shiite tensions. Exploring how these conflicts emerged and how they had negative effects on Iraqi politics will lead us to reach a full understanding of the politics of reconstruction in Iraq.

At the end of the First World War, Iraq emerged as a state under the guidance of the British authorities. The Iraqi state was not established by the active political participation of domestic, social and political forces. In the Ottoman Empire, Iraq consisted of three Ottoman provinces with the Kurds in the north, the Sunnis in Mosul and the center, and the Shiites in Baghdad and the south; Basra.

In 1921, the British started to combine the three parts into a state. In brief, this witnessed the emergence of ethno-religious conflicts in Iraq because the Iraqis

were concerned about each side's political agenda instead of unified political goals under the state identity of Iraq. This means that ethno-religious groups in Iraq prioritized disputing their differences. In fact, Iraq is composed of citizens with remarkable ethno-religious divisions. Since the establishment of Iraq, the boundaries between Iraq's groups have led to stronger ethnic and religious identifications of populations. These identities and affiliations have been accommodated by a system of power sharing ruled by Sunni elites. Minority rule persists in spite of the fact that a majority of Iraqis are Shiites and the Kurds in Mosul desire autonomy.⁷ After living together under a system of unstable unification and diverse interests, these ethno-religious groups have failed in finding common political ground until today.⁸

After consolidating the power of the Ba'th party in 1968, Saddam Hussein played a pivotal role in Iraqi politics, and eventually, became president in 1979. Although Saddam was defeated in the Gulf War of 1991 and then struggled with economic sanctions, he sustained his rule until the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.⁹ The post-Ba'th regime faced mounting Shiite' dissatisfaction and Kurdish claims for independence.

As the majority of the Iraqis, the Shiites had been handicapped by the political and economic systems established by the British authorities and the monarchy since 1932. From the perspective of the Ba'th regime, they did not represent

⁷ James L. Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 183-84.

⁸ Polk, 5-6.

⁹ Cleveland, 397.

a uniform community and common attitude toward the regime. Even though the Shiites were diversified and paid more attention to economic and political factors than to religious ones, the Shiite Ulama still played a strong role in defining their religious identity.¹⁰ In both 1977 and 1979, there were large-scale anti-government demonstrations with three discontent movements led by the Ulama, al Da'wa (Islamic Call), and its followers. This religious discontent focused on the secularism of the Ba'th regime, the discrimination of the Shiites by commissioning government officials in the higher echelon and the regime's attempts to control all organizations and religious institutions in Iraq. As a result, Saddam's regime arrested many members of al Da'wa and executed a prestigious leader of the Ulama in 1979 when Ayatollah Khomeini appealed to Islamic revolution in 1979. In spite of Ayatollah's appeal to the Iraqi Shiites, the Shiite disloyalty toward the regime was one of the elements to give rise to the Iran – Iraq war in 1980.¹¹

The relationship between the Kurds, Iraq's second largest ethnic minority, and the Ba'thist regime of Saddam was taking on a different aspect as compared to that of the Shiites. There were conflicts between the Kurds, who sought independence from Iraq, and the regime, which insisted on a centralized government. As well, the Kurds wanted an autonomous nationality because their culture and language were different from those of the Arabs. In 1968 and 1974, there was full-scale warfare between

¹⁰ Cleveland, 411.

¹¹ Ibid., 412.

Baghdad and the Kurds. At that time, Iraq was armed well enough to control the northern Gulf because of obtaining weapons from the Soviet Union.

At that time, the only issue that threatened Iraqi security was Iran, which was the only country to check Iraqi regional power in terms of providing both weapons and Kurdish Iranian troops to the Kurdish rebellion in Iraq. In 1975, however, Iraq and Iran reached an agreement called the Algiers Agreement which stipulated that Iran would close its borders and would end its support for the Kurdish rebellion. The conflict ended with the isolation of the Kurds and with airstrikes by the Iraqi air force. To hinder future rebellions, Saddam's regime relocated about 250,000 Kurds both in the central and the southern regions of Iraq. Their resistance against the government was continued from the late 1970s, to the Iraq – Iran war in 1980, and to the Iraq – Kuwait war in 1990 which played a significant role as new momentum for Kurdish separatism.¹²

In the midst of an unclear post-war plan by the US, internalized Iraqi ethno-religious conflicts have worsened political security in Iraq for three main reasons. First, the political goal of the invasion was not humanitarian relief such as feeding hungry Iraqis as Bush's strong pre-war argument. Indeed, the US actual goal was the collapse of Saddam's regime. The disconnection between the rhetorical justification for the American invasion and the actual intention of the US suggests that the Bush administration did not have proper political and economic plans for the post-Saddam

¹² Cleveland, 410-11.

regime. This is because the US paid more attention to Saddam's fall and an overall shift in power from the Sunnis to the Shiites.¹³

Without a clear reconstruction plan for Iraq, many Iraqis suffered from political and economic insecurity including a high rate of unemployment and child malnutrition. In addition, the United States and the Western European countries share a common interest in legitimizing their invasion of Iraq to their people through successful reconstruction of the Iraqi state. Threats to Iraqi national insecurity, especially those coming from the exterior, could provoke some Iraqis to participate in terrorist activities with nationalists' and religious insurgent groups that would threaten the security of American and Western European citizens.¹⁴

Second, the shift in power from Sunnis to Shiites marks a turning point of ethno-religious conflicts after the war in 2003. This situation has perpetuated devastation in Iraq, not wholly in terms of increased violence and casualties, but also in terms of the brutality of internal conflicts, "Iraqi-on-Iraqi violence."¹⁵ Therefore, conflicts have increased between the two religious factions, the Sunnis for recovering power and the Shiites for keeping it. This recent increase in Sunni-Shiite conflict relates to religious insurgent groups such as al Badr and al Qaeda as well. In addition to the religious conflicts, the Kurds have insisted on their autonomy in their territory

¹³ Toby Dodge, "Iraqi Transitions: From Regime Change to State Collapse," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 4/5, 'Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq: A Quixotic Beginning to the 'Global Democratic Revolution' (2005): 707, <http://0-www.jstor.org.lib.aucegypt.edu/stable/pdfplus/3993716.pdf>.

¹⁴ Noah Feldman, *What We Owe Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 2-3. James L. Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 182.

¹⁵ Gareth Stansfield, "Accepting Realities in Iraq," *Middle East Programme Briefing Paper*, (2007): 2.

since the first major Kurdish nationalistic upheaval in 1880.¹⁶ Since the Kurds suffered from the Arabization of Saddam's regime in the territory, they have persistently fought for autonomy by removing Arabs from their territory in Iraq.

These internal factors of ethno-religious conflicts are intertwined with external neighboring factors, such as Iran, Turkey and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Ethno-religious minorities of these countries depend upon a solution to Iraqi problems for their own internal security. On the one hand, these three neighboring countries are concerned that their minorities will seek to secure their autonomy or higher stakes in the political game, just as their Iraqi counterparts have. On the other hand, each of these countries supports one actor in the Iraqi conflict or another according to its own interests. Turkey supports the prevention of the autonomy of the Kurds, Iran backs the Shiite government and Saudi Arabia prefers the Sunnis' return to power. For these reasons, the ethno-religious conflicts in Iraq are a main factor in the disturbance of the reconstruction of Iraq which will be explored in more detail throughout this thesis.

1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this thesis is based on the work of Gareth Stansfield, researcher at Chatham House and University of Exeter. His article "Accepting Realities in Iraq" examines Iraqi realities since the invasion of Iraq in

¹⁶ Nader Entessar, "The Kurds in Post-Revolutionary Iran and Iraq," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (1984): 911-933, <http://0-www.jstor.org.lib.aucegypt.edu/stable/3991802.pdf>.

2003. In order to reconstruct the state in Iraq, it is important to explore the detailed realities, the struggle for power between religious factions and for autonomy between ethnic groups in the country. As well, the acceptance of Iraqi realities and the allowance of Iraqis to attempt to prevent the collapse of their country by an Iraqi approach rather than a US-imposed approach are necessary.¹⁷

In addition to the US interest in obtaining oil from Iraq, the Israel Lobby's influence on the US decision to invade Iraq will be examined as one of the main reasons for this war. The Israel Lobby serves as a strong Israeli intervention in the US decision to attack Iraq although the country was not a direct and dangerous threat to the United States after 9/11. Within this context, this thesis examines what the Iraqi ethno-religious conflicts as an ongoing conflict between the Shiites and the Sunnis, including insurgent groups in Baghdad as well as between the Arabs and the Kurds in Kirkuk. Furthermore, with the above cases, this thesis explores how these conflicts negatively affect the political reunification of the Iraqi state.

1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

The Invasion of Iraq: Why Did the US Attack Iraq in 2003?

The literature for this thesis focuses on why the United States attacked the Iraqi Saddam regime. Was Saddam Hussein a real threat to the United States after 9/11? Was he related to al Qaeda activities? There are abundant hypotheses about the

¹⁷ Stansfield, 1.

US goal of its invasion of Iraq. In the book by John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, one of many factors that played a significant role in America's decision to invade Iraq was that Saddam Hussein was a brutal tyrant with ambitions to build weapons of mass destruction (WMD) including nuclear, biotic and chemical weapons. Although no direct connection between Saddam's regime and al Qaeda has ever been established, the US invasion of Iraq was based on 9/11. In the wake of unprecedented terrorism within its territory, the United States of America felt shocked and fearful of invisible and remote danger. It is possible that the United States viewed Iraq as an example of "the rogue states" in the third world. With the collapse of Saddam's regime, "the rogue states" would have to consider the United States unmatched power before standing against its policies. These rogue states would have to try to adjust themselves to the values and national interests of the United States instead.

Most importantly, there was another factor in the US decision to attack Iraq. That element was "the Israel Lobby" which was mostly composed of neoconservative groups and pundits who favored war since before 9/11. In an effort to invade Iraq, the war scenario was supported by Israeli officials and former Israeli leaders because it was a chance for Israel to topple one of its main regional threats, Saddam Hussein, who had launched Scud missiles to Israel in the Gulf War of 1991. In this way, eliminating Saddam was good for both the United States and Israel to strengthen their

strategic position in the region as well as to promote a regional process of democratization.¹⁸ It is clear for both countries that defeating Saddam's regime did not only warn "the rogue states" to pay absolute attention to US foreign policies, but it also provided Israel security in terms of eliminating Iraqi missile fire in its borders.

In comparison to the arguments of the Bush administration for the invasion of Iraq, there were also credible reasons to topple Saddam's regime presented by the international community before and after the March-April war in 2003. Although Bush argued that the political goal for the war was a humanitarian perspective which would enable the Iraqi people to rehabilitate their political, economic and ethnical problems, reality of the US goal in Iraq was different. An examination of "the Israel Lobby" will provide evidence in favor of the claim that the main goal of the United States in its invasion of Iraq was to overthrow Saddam Hussein. This supports the claim that the United States went to Iraq with a specious plea.

Before and after the outbreak of the Iraqi war, substantial evidence related to the real political goals of the war existed. This evidence strongly supported the United States' interest in overthrowing Saddam to maintain security in the region with Israel's public and private concerns in mind, not to reconstruct the Iraqi state in a humanitarian way. One example of this is from before the war in 2002, when General Wesley Clark, a retired NATO commander, publicly stated that "those who favor this

¹⁸ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 229-230.

attack now will tell you candidly, and privately, that is probably true that Saddam Hussein is no threat to the United States. But they are afraid that at some point he might decide if he had a nuclear weapon to use it against Israel."¹⁹ Another can be seen in a speech that Philip Zelikow made to a University of Virginia audience in 2002. He argued that "the real threat is the threat against Israel,"²⁰ meaning that Saddam did not pose a direct threat to the United States. Zelikow was a member of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (2001-03), executive director of the 9/11 Commission, and counselor to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice (2005-06).

From the perspective of post-war evidence, Rovert Novak, a columnist who frequently and prominently criticizes Israel, explained the war as "Sharon's war" and in 2007 said, "I am convinced that Israel made a large contribution to the decision to embark on this war. I know that on the eve of the war, Sharon said, in a closed conversation with senators, that if they could succeed in getting rid of Saddam Hussein, it would solve Israel's security problems."²¹ In May 2005, Barry Jacobs of the American Jewish Committee acknowledged that it was "pervasive" that Israel and the neoconservatives were responsible for letting the United States invade Iraq.²² As a matter of fact, there was no security-related reason for the United States to invade Iraq. As much of the evidence shows, Saddam Hussein was not a direct threat to the United

¹⁹ Quoted in "US Assumes UK Help in Iraq, Says General," *Guardian*, August 20, 2002.

²⁰ Emad Mekay, "Iraq Was Invaded 'to Protect Israel'-US Official," *Asia Times On-line*, (2004).

²¹ Akiva Eldar, "Sharp Pen, Cruel Tongue," *Ha'aretz*, April 13, 2007.

²² John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, 233.

States and did not have links to al Qaeda.

The political goal of the United States was to overthrow Saddam from his rule over Iraq. It is apparent that Israel backed up the US decisions to invade Iraq for its national security. If Iraq had been chosen randomly as one of "the rogue states" standing against the United States in the third world, "Pre-War Reconstruction Plan of Post-War Iraq" would be the plan the Bush administration randomly made with the international community and organizations giving rise to current Iraqi ethno-religious conflicts. This is because no humanitarian or reconstructing intention for the future program for Iraq have been articulated as of yet. The Bush administration only considered Saddam as its main target and underestimated the complexity of the Iraqi situation as well as cultural, factional and ethno-religious factors.

1.5 SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

The sources for this thesis include English and Arabic secondary sources as well as supplemental primary sources available to me. This thesis research was limited by inaccessibility of many sources on Iraq, particular sources addressing state reconstruction. Since visiting Iraq has been prohibited by the Korean government, my Korean nationality permitted me to only deal with official publications published by Iraqi organizations as well as the Iraqi government in English and Arabic.

"The Council of Ministers of the Republic of Iraq"²³ was a crucial online Arabic source for information on current Iraqi political situations. In addition, "Iraqi Presidency," an online news site written in Arabic, Kurdish and English, was helpful along with other online sources. In addition to online resources, the work of William R. Polk, David Rose and Noah Feldman provided more historic and political views of the ethno-religious conflict and their effect on nation-building in Iraq.

Furthermore, I requested information from the Korean Embassy in Baghdad to research the current Iraqi political insecurity. This part of the research focused on the Iraqi political insecurity between ethno-religious groups since the failure of passing the election law on 29 October 2009 for the national elections in January 2010. As well, contacting Iraqis who worked for Kurdish Pesh Merga in the Kurdish region and for the Iraqi government was important in order to adequately explore each group's political agenda and expectations of national reconstruction.

Interviews with Iraqis living in Turkey were conducted over one week in the summer of 2009. Questions for interviewees were about the future of Iraq in general, the reunification or federalism of the state, as well as the US role in Iraq in particular. In addition, I interviewed several Iraqis regarding the conflicts between the Kurds and the Arabs as well as the Sunnis and the Shiites. Finally, I also interviewed AUCians coming from various work experiences and backgrounds for additional perspectives. These interviews provided fresh primary perspectives in addition to the secondary

²³ <http://www.cabinet.iq>.

perspectives given in books.

1.6 THESIS OUTLINE

This thesis will discuss ethno-religious conflicts among the Sunnis, the Shiites and the Kurds and their role in reconstructing post-Saddam Iraq since the United States' invasion of Iraq in 2003. In terms of studying the emergence and the brutalization of ethno-religious conflicts in Iraqi history, the US occupation of Iraq in 2003 and the events taken place thereafter will be chronologically discussed to illustrate how the invasion gave rise to more internalized and brutalized ethno-religious conflicts. It eventually led to a less integrated and more poorly united post-Saddam regime than any other political regimes in Iraq.

Chapter 2 will investigate the emergence of ethno-religious conflicts before 2003 from a transitional period between the end of the Ottoman Empire (1550 - 1914) and the British mandate (1914 - 1932) in terms of the state formation of Iraq by the British authorities and according to the British interests in Iraq. As well, this chapter will discuss how these conflicts played a significant role in the Iraqi political situation under the monarchy (1932 - 1958) and the Saddam regime (1958 - 1990). It explains how and when the Ba'th party emerged as the Iraqi political entity and how Saddam grew to play a significant role in Iraqi politics, how he manipulated these conflicts and used them as a means for his suppression of Iraqi political minorities and not just

ethno-religious minorities.

Chapter 3 focuses on Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the Gulf War in 1991 as the starting point of the US intervention in Iraqi politics since 1991. In terms of emphasizing the UN economic sanctions against Saddam Hussein and the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, it will criticize that ethno-religious conflicts since 2003 became more internalized among ethno-religious groups and more severe with the advent of insurgent and militia groups as a consequence of US interference in Iraqi internal affairs, the poorly designed "Pre-War Reconstruction Plan of Post-War Iraq," and power shift to the Shiites. Furthermore, this chapter discusses the US plan for post-Saddam Iraq as it played a fatal role in reshaping Iraqi politics among ethno-religious groups.

Chapter 4 explores expected political assignments the Shiite government is facing based on regime change and the concerns of neighboring countries with post-Saddam Iraq such as Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey. Although these three countries do not have political influence on the re-building of Iraq, their effects on Iraq cannot be ignored because their future is also dependant on the stability of post-Saddam Iraq. Before establishing a strong political system in Iraq, political cohesion among the ethno-religious Iraqis is a precondition. For this to be successful, there are three main key players, the Sunnis, the Shiites and the Kurds, all of which are important for establishing and developing Iraqi politics, rather than consolidated a well-developed

and planned democracy dictated by the international community. In addition, oil as the national revenue poses another significant challenge to the Iraqis. In terms of negotiating oil distribution and control, the central Shiite government will try to find a prosperous way for all ethno-religious Iraqis such as a reasonable Petroleum Law.

In conclusion, I will comment on the most recent political atmosphere in Iraqi politics based on ethno-religious conflicts and their affects in Iraqi history and the failure of the "Pre-War Reconstruction Plan of Post-War Iraq." In addition, the last chapter will summarize all chapters I explored within the developed context of this thesis.

II. ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS BEFORE 2003

2.1 IRAQ FROM OTTOMANISM TO A BRITISH MANDATE: 1550 - 1914

When the British troops were sent to the southern port of Fao on 6 November 1914, the region which is now considered current Iraq or modern Iraq belonged to the Ottoman Empire. Before the British troops arrived in Iraq, the country had had many experiences with foreign occupiers. Within these contexts, Iraq had a symbiotic relationship with various political controllers, meaning that Iraq had belonged to a part of the Ottoman Empire for almost four centuries from 1550 to 1914. Furthermore, before the Ottoman era, the region fell under the authority of the Abbasid caliphate, the Mongols, the Turkmens and the Safavids. Iraq's territory was the center of many empires for a long period of time.

With the advent of the Ottoman Empire, Mosul and Kurdistan were taken by the Ottomans from the Safavids in 1516, and Basra and Baghdad were added to the Empire in 1555.²⁴ As a result of the expansion of the Ottomans, these provinces of modern Iraq came under the control of the Ottoman Empire. In the Ottoman era, Iraq was considered a significant frontier buffer between Ottoman Sunnism and Safavi / Qajar Shiism. This is because Iraq possessed important Shiite learning centers and religious sites in Najaf, Karbala and Baghdad such as Kazimiye even though they

²⁴ Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, *Iraq since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship* (New York: I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2001), 1.

were occupied by the Ottoman Sunnis.

As a result of the Ottomans' occupation of Shiite religious sites in Iraq, neighboring Iran which was the cradle of Shiite power and the Ottoman stronghold on Sunni power had bitter political struggles because each sect sought the religious legitimization of their rulers in the region.²⁵ In addition to the religious factors, Kurdish nationalism has played a significant role in the conflict between the Arabs and the Kurds. This indicates that Iraq has struggled throughout history with ethno-religious conflicts involving the various previous political controllers of the territory, Kurdish nationalism, and the competition for legitimacy of Shiism and Sunnism.

2.2 THE EMERGENCE OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS: IRAQI STATE FORMATION UNDER THE BRITISH MANDATE: 1914 - 1932

2.2.1 The State Formation of Iraq by the British Authorities

The history of modern Iraq is strongly related to the British occupation and British mandate during 1914 to 1932. Prior to the British occupation and mandate, no state or nation formed by political unity in Iraq had existed.²⁶ Within its historical context, the state formation of current Iraq coincided with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918. In fact, the three provinces – Basra, Baghdad and Mosul – were put

²⁵ Selim Deringil, "The Struggle against Shiism in Hamidian Iraq: A Study in Ottoman Counter-Propaganda," *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, Bd. 30, Nr. 1/4 (1990): 46-47, <http://0-www.jstor.org.lib.aucegypt.edu/stable/pdfplus/1571045.pdf>.

²⁶ Rashid Khalid, *Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America's Perilous Path in the Middle East* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009), 92.

together by the British to take advantage of the war's opportunity to establish the state.²⁷ Britain saw this as advantageous as it was reorganizing its new possessions in the Middle East after World War I.

Joining these three provinces together under one flag signifies the starting point of the conflicts among the Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds in Iraq. The most significant catalyst to these conflicts was that the British had little interest in building the current state of Iraq. Although these provinces were under the British protectorate, they did not play a primary role in "a geopolitical or economic unit." This is because each province had a unique socio-political system with differences so clear that they did not even share weights, measurements and currencies. Moreover, each province had different historical experiences. For example, Basra held ties to the Gulf States and India, Baghdad was historically linked to Syria and Iran, and Mosul had relations to Turkey.²⁸

The conflicts among various ethnic groups and religious sects in Iraq were relatively new. However, the British paid little attention to and even ignored a variety of people, histories, and ethnic and religious factions living in the region. Before the British came to Iraq, the conflicts had been related to ethnic and religious identities within a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural context. Each province had its own distinctive characteristics. The population of Iraq was composed of three main groups whose

²⁷ Peter J. Munson, *Iraq in Transition: The Legacy of Dictatorship and the Prospects for Democracy* (Virginia: Potomac Books, 2009), 17.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

identity was based on their religion and ethnicity. As an ethnic minority, the Kurds spoke a different language, had a different history, culture and ethnicity than the Iraqi Sunni and Shiite Muslims. The Shiites were an Iraqi majority and were ethnically Arab, although they came from a different sectarian group of Islam than the traditional Iraqi power elite. The Sunnis, who are also ethnically Arab, controlled governance in Baghdad, although they were a religious minority.

The Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis were challenged by a new and complex Iraqi identity reconfigured with Iraqi nationalism, Arab identity, Islamic identity, tribal and family allegiance, and so on.²⁹ The sectarianism of Islam played a role in giving rise to conflicts in Iraq. The conflicts between the Sunnis and Shiites found their origin in the coincidental marriage of sectarianism and politics. However, the Iraqi Shiites were also one of two Islamic factions who originally came from the fourth Khalif Ali and so their history does not date back as far as that of Sunni Islam. Although disputes between the two sects often broke out, the Sunnis and the Shiites have been able to cohabitate within their respective historical and religious contexts.

In the 19th century period of Ottoman rule, Arab intellectuals and political activists preferred an autonomous Arab state to subordinate Arab provinces within the Ottoman Empire. However, Britain and the other European powers did not welcome their aim because Britain disapproved of an Arab state in Iraq as this would threaten

²⁹ Munson, 18.

its own interests in the region.³⁰ These interests explain why Britain invaded and mandated Iraq from 1914 to 1932.

2.2.2 The British Interests in Modern Iraq

The British invaded Iraq to expand the territorial dominance of the British Empire and to heighten its agricultural capacity in terms of controlling both oil and food. Upon the British occupation of Iraq, the British authorities fell into fiscal deficit. Due to the expense of their overstretched imperial politics, Britain decided to rule Iraq as frugally as possible. This financial pressure led to the cultivation of desert lands to produce tons of grain and to establish military manufacturing infrastructure to equip the army.³¹

However, the most pressing British interest in Iraq which ultimately led to the invasion of the country was its copious oil reserves. The British engaged in naval competition with Germany for which oil possession indeed played a considerable role in maintaining British superiority. Oil could replace coal for fuel and make the British fleets faster than Germany's. In order to obtain as much oil as the British desired, Britain ruled Iraq, like Iran, according to its political and military actions. In addition, Iraq gave Britain the geopolitical advantage particularly in southern Iraq and later Baghdad in 1917, connecting its access to India and the Mediterranean through the

³⁰ Farouk-Sluglett and Slugglett, 7.

³¹ Polk, 72.

Gulf.³²

On 30 October 1918, the war between the Ottoman Empire and Britain ended. The war lasted almost four years and caused about 20,000 British casualties in Iraq. However, the most post-war goal for the British authorities was to find a way to reduce its expenditures by decreasing the number of British troops stationed in Iraq. The British authorities made the citizens of Baghdad participants of civil affairs in cooperation with "the Political Representatives of Great Britain."³³ This did not equate to Iraqi independence, but rather under British rule by mandate.

Regardless of the British decision to occupy Iraq through mandate, the Iraqis opposed the foreign rule at the League of Nations, which played a significant role in hiding its mandatory from them. However, at a conference in San Remo in April 1920, the British authorities started governing Iraq with the support of its allies. Although the British justified their rule with the term legitimacy, alluding to popular political support of the Iraqis, the British authorities legally remained in Iraq only to achieve its political and economic aims.

The British mandate in 1920 triggered the beginning of insurgent operations within Iraq. After the British mandate started, the Iraqis staged a rebellion against the authorities on 30 June 1920. Although this insurrection resembled a nationalist movement against the British, the operations were totally based on Iraqi religious or

³² Khalid, 93-95.

³³ Polk, 73.

ethnic ties or both. This is not to say that the British mandate gave rise to full-blown ethno-religious conflicts, but there were insurgents consisting of the Shiites, the Sunnis and the Kurds, in Iraq under the British mandate. Indeed, this was not an ethnic or religious revolt, but "a national war of independence" by the whole Iraqi 'nation', including anti-Arab Kurds.³⁴

This case engenders a precedent for Iraqi insurrection against colonial power as witnessed with British occupation in the 1920s and US occupation in 2003. Furthermore, the insurgent activities worked well against the British and still play a powerful role in Iraqi politics under US power. However, ethno-religious conflicts did not emerge directly from the British mandate, but from the Iraqi state built by the British in 1921. The British authorities had their own economic, strategic, and geopolitical interests in establishing the Iraqi state regardless of the irresolvable ethno-religious questions of the region. Britain exacerbated this situation by combining three different and distinct ethno-religious groups together to construct the Iraqi state.

It is important to note why the British authorities established Iraq with three different ethno-religious groups or provinces, which had been in the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, building an Iraq that protected its own interests meant the emergence of ethno-religious conflicts among the Shiites, the Sunnis and the Kurds since these groups never agreed to unify under the British power.

³⁴ Polk, 77.

Britain's main interests included securing the route to India and preventing pirate attacks on British ships in the Gulf during the first half of the nineteenth century. However, the British authorities kept trying to reduce their overseas expenses and to obtain Kurdish oil fields to make up for the costs of war, occupying and stabilizing the region. In this way, the British authorities established an Iraqi government under British administrative policy. As a result, Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill outlined the new guideline for the Iraqi government in a conference held in Cairo in 1921.³⁵ The guideline played a significant role in building Iraq for the Iraqis as well as inspiring emerging ethno-religious conflicts among the Sunnis, the Shiites and the Kurds.

After establishing the state of Iraq in March 1921, Iraq was governed by the Hashemite Amir Faisal who was a veteran of the Arab Revolt against the Ottomans. Indeed, he was a problematic leader because he was not Iraqi and did not live within the country's borders. The British chose him as a leader for his prominent participation in the Arab Revolt and his good relations with the British, giving him instant power in the Arab region.³⁶ It is important to note that the Hashemite monarchy also played a significant role in fomenting these ethno-religious conflicts in the context of the birth of Iraq.

³⁵ Farouk-Sluglett and Slugglett, 11.

³⁶ Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield, *The Future of Iraq*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan division of St. Martin's Press, 2004), 14.

2.2.3 The Emergence of Ethno-Religious Conflicts in the British Iraq

With the advent of the Hashemite monarchy, Sunni Arabs, who were 20 percent of the Iraqis, controlled Shiite Arabs and the Kurds based on their economic and political power in Iraq. For example, only five of the fifty-seven politicians of the cabinet were Shiites or Kurds between 1921 and 1936. In addition, thirteen governors of fourteen provinces and forty-three of forty-seven district heads were Sunnis.³⁷ This means that Iraq was strongly dominated by minority Sunni politicians and governors supported by the Hashemite monarchy. However, Shiite and Kurdish politicians did not possess enough political power to express and argue for their political preferences.

The ethno-religious strife between the Sunnis and the Shiites was directly caused by the British authorities. When the British first occupied and mandated Iraq, the Sunnis and the Shiites fought together against British power. However, when the Sunni Iraqis took power of the state and cooperated with the British authorities, the Shiite Iraqis felt abandoned. This moment represents a transitional period in which a transfer of shared power from three main ethno-religious groups to just the Sunnis occurred. The division of the Shiites from the Sunnis is important to note because the dichotomy between Sunni and Shiite lost its nationalist sentiment and took on religious and political terms.³⁸

Since the birth of Iraq in 1921, Shiite Arabs were politically discriminated

³⁷ Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield , 20.

³⁸ Polk, 93.

against by Sunni Arabs. The Shiites could not access political power or even financial and commercial resources. This means that the Shiites were completely isolated in Iraqi politics. In 1935 and 1936, the most serious Shiite rebellions broke out in Iraq. The Iraqi government used armed force to suppress the Shiite rebellions.³⁹ It seems that the most unsolvable problem in Iraq is ethnic conflicts between the Kurds and Sunni Arabs. Kurdish history has been intertwined with the dominance of Sunnis since 1918. When Baghdad and Basra fell under the British mandate, Kurdistan did not. The British divided the Kurdish areas into four land partitions divided among regions of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey in 1921. Although the British authorities promised the Kurds their autonomy within the state after building Iraq, Shaykh Mahmud rejected it and then forcefully occupied the Kurdish region in 1922 and bombed the region in 1924.⁴⁰ This historical account of the effects of the British mandate in Iraq shows the emergence of the ethnic conflicts between the Kurds and Sunnis as the Kurds have sought their autonomy until the present time.

2.3 OUTBREAK OF CONFLICTS UNDER THE MONARCHY: 1932 - 1958

When the British occupation of Iraq ended and Iraq became independent in 1932, the Iraqis had clear visions of their political future. The following sixteen years, however, provided an eventful history for the young country. In this short period, Iraq

³⁹ Anderson and Stansfield, 24.

⁴⁰ Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 26.

enjoyed independence for nine years, the British reoccupied the country for four years, and the reconfiguration of the monarchy in 1945 with the end of the British reoccupation dominated Iraq's history. With re-independence under monarchic rule by King Faysal II after the Second World War, monarchy in Iraq survived until 1958 when the coup of Colonel Abdel Karim Qassim and Abdel Salem Aref overthrew it.

The period of the monarchy was also challenged by the ethno-religious conflicts. The biggest conflict of this period arose out of the political suppression of the Shittes by the Sunnis. In fact, the Sunnis did not have to deal with the Shiites as the same way they dealt with the Kurds. The political relationship between the Sunnis and the Kurds and between the Sunnis and the Shiites was different. As Arabs and Muslims, the Shiites were identified more easily with the Sunnis, meaning that they integrated well as Iraqis like Sunni Iraqis.⁴¹

Although the Kurds had strong political leadership, movements and military struggles for their ethnic and political autonomy, the Shiites did not match them in their political and military actions nor did they express their independent will against the Iraqi government. Therefore, the Shiites did not pose a direct and powerful threat to the Iraqi ruling elite like the Sunnis, the Ba'th and later Saddam Hussein strongly argued.

In the monarchy, the Shiites' situation did not change. Although the Shiites

⁴¹ Ofra Bengio, "Shi'is and Politics in Ba'th Iraq," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 21, No.1 (1985): 1, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4283042.pdf>.

were a majority of the Iraqis, their political status was a minority in Iraq.⁴² This political composition endured as the Sunnis accepted and adopted previous policies toward the Shiites from the Ottomans and the British. For example, the analysis of King Faysal I in 1932, the Shiites were persecuted by the Ottomans and excluded from power in that era. Since the Ottoman Empire, the Shiites felt alienated from the Sunni-controlled government because of their deprivation of power. When the Shiite clergy was deprived of funding, their Sunni counterpart enjoyed the support of the government.⁴³ These instances of political discrimination provided two threats to the Sunni government which were religious opposition to Ba'th secularism and popular revolts staged by the Shiite clergy.⁴⁴

In the post-British mandate period, the establishment of Kurdish political parties emerged. The Iraqi Communist Party (the ICP) was established in 1934 and became active in the Kurdish region. The ICP was the first Kurdish political party to focus on and solve Kurdish political problems. Also, another Kurdish political party called Hewa was founded by Massoud Barzani and Kurdish intellectuals in 1939. This party consisted of leftists and conservatives who argued that revolution and socialism were the proper vehicles for attaining Kurdish national rights.⁴⁵

In addition to these two parties, the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) was founded in 1945. Although it did not contribute to the political opposition against the

⁴² Bengio, 2.

⁴³ Ibid., 1.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 1.

⁴⁵ Farouk-Slglett and Slugglet, 27.

Iraqi government, by the 1950s, the KDP expressed its support for the Revolution of 1958 out of its own political interests.⁴⁶ With several active political parties in Kurdistan, Kurdish politics of opposition to British power or to Sunni power in the central government persisted. Political struggles among ethno-religious groups under the British occupation continued throughout the Hashemite monarchy and into Saddam's regime. Even though their political methods differed, their political aims remained the same.

2.4 SADDAM'S BRUTAL ETHNO-RELIGIOUS SUPPRESSION OF THE SHIITES AND THE KURDS: 1958 - 1990

2.4.1 The Emergence of the Ba'th Party and Saddam Hussein

Saddam's regime came into power when young Iraqi army officers enacted their dreams of revolution. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, young Iraqi army officers were worried about the corruption of civil politicians and felt empowered to protect their country. The political ideology they instilled in revolutionary Iraq has penetrated Iraqi society up to today as has been carried out to fight against the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. In addition to its revolutionary conviction, Iraqi Ba'thism played a significant role in building Iraq and sustaining the power of the Sunnis.

Indeed, the Ba'th was founded by Syrians in Damascus as a discussion

⁴⁶ Farouk-Slglett and Slugglet, 30.

group.⁴⁷ In 1951, Ba'thism came to Iraq and gradually had an effect on Iraqi politics. The Iraqi Ba'th party was founded by Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din al-Bitar in 1952 and acted as a branch of the Syrian party.⁴⁸ The most important point in Iraqi political development is that the initiation of the Iraqi Ba'th party coincided with rise of Pan-Arabism. As mentioned above, the monarchy represented a kind of puppet regime under the British mandate. In this sense, the Ba'th party and young Iraqi free officers sought their national identity through the collapse of the old monarchy.

In 1968, a few Iraqi free officers, civilians and the Ba'th succeeded in staging a coup d'état that overthrew the old monarchy and gave birth to revolutionary Iraq or Saddam's Iraq. The success of this coup was based on the strong leadership of less than a few dozen young Iraqi free officers who controlled military troops⁴⁹ under a strong Pan-Arab ideology. The nationalist-led collapse of the Pro-British monarchy instilled a sense of pride in the Iraqis and united them under one political agenda of nationalism. This nationalist agenda was not based on ethnic and religious identities, but rather on a unified Iraqi identity. The emergence of a collective Iraqi identity is significant because although the Iraqi ethno-religious minorities remained in conflict during the the Ba'thists' and Saddam's regime, actual unification of Iraqi identity under nationalism would come with the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Needless to say, Iraqis of different religious sects and ethnic identities have

⁴⁷ Polk, 109.

⁴⁸ Kanan Makiya, *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 183.

⁴⁹ Polk, 110.

seldom cooperated in their history with the exceptions of the two cases of foreign occupations by the British and the US. However, the coup of 1968 displayed stark differences from the coup of 1958 because after 1968 the Ba'th party finally took power and sustained it until 2003. On the one hand, the decade between 1958 and 1968 positively affected the strength and endurance Ba'th party to secure its power.⁵⁰ In spite of the Ba'th consolidation of power, Iraqi politics could not overcome the social and political instability of Iraq left over from the collapse of the monarchy.⁵¹

On the other hand, the new leader and order to emerge from Iraqi Pan-Arabism was Saddam Hussein who was born in 1937 in Tigris and whose family was landless peasants. Although he was from a rural city, Saddam used the urban Ba'th as a footstone to becoming the president.⁵² Saddam became a member of the Ba'th and started protesting against the old regime in 1957. Indeed, he was affected by his uncle who was a participant in the Rashid Ali revolt and was imprisoned for his political dissent. His uncle's case influenced Saddam to participate in political activities against the British authorities and the British-backed monarchy. This involvement in opposition to British forces was the first moment that Saddam joined Iraqi politics with the Ba'th party and demonstrated his political capabilities to the Ba'th members and the masses.

After the coup of 1968, Saddam became vice-chairman of the Revolutionary

⁵⁰ Makiya, 237.

⁵¹ Cleveland, 408.

⁵² Ibid., 408.

Command Council (RCC). In 1973, he occupied four of the nine membership positions on the RCC and finally, became the head of the RCC in the 1970s. Indeed, when President al-Bakr resigned in 1979, Saddam replaced him as president, secretary general of the Ba'th party, chairman of the RCC and commander in chief of the armed forces.⁵³ With the advent of his usurpation of political power in Iraq, Saddam began suppressing the Shiites and the Kurds by enacting brutal and unfair domestic policies toward them.

2.4.2 Saddam's Policies against the Shiites and the Kurds

In the 1950s some Shiite secular nationalists who opposed the monarchy were not imprisoned. They committed acts of political defiance of the Ba'th in the 1960s in which they adopted political Islam as an opposition ideology.⁵⁴ The Sunnis tried to initiate the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan al-Muslimin) that had been created in Egypt in the 1930s and 1940s in order to bolster Sunni power. However, one of the Shiite groups, al-Da'wa, became the first anti-governmental movement to Saddam's regime and also to the American occupation later.⁵⁵ It seems that al-Da'wa played a significant role in Iraqi political movements because it organized and systemized opposition within the political context of Saddam's authoritarian rule.

The relationship between the Sunnis and the Kurds was strongly tied to wars.

⁵³ Cleveland, 410.

⁵⁴ Polk, 113.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 114.

The two ethnic groups competed for the protection and pursuit of their interests. By 1961, a Sunni-Kurdish war broke out between Peshmerga and the Iraqi army. The tension between two ethnic groups seemed impossible to alleviate. This was evidenced when the Iraqi army acknowledged that they could not win the war because Americans, Israelis and Persians encouraged the resistance of the Kurds and supported them to maintain their political goals.⁵⁶

Conflicts between the Sunnis and the Kurds date back to the moment when Iraq gained independence in 1932. If the British had granted the Kurds autonomy, the tension between two would cease to exist. Although the British agreed that the Kurds were too difficult to handle, they inhibited the Kurds from becoming independent. It was clear that an autonomous Kurdistan would constitute a threat to Sunni Iraq due to Kirkuk's abundance of oil. At present, Iraq is saturated with massive Kurdish military campaigns as opposed to their former guerrilla warfare and hit-and-run raids.⁵⁷

In addition to the Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdish ethno-religious conflicts, there was also the factor of Saddam's personality. His greedy and zealous quest for political power contributed to the ethno-religious chaos of Iraq. When Saddam Hussein became president, his primary political goal was to aggrandize his own power. To satisfy his hunger for power, Saddam always needed enemies to crush down to maintain his regime. His potential enemies included Kurds, Shiites, Ba'thists, army

⁵⁶ Polk, 114.

⁵⁷ Ibid.,121.

officers, religious leaders, British, Americans, Persians, Egyptians, Syrians and Israelis. The first enemies Saddam labeled and began to persecute were the Shiites.⁵⁸ He feared another coup when he became president and opted for brutal ethno-religious suppression and massacres to keep his position as head of the Iraqi state.

One major reason why Saddam began to attack the Shiites was that he considered them as non-Iraqis, claiming that the Shiites were influenced by Persian culture and sometimes spoke Persian with their relatives in Iraq. With his argument against the Shiites, Saddam did not hesitate to violently suppress them with the security forces and the army whenever the Shiites gathered. As well, religious leaders were imprisoned and executed, their schools were closed, and sermons were suppressed. Furthermore, the Iraqi government expelled about twenty thousand of Iraqi Shiites from their hometowns to Iran in 1969.

Before the Iran-Iraq war broke out in 1980, Ayatollah Khomeini recognized the war between them with the support of Saudi Kingdom, Kuwait and Jordan and urged the Iraqi Shiites to revolt against and assassinate Saddam. As a result of the Khomeini's encouragement of the Iraqi Shiites to stand against their leader, Saddam invaded Iran. His decision was influenced by his desire to regain territory which he gave to the Shah in the 1970s, to force Iran to stop provoking the Shiites to depose Saddam, and to cut Iranian support for the Kurds in Iraq.⁵⁹ This situation illustrates

⁵⁸ Polk, 119.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 129.

why Saddam did not consider the Shiites as Iraqis, but as his regime's "enemy-in-potential"⁶⁰ for the past four decades.

Religiously speaking, the Ba'th concept of secularism conflicted with the Shiites because they were religiously strict and intolerable of Sunni secular ideas. When the Ba'th took power in 1969, the Ba'th Sunnis repressed the Shiite clergy and institutions by implementing the closure of Islamic institutions, strict censorship of religious publications, and persecution of the Shiite Ulama.⁶¹ In the political arena, beginning in 1963 the Shiite officials in the higher echelons of the Ba'th gradually decreased. Finally, in the 1970s, the Ba'th was fully controlled by the Sunnis.

When examining Shiite participation in the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), for about ten years from 1968 to 1977 no Shiites were members of this political body.⁶² Although there were a number of Shiite politicians in the cabinet, they had no power over policy-making. The Political Report of the Ba'th party's Eighth Regional Congress of 1974 expressed the party's political problems, its policies and relations with the Kurds and the Communist party. However, the Ba'th report did not mention anything about the Shiites.⁶³ This means that the Shiite politicians were excluded from real political power. As well, the Sunnis considered the Shiites as non-political participants of Ba'th Iraq and ignored them in politics.

On the other hand, Saddam's and the Ba'th's relations with the Kurds reflected

⁶⁰Polk, 120.

⁶¹ Bengio, 2.

⁶² Ibid., 2-3.

⁶³ Ibid., 3.

ancient Assyria, in which the regime endorsed forced migration of much of the Kurdish population from their hometowns. The Ba'th tried to drive tens of thousands of Kurds from their land to Iran in the 1970s. However, the worst disaster was that Iran sold the Kurds out to stop their covert war and to have an economic benefit such as a waterway leading to the Persian Gulf. The Kurds were betrayed by Iraqi Sunnis and Iranian Shiites. Furthermore, the Ba'thists relocated many Kurds into the southern part of Iraq and transferred the southern Arabs to Kurdish territory.⁶⁴ Saddam switched the two ethnic groups in an effort to Arabize the Kurds and to decentralize their political power.

After the Iran-Iraq war ended, Saddam refocused his attention on north Iraq. He suspected that the Kurds in the north were supported by the Iranian government and the Israelis. Before the Anfal case broke out in 1987, two strong Kurdish political factions existed, the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) that controlled everything in Kurdistan. In the wake of the Kurdish situation, Saddam perceived them as a main threat to his regime's security and decided to eliminate the Kurds.

The Anfal campaign derives its name Quranic verse VIII in which the battle was not only brutal, but barbaric as well.⁶⁵ Its scale did not compare with former Iraqi operations against the Kurds at all. In this campaign, Kurdish and Iraqi troops

⁶⁴ Polk, 122.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 134.

committed heinous acts of war on the Kurds in terms of theft, rape, murder, and military tactics which were dormant in Iraq since the Mongol invasions. However, these inhumane attacks became worse when the Kurds and the Iranians counterattacked in 1988. The Iraqi army launched chemical weapons on Halabja and killed approximately four thousand men, women and children. Indeed, the exact number of casualties is disputed⁶⁶ as others estimate that casualties amounted to more than one hundred thousand Kurdish fighters and Kurdish civilians.⁶⁷ The most important result of Anfal was that many thousands of people were dead and over one million people lost their homes.

After the Anfal campaign, acts of Arabization or Arab nationalism by the Sunnis in Iraq continued. Similar to the Iraqi government's Kurdish policy in the 1970s, Kurds were forced to migrate to other parts of the country as a result of the policy of Kurds' relocation in 1989. The Kurds living in the districts of Qalat Dizah and Raniya were transferred to other districts of Iraq. These two districts were beyond the central control of the state because they were embedded within a few Kurdish areas. Although external Arab and Western criticism denounced the evacuation of the Kurds by the government, more than 7,000 Kurds lost their homes in the wake of the implementation of the policy.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Polk, 135.

⁶⁷ Gelvin, 244.

⁶⁸ Nader Entessar, "The Kurdish Mosaic of Discord," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 4, Ethnicity in World Politics (1989):85, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3992332.pdf>.

It is important to note why Saddam Hussein and the Ba'th party strongly planned the Kurds' evacuation and relocation operations. The slogan the Kurds dictate until today is that "without the mountains, there will be no Kurds."⁶⁹ To the Kurds, the mountain engenders their mother, refuge, protector, home, farm and market. If the Kurds migrate to urban areas, they would lose their identity quickly because their lives would not revolve around mountains any more. The loss of Kurdish national identity was exactly what Saddam and his regime desired at that time. Saddam's policies of Kurdish evacuation and his relocation plan of the Kurds were deliberate strategies to eliminate Kurdish identity.⁷⁰

2.5 CONCLUSION

With the establishment of Iraq by the British and according to British interests in 1921, Iraq reflects a state not constructed by the Iraqis' will, but by imperial aims. Furthermore, a variety of ethnic groups with different interests have composed the territory of Iraq since the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, under the British mandate the Iraqis worked together in spite of their ethnicities to fight against British power. Their anger against the British brought about nationalists movements to achieve their common goal of ending the British mandate in Iraq. Their cooperation in opposition to the British grew out of their shared goal to get back their provinces, not

⁶⁹ Entessar, 85-87.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 87.

to retake the Iraqi state. The Kurds wanted autonomy and the Shiites sought participation in Iraqi politics within the structure of Iraq.

However, the Shiites could not play a political role in the Iraqi political structure. They were discriminated against by the Sunnis in the cabinet and provinces and only occupied less than 10 percent of parliamentary seats and positions. In addition to political discrimination, the Shiites also faced financial and commercial discrimination. These factors laid the foundation for outbreaks of Shiites' conflicts and revolts.

The problem between the Kurds and the Sunnis was not easy to solve. Ambitions of Kurdish autonomy were destroyed with the refusal of Shaykh Mahmud. Shaykh Mahmud even sent troops and occupied the Kurdish region in 1922 and bombed it in 1924. Since they missed their chance for autonomy, the Kurds have struggled with the Sunnis to get independence until today. The three main players of Iraq attempted to overtake one another's political agenda and, in turn, fell into ethno-religious conflict. The difference in their political goals worsened their relations in Iraq. This period in which they recognized their political differences can be seen as the starting point of ethno-religious conflicts in Iraq.

The British terminated its mandate in 1932 and the period of the monarchy began. In general, the Sunnis took power and started suppressing their political opposition, the Shiites and the Kurds. The dominant Sunnis adopted Sunni-oriented

politics which had sustained the periods of the Ottoman and the British rule. Finally, the three groups discovered they had conflicting emotions, desires and political agendas. Politically speaking, the Shiites were not participants in Iraqi politics at that time. This situation led to a series of revolts by the Shiites and the Shiite clergy. Although the Sunnis let the Shiites work with them, they did not accept the Shiites as their political and religious partners.

In the monarchy, the movements of the Kurds for their autonomy increased because their chance for political autonomy began to vanish again. Given their political situation, the Kurds tried to find out a way they could achieve autonomy within the political structure of Iraq. These political movements gave rise to the initiatives of political parties, such as ICP and KDP. Because of these Kurdish political parties, the Kurds played a political role in the Sunni dominated Iraq.

After the collapse of the monarchy in 1958, Iraq was strongly controlled by the Ba'th party from 1968 onward. The relationship among the Sunnis, the Shiites and the Kurds was worsened. Saddam Hussein considered the Shiites as his political enemy, not his brothers, and carried out brutal military campaigns against the Kurds with the use of chemical weapons. The political positions of the Shiites in Iraqi politics diminished and they were left with no political outlets. Although the Kurds engaged in political activities against the Sunni regime, Saddam destroyed and relocated them from their homes to other districts.

In revolutionary Iraq, Saddam's main concern was keeping his political power from his political dissenters. It seems that Saddam's discrimination and suppression emerged not from his hatred for the non-Sunni Iraqis, but from fear of potential supplanters. In fear of potential enemies, he did everything to protect his power and to keep his reign over Iraq. He did well within his own standard under the economic sanctions of the US-led allies in the 1990s until the outbreak of the US invasion in 2003. However, the Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 played a key role in staging the US direct intervention in Iraqi politics with US military actions and the UN economic sanctions.

III. ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS AFTER 2003

3.1 SADDAM HUSSEIN'S SUSTAINED POWER UNDER THE ECONOMIC SANCTIONS: 1990 - 2003

Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 marked shifts in Iraqi politics since the war between Iraq and Kuwait gave rise to letting the United States intervene in Iraqi affairs for the first time. Indeed, since 1990 up to the present the US has played a key role in dealing with a series of events in Iraq.⁷¹ In addition, this war was the first important conflict between two Arab states which divided the Arab world into two, one of which supported Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the other which supported the US attack on Iraq with its allies.⁷² The outcome of Saddam's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 was twofold. First, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was a controversial war among Arab leaders because it was justified by only Saddam Hussein and a few other leaders of Arab states. Iraqi infringement on Kuwaiti territorial sovereignty politically divided the Arab world. Secondly, the war triggered off a turning point from the formerly strong revolutionary Iraq to an Iraq with much less political autonomy and much more submission to economic sanctions. Since the first Gulf War, US troops have been stationed in Iraq and their presence has weakened Iraqi autonomy.

⁷¹ Polk, 143.

⁷² Fred Halliday, "The Gulf War and Its Aftermath: First Reflections," *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)*, Vol. 67, No. 2 (1991): 224, <http://0-www.jstor.org.lib.aucegypt.edu/stable/pdfplus/2620827.pdf>.

Needless to say, the factors that influenced the decision by Saddam Hussein and the Ba'th party to invade Kuwait were straightforward. As discussed in Ch. 2, Saddam and his supporters paid more attention to maintaining political power in the 1970s. In fact, the regime's primary political task was to keep their legitimacy and credibility high as well as crafting successful foreign policy that could both ensure the survival of Saddam's regime and improve Iraq's international position. When Saddam invaded Kuwait, his political goal was the establishment of Iraqi hegemony in the Arab world.⁷³ Moreover, from an economic perspective, the invasion and the seizure of Kuwait could have provided a solution to the Iraqi economic crisis that had endured since the 1970s. The outbreak of war between Iraq and Kuwait would cause the Iraqis to refocus on the war front rather than to criticize Saddam's economic mismanagement. As well, if Saddam had gained a victory from the war, he could have acquired Kuwaiti assets and investments.⁷⁴

Soon after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted Security Council Resolution 661 in 1990 which imposed economic sanctions on Iraq. All products imported to, exported from and produced in Iraq were prohibited from entering the international market. Also, all financial transactions were banned except for medical supplies and foodstuffs.⁷⁵ In fact, this exception was

⁷³ Halliday, 225-26.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 226.

⁷⁵ Ninan Koshy, "Continuing Sanctions against Iraq," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 30, No. 47 (1995): 2985, <http://0-www.jstor.org.lib.aucegypt.edu/stable/pdfplus/4403475.pdf>.

exercised in the UN's "Food for Oil" program in which the world traded their food for Iraqi oil without any monetary exchange. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait mattered less to the western powers after the war ended since the British and the US in particular did not want to lift economic sanctions against Iraq regardless of the Iraqi defeat. The UN Security Council Resolution 687 in April 1994 further displayed global hesitance to lift sanctions as it stipulated that the destruction of weapons was a precondition for removing sanctions. In addition, UN Resolution 688 in July, 1994 related to Saddam's repression of the Kurds and other Iraqis instead of his invasion of Kuwait.⁷⁶

Indeed, the last two Resolutions did not speak to the Iraq - Kuwait war, but strongly stressed the issues of weapons of mass destruction as well as the Kurds. Although economic sanctions started with the Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the US-led allies were more concerned with the threat of Saddam's regime and the ruler's suppression of political minorities, which posed a threat to regional and Iraqi national security. In this sense, economic sanctions were utilized as tools not for humanitarian relief, but for foreign intervention in Saddam's authoritarian regime under the authority of the UN with UNSC Resolutions 687 and 688 as well as the US new military stationing in the country with no-fly zones in northern and southern Iraq.

Before the outbreak of the Gulf war in 1991, Saddam proposed conditions to withdraw his army from Kuwait. However, the George H.W. Bush administration refused to engage in any negotiations with Iraq regarding its withdrawal from Kuwait.

⁷⁶ Koshy, 2985.

For this reason, Bush's regime had already decided to attack Iraq when the US troops were stationed in Saudi Arabia to carry out Operation Desert Shield in 1990, which was to protect the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.⁷⁷ Not coincidentally, the Gulf war broke out on 17 January 1991 with the operation change from Desert Shield to Desert Storm on January 1991, and the Iraqi army was suppressed on the following 24 February. Saddam withdrew his army from Kuwait on 25 February and the Gulf War ended on 27 February with Bush's ceasefire.⁷⁸ The Gulf War only lasted about three weeks from beginning to end.

As a result of economic sanctions, more than half a million Iraqi children died from malnutrition and disease. Additionally, about four hundred thousand Iraqis died because of the lack of medical supplies since 1990.⁷⁹ These figures did not justify or support the goal of the economic sanctions of protecting the Iraqis from Saddam Hussein. Although the "Food for Oil" program remained until 2002, the true victim of this program was the Iraqi public. The sanctions failed in quelling Saddam's desire to buy arms while the Iraqis suffered from the lack of medical supplies, and malnutrition and disease under these sanctions.⁸⁰

In the post-Gulf War era in Iraq, two strong revolts against Saddam's regime occurred, one of which broke out in Basra by the Shiites on 1 March 1991. The rebels were crushed by Saddam's regime with US permission to deploy helicopter gunships.

⁷⁷ Polk, 148.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 152.

⁷⁹ Koshy, 2985.

⁸⁰ Polk, 157.

However, the revolt failed not entirely due to the military power of Saddam's regime, but mostly due to the lack of Shiite coordination. The outcome of this revolt devastated the Shiites because the well-armed Republican Guard defeated them in town after town until they were finally overwhelmed on 25 March 1991.⁸¹

Similar to the Shiite revolt of the south, Iraq witnessed another revolt in northern Iraq by the Kurds. Although the Kurds were relatively well armed and organized unlike the Shiites, their revolt was also suppressed by the government. Unlike the case of the Shiites in which the simple factors of disorganization and poor armament contributed to their failed revolt, the Kurds experienced a much more complex constellation of political and military variables that failed in their nationalist revolt. Foreign powers such as Iran and Turkey meddled with the Kurds in cultural, political and even military affairs.⁸² However, the factor that influenced their revolt the most was existential. From generation to generation, Kurdish autonomy has been directly related to their existence. Although the notion of an independent Kurdish state was not guaranteed by 2003, Kurds have consistently sought ways in which to preserve their Kurdish national identity.⁸³

From 1990 to 2003, the US-led allies considered Saddam as a main threat, but the main concern of the US was oil resources rather than a dictator. Although obtaining oil resources was the top priority to ousting Saddam from Iraq, the US tried

⁸¹ Polk, 154.

⁸² Ibid., 155.

⁸³ Ibid., 156.

to get rid of him indirectly by promoting a revolution of the Ba'th party and the Iraqi army against Saddam's regime. Indeed, President Bush openly expressed his belief that the annihilation of Saddam's weapons of mass destruction was the only way to lift sanctions⁸⁴ and to offer humanitarian relief to Iraq. For various political, economic and strategic reasons, Iraq was invaded in 2003 and the Saddam and the Ba'th regime were both overturned. The most possible theory for explaining the US invasion was based on the 9/11 terrorist attacks on US soil in 2001. From 2001, the United States and its allies formally planned to attack Iraq and to shift political power to the Shiites in Iraq. However, the plan was controversial when it was first made in the White House.

3.2 THE FAILURE OF THE "PRE-WAR RECONSTRUCTION PLAN OF POST-WAR IRAQ" IN 2003

3.2.1 9/11 Terrorism and Beyond 9/11 and After

After the events of 11 September 2001, Americans felt fear and frustration that the George H.W. Bush government should have toppled Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War era of the early 1990s. Many Americans believed that al Qaeda and Saddam's regime maintained a strong relationship. Therefore, if George H.W. Bush had previously destroyed Saddam and his army, there would have been no 9/11 in the United States. However, no evidence exists and shows that the former Iraqi leadership

⁸⁴ Polk, 158.

was a key player in the terror of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.⁸⁵ Although Saddam's regime supported some terrorists who stood against the United States, it was not clear that Saddam was directly behind the 9/11 attacks.

However, what the US failed to realize was that its 1998 military strike, targeting the Ba'th party headquarters and the barracks of the Republican Guard, played a crucial role in the movement of Saddam to support anti-American and anti-western terrorist groups.⁸⁶ Many anti-US political groups, including terrorist groups, were formed and supported by the military and the regime as political retaliation for the 1998 US offense on Iraq. In this way, the US shared some responsibility for 9/11 and the anti-Americanism of "the rogue states" because of its military infringements on Arab sovereignty.

On 20 March 2003, the US invasion of Iraq commenced with heavy bombing, air strikes and ground operations. The war was declared and after about three weeks all Iraqi divisions were destroyed by the US-led forces. As a result, about ten thousand Iraqi civilians and tens of thousands of Iraqi soldiers were killed yet the total casualties on the non-Iraqi side amounted to 128 American soldiers and thirty one British soldiers.⁸⁷ When the invasion ended on 16 April 2003, President George W. Bush publicly announced that Iraq was liberated, not that the US led allies were

⁸⁵ Mark Strauss, "Attacking Iraq," *Foreign Policy*, No. 129 (2009): 16, <http://0-www.jstor.org.lib.aucegypt.edu/stable/pdfplus/3183385.pdf>.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁸⁷ Polk, 169.

victorious.⁸⁸

Although Saddam's regime collapsed under the forces of the US and its allies, the living conditions of post-Saddam Iraqis were deeply worsened as compared to those under the economic sanctions in Saddam's Iraq. Public security disappeared and looters took to the streets to accumulate supplies and weapons.⁸⁹ The situation was so unstable and insecure that any Iraqi could easily acquire machine guns or even rockets meaning that Iraq was spiraling out of control. Furthermore, about half a million Iraqi soldiers were dismissed and had no alternate means of earning a living. When they left their camps, they took their arms. The police experienced a situation similar to that of the soldiers. In an environment of growing insecurity, the dismissed Iraqi soldiers started participating in gangs and in looting for food. Iraq became a cluster of "free fire zones."⁹⁰ In addition, there were no police, firefighters, and doctors throughout the entire country after the invasion. The most striking aspect of this situation was that the occupation authorities at that time did not comprehend the chaos that was unfolding nor did they make substantial efforts to help Iraqis.⁹¹

The only reason that explained this chaos was the US poorly designed post-war program. The plan completely ignored the political and economic reconstruction of Iraq by the US and only outlined how to depose Saddam and impose an Iraqi regime change that gave power to the Shiites. Consequently, the Bush administration's

⁸⁸ Polk, 170.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 171.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 172.

⁹¹ Ibid., 173.

policy was an attempt doomed to failure. The US administration paid more attention to the removal of Saddam Hussein than to humanitarian support for the Iraqis.

Because the first Bush administration did not remove Saddam from power in the 1990s, his removal became a more urgent matter.⁹² The first Bush administration did not topple Saddam because obtaining secure oil resources from Iraq was a higher priority for the US at that time than toppling Saddam.

The US invasion of Iraq seemed like a tactic of "attack first and report later." When Secretary of State Colin Powell made a presentation for the invasion at the Security Council of America on 5 February 2003, most of what he said was not true. Indeed, he later apologized for his misunderstanding to the Security Council and to the American public after the US invasion of Iraq.⁹³ Needless to say, Powell tried to justify the government's decision to go to war and promoted the fear of terror to the public in order to gain enough support to attack Iraq. It was ethically questionable whether or not he should have manipulated public opinion and promoted anti-Saddam sentiment to wage war against Iraq.

Since 9/11, two important factors had existed and must be highlighted. The first was that the world, except the US, considered the US "an overwhelmingly dominant military power⁹⁴." Yet, since Americans thought of themselves as victims, the actions of the army and other military operations were reinforced under the name

⁹² Dodge, 710.

⁹³ Polk, 169.

⁹⁴ Strauss, 19.

of protecting them from invisible threats. This indicated that the US has not, up to the present, hesitated to do whatever necessary to justify invasion and political intervention and is not likely to hesitate in the future. The second factor deals with the plan the US made or the "Pre-War Reconstruction Plan of Post-War Iraq." This plan loosely justified the US military action against Iraq, meaning that it was not enough to explain the US invasion of Iraq. On the other hand, the US intention for the war was very clear because before the US attacked Iraq in 2003, the Bush administration was preparing the plan for invading Iraq and reconstructing the state with regime change since August 2002.

3.2.2 For What and For Whom?: The "Pre-War Reconstruction Plan of Post-War Iraq"

As mentioned in Ch. 1, the "Pre-War Reconstruction Plan of Post-War Iraq" was initiated by the Bush administration in September 2002. Also, the Bush government held multilateral and bilateral meetings with NGOs to discuss the coming war against Iraq. Beginning in August 2002, Bush secretly carried out his plan using funds allocated for the post-war reconstruction of Iraq.⁹⁵ In addition to the US government's preparation for war, USAID and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) worked on the humanitarian aspect of the plan. UNHCR coordinated the distribution of 21 million dollars to prepare humanitarian supplies before the outbreak of the invasion. Warehouses were built in four Gulf

⁹⁵ Mac Ginty, 606.

countries to store humanitarian supplies and the international legal systems allowed US NGOs to prepare for the war in spite of the fact that Iraq was under economic sanctions.⁹⁶

In terms of the rhetoric of the Bush administration, decision makers claimed that the most significant reason for the US invasion of Iraq was to provide humanitarian relief for the Iraqis who had been suppressed and discriminated against by their dictator for so long. When Bush was in the process of war preparation, he paid close attention to increasing food stuffs, medical resources against AIDS, and investment in educational and trading systems for the Iraqis. Also, the Bush government argued that the US military action had to be followed by the reconstruction of Iraq, a top US priority for post-Saddam Iraq. Aside from these economic and political efforts, Bush justified his military actions in terms of reporting publicly that about three million emergency rations were moved to Iraq "to feed the hungry."⁹⁷ In this way, Bush noted that the Iraqi food distribution system for humanitarian relief was authorized by the "Food for Oil," a system which US forces had to carry out while they had to be stationed in Iraq.⁹⁸

To acquire public political agreement for the invasion of Iraq, the Bush government stated paradoxically that to save the Iraqis from hunger, illness and economic chaos in post-war Iraq, stationing military forces in the country was

⁹⁶ Mac Ginty, 606.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 606.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 606.

necessary. If Bush was sincerely concerned about the insecurity and the reconstruction of post-war Iraq rather than just toppling Saddam Hussein, the estimated Iraqi and US-led allies' casualties, and the expected destruction of economic, political and educational facilities evaluated by international organizations since 2003 should have overturned his decision to attack Iraq.

The only achievement the US had in post-war Iraq was the US military campaign. Reconstruction efforts were absorbed and integrated into US military strategy and not considered as humanitarian activities.⁹⁹ If Bush's political goals were not solely about overthrowing Saddam and switching the Iraqi government to the Shiites, he would have considered how to minimize the mass loss of life and property. He could have calculated air and ground attacks in terms of "a more precisely targeted military campaign."¹⁰⁰ This could have helped decrease civilian casualties, and infrastructural and cultural damage. Furthermore, it could have saved time and effort of the US-led allies to reconstruct Iraqi infrastructure, resolve political insecurity, and most importantly, lessen the Iraqis' anti-American sentiments in the chaos.

The US-led invasion to save the Iraqis from Saddam's regime became catastrophic as it combined an ideological misunderstanding of post-war Iraq with poor preparation of a post-war reconstruction plan.¹⁰¹ The "Pre-War Reconstruction Plan of Post-War Iraq" was not as well-thought out as it looked, meaning that Bush

⁹⁹ Mac Ginty, 607.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 607.

¹⁰¹ Dodge, 710.

strongly prioritized the US military actions. Indeed, the Bush government appeared to care little about Iraqis' futures and lives. The UN Secretary General Kofi Annan stressed that "there is no UN plan for administering post-conflict Iraq"¹⁰² (UN Press briefing, 2003). In order to play a leading role in rebuilding Iraq based on the invasion of Iraq, the US stood against many other UN members.¹⁰³

For example, although CNN and USA Today polls in November 2001 found that about 75 percent of Americans supported the US attack on Iraq, the US invasion of Iraq was not supported by the global public who measured less than 30 percent.¹⁰⁴ The results of these polls showed that the US failed in gaining world support for the war and ultimately took unilateral military action in 2003.

More than seven years have passed since the US invasion in 2003 and there has not been considerable improvement of the Iraqi state except for regime change, transfer of power to the Shiites and the general elections of 2010. The US led allies are still stationed in Iraq, and social and political insecurity is still rampant in Iraqi society. Furthermore, the invasion of Iraq and post-war reconstruction failed in achieving the humanitarian goals that Bush ostensibly argued before the war. From the beginning of the war plan preparation, it was undeniable that the US "Pre-War Reconstruction Plan of Post-War Iraq" was problematic.

¹⁰² Mac Ginty, 608.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 608.

¹⁰⁴ Strauss, 18.

3.2.3 "Practical and Conceptual Problems with the Pre-War Reconstruction Plan"

From the beginning, the "Pre-War Reconstruction Plan of Post-War Iraq" was an attempt doomed to fail. Regardless of economic and political problems, the program had "practical and conceptual problems" when it was initiated by the Bush administration. The practical problems were an initial acute lack of knowledge about the country¹⁰⁵ and the humanitarian situation.¹⁰⁶ Before and after the invasion, there were no Iraqi experts in the US cabinet, and the US allies were strongly dependent on a small number of Iraqi exiles with strong ties to the Bush administration for consultation on the war.¹⁰⁷ As well, the pre-war reconstruction was not based on in-field needs assessments. Before the war, USAID was well-prepared to provide humanitarian assistance to the Iraqis because the "Food for Oil" program and other NGOs promoted the collection of humanitarian intelligence. However, right before the outbreak of the war, they withdrew from Iraq.¹⁰⁸ USAID and other NGOs did not have enough time to research and get access to important regional information on the humanitarian help the Iraqis required.

Another practical problem was based on the political dependence of the Iraqis who solely depended on what non-Iraqis gave to them. As long as the US troops and their allies are stationed on Iraq, Iraqis will be waiting for the US and its allies to plan

¹⁰⁵ Dodge, 712.

¹⁰⁶ Mac Ginty, 610.

¹⁰⁷ Dodge, 712.

¹⁰⁸ Mac Ginty, 610.

their future instead of executing it themselves with their own political participation.¹⁰⁹

This kind of political powerlessness can lead to the rise of another Saddam Hussein.

Post-Saddam Iraq is, without exception, dominated by the Shiites who are considered

the new political elite and the core figures of new ruling classes.¹¹⁰ The lack of

political participation can give rise to the unilateral decision making or the

suppression against specific religious factions and ethnic groups similar to the

political reality of Saddam's regime.

The most critical problem was related to the actual aim of this invasion.

Unlike Bush strongly argued, the war was not to liberate Iraq, but to topple Saddam

Hussein. However, many allies of the US invasion of Iraq participated in the war for

the liberation of Iraq as part of the Operation Iraqi Freedom. This means that although

their political aims might have been different from those of the US, they were

identified with the invaders or occupiers such that they could not support and fund

humanitarian organizations and NGOs in Iraq. As a result of the negative reputation of

US allies, the influence of humanitarian activities for the Iraqis carried by the

international organizations and institutions was minimized.¹¹¹

When it comes to discussing conceptual problems, the justification for the US

invasion of Iraq should first be analyzed. Indeed, the "Pre-War Reconstruction Plan of

Post-War Iraq" distorted the war claiming that it was the realization of

¹⁰⁹ Mac Ginty, 611.

¹¹⁰ Dodge, 712.

¹¹¹ Mac Ginty, 612.

humanitarianism. In this way, the Iraq war was identified with both state reconstruction and humanitarianism.¹¹² Despite the rhetoric of reconstruction in the pre-war plan, the damage of the Iraqi infrastructure, cultural heritage, educational facilities and civilian casualties were maximized without explanation in post-war Iraq. Furthermore, civil and public lives could not flourish in the wake of the massively destructive war. The goal of national Iraqi security was not compatible with the war, the occupation, and the stationing of foreign military in Iraq.

Contrary to what Bush argued, the war seemed to be poorly-planned and unprepared for humanitarian activities. To help and save the Iraqis from their dictator, and to rebuild post-war Iraq, the US did not focus on the activities of NGOs and human rights organizations, but on a war plan that dealt with the deployment of military operations.¹¹³ If the Bush administration thought of humanitarian relief as the top priority, the military operations should have been subordinate to the activities of the human rights organizations.

As well, modern warfare, which the US employed, included technologically advanced, expensive and new arms that hit targets from afar. Since this military technology was invented to maximize military or political profit in accordance with minimizing human casualties and the destruction of cultural heritage, Iraqi civilians should have been more protected in the dangerous situation. US forces have been

¹¹² Mac Ginty, 613.

¹¹³ Ibid., 613.

known for having the most sophisticated and developed troops in the world. However, they were not equipped or trained to minimize civilian casualties, and the destruction of infrastructure and historical sites in spite of the fact that they were in Iraq to save Iraqis from Saddam Hussein. In the case of the Iraq war, the violence and destruction caused by the outbreak of war did not justify the stated goal of the US invasion which was to promote humanitarianism by rescuing suffering Iraqis from Saddam's dictatorship.

3.3 THE US OCCUPATION AND REGIME-CHANGE: THE CAUSES OF NATIONWIDE ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS

3.3.1 The US Invasion of Iraq as an Open-Ended Story

Within the era of the US invasion and the US occupation of Iraq, it is undeniable that the most prominent political change has been the shift in Iraqi power from the Sunnis to the Shiites. This occurred due to the aid of US-led troops. In addition to this transition of power from the religious minority to the religious majority, the opportunity for Kurdish autonomy arose in the wake of the US occupation of Iraq. With two terrible and disastrous wars in 1991 and 2003, and the UN-imposed economic sanctions, Iraq was in a state of collapse. Although the Iraqi regime change directly gave rise to large scale ethno-religious conflicts among the Iraqis, the US publicly expressed the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and regime

change as a means for political stability in post-Saddam Iraq.

The reasoning behind the Iraqi regime change was strongly related to the aftermath of 9/11 in which American society was plagued with fear. After 9/11, the US was concerned about a continued threat to the security of Americans and began to label certain states as "the failed and rogue states" to lay the responsibility of 9/11 on them. Furthermore, the US publicly proclaimed that if the international community did not endorse "the US defined responsibilities," it would lose its right to sovereignty.¹¹⁴ These US defined responsibilities were based on not only protecting friendly relations with the US, but also struggling against all terrorist activities in their countries, standing against weapons of mass destruction, and banking and trading under transparent arrangements.¹¹⁵ The required responsibilities the US was demanding were targeted at Iraq, which was considered by the Bush administration as one of "the rogue states."

However, if the US administration tried to topple him earlier just since the end of the Gulf War, the US military and political intervention would have been earlier and less destructive, and the UN economic sanctions would have never been in place. In addition, the duration of the sanctions for over ten years made Saddam Hussein politically, economically and militarily weak enough so that the US could get rid of him as easily as possible. Unsurprisingly, Iraq was not willing or able to stand

¹¹⁴ Dodge, 705.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 706.

against the US and the international community under the supervision of political and military interventions, and the UN economic sanction since the defeat of the Gulf War. From the perspective of the Iraqis, they never needed to suffer from diseases and malnutrition caused by a result of UN economic sanctions.

In the Gulf War, the US did not only fail to overthrow Saddam Hussein from Iraq but also allowed him to continue to play the leading role in Iraqi politics. It is very important to note why Saddam could sustain his power in Iraq since the political and military defeat of the 1990 war. Indeed, the US troops were deployed not to topple him, but to obtain secure oil resources from Iraq. Although the US attempted to topple him in cooperation with the Iraqi army and the Ba'th party, its attempt was not ardent. This was because the US had already achieved its main aim for the Gulf War. The US feared Iraqi revolution which could seriously affect US access to secure Iraqi oil resources.¹¹⁶ In the wake of the Gulf War, the US started obtaining secure oil resources from Iraq and finally intervening in Iraqi politics under the presence of US military and UN economic sanctions since 1991.

However, after 9/11, the removal of Saddam's regime was regularized by the Bush administration with two types of hostile countries against the US, which were "the failed and the rogue states." Iraq became a symbol of "the failed or rogue states" as a result of the Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the assumption of relation with the terror of al Qaeda in 2001 and developing weapons of mass destruction. For these

¹¹⁶ Abdulhay Y. Zalloum, *Oil Crusades: American through Arab Eyes* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 44.

reasons, it was easy for the Bush administration to let the Americans strongly believe in the Bush doctrine which was mainly focused on toppling Saddam Hussein. With the key concept of the Bush administration, Saddam's regime collapsed and the new regime was established in 2003. The power change from the Sunnis to the Shiites with US support meant the emergence of more internalized and brutalized ethno-religious conflicts to take each one's own political interests rather than to rebuild their fragmented and destroyed country.

As a means of regime change and state reform, the US endeavored to replace Saddam with a more moderate leader, who could not stand for diplomatic provocation, ethno-religious suppression and discrimination as the best solution for post-Saddam Iraq.¹¹⁷ Reflective of this political goal, the US let the Shiites take political power which the Sunnis acquired since the foundation of Iraq in the 1920s. With the establishment of a new pro-US government, the new Iraqi regime could not easily stand against US interests and could not suppress ethno-religious opponents.

Seriously speaking, the US goal for post-Saddam Iraq changed because of the extreme destruction left in the wake of the war.¹¹⁸ The Iraqis were not able to live within secure political and economic borders because their daily lives were stripped of all former employment and routine. Many Iraqis turned to the street to steal foodstuffs and other necessities while armed with weapons as discussed before. Post-war Iraq

¹¹⁷ Dodge, 707.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 707.

depicted a situation of chaos as the Iraqis resorted to weapons instead of upholding civil consciousness in their structure. As well, ethnic groups and religious factions struggled against each other to achieve their individual political agendas. These struggles became more internalized and violent as a consequence of the external threat of US occupation and the internal regime change.

After toppling Saddam Hussein and arranging regime change, the attitude toward the US-led allies became negative and distrustful. The Iraqis began to identify the US invasion with the British mandate in the 1920s. Similar to the case of the British mandate, there were many groups of nationalist factions and movements against the US occupation in Iraq. Although the US did not agree with its identity as "the Occupier," in terms of the US troops stationed in Iraq, the Iraqis started to consider the US military presence in their state similar to the British occupation in Iraq in the 1920s and 1930s. Furthermore, the empowerment of the Shiites had a negative effect on national Iraqi unity as it promoted more conflicts between ethno-religious factions based on the internalized Iraqi conflicts of the past. These included ethno-religious insurgent and militant groups. Retaking power from the Shiites, Shiite protection of their power from the Sunnis, and achieving autonomy from the central government were contradictory and controversial questions to solve mixed up in Iraqi politics. These issues made Iraqi politics difficult to accommodate all Iraqi factions.

3.3.2 Accepting Lessons from the British Occupation

Initially, when the US-led allies defeated Saddam's regime, the Iraqis thought of them as their "savior" for a short time. However, their "gratitude" dissipated with their tragic reality. Under the unexpected post-war Iraqi situation, the US could not see that the solution to Iraq's instability laid in rebuilding Iraq's political and governmental structure within the nationwide perspective. Unfortunately, this solution was exactly what the US never considered within the "Pre-War Reconstruction Plan of Post-War Iraq."

Since the collapse of Saddam's regime, the stationing of the US troops in Iraq reminded the Iraqis of the British mandate and occupation. Even though the US government argued that the US and its allies were "not as conquerors, but as liberators,"¹¹⁹ their operations were totally ignorant of the sentiment of the Iraqis against a foreign power and conqueror which they had already experienced. Just like the US insistence on its role as a liberator, the British publicly proclaimed to the Iraqis that they too did not come "as conquerors or enemies, but liberators" in the beginning of its occupation. Aside from their proclamations on the wars or occupations of Iraq, the main reasons for these two countries' invasions were based on oil. Protecting oil resources in Iran for the British and obtaining secure oil resources from Iraq for the US were key aims for invading Iraq in the different time periods.

¹¹⁹ Judith S. Yaphe, "War and Occupation in Iraq: What Went Right? What Could Go Wrong?," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 57, No.3 (2003): 381, <http://0-www.jstor.org.lib.aucegypt.edu/stable/pdfplus/4329910.pdf>.

In addition, the British promised the most suitable political government to support and establish the Iraqis' independence, but only under their understanding of the British advice and guidance.¹²⁰ This meant that Iraq's future was completely dependent on what the British decided. Under the name of rebuilding the state, the British chose its Indian model of administration for Iraq. Everything the Iraqis had before changed and was mixed up when the British occupied Iraq. The British did not consider particular Iraqi situations as important factors for rebuilding the state. Turkish courts and laws which Iraq had under the Ottoman Empire shifted to the Anglo-Indian civil code under the British occupation. As well, Iraq's taxation code was Turkish, but the Indian rupee was the official currency. Most importantly, law administered by the British Civil Administration started to control the Iraqis in terms of the stationing of the Royal Air Force.¹²¹

Under the British authority, the Iraqis began to become defiant of foreign occupation. The Sunnis defended Islam against the British, and fought against tighter British administration in the wake of being unemployed and underestimated. The Kurds revolted both in 1919 and the 1920s. As well, the Shiites formed groups to struggle against the British occupation and to seek independence.¹²² This meant that all Iraqis acted as cooperative nationalists in their struggle against the British occupier.

To minimize military and political errors in Iraq, the US should have paid

¹²⁰ Yaphe, 386.

¹²¹ Ibid., 386.

¹²² Ibid., 388.

more attention to the experience of the British invasion of Iraq to learn from its mistakes. One of the lessons, the US could learn from the British occupation, could have included not letting the Iraqis become nationalists, insurgents, or militias. This is not to say that the US had to prepare for war entirely to succeed according to the British case study, but rather that if the US policy makers were more aware of the Iraqi state and society, they could have helped the Iraqis to decrease their calls for ethno-religious conflicts. Even though neither country took these factors into consideration, the most valuable lesson the US could learn from the British case was the necessity of drawing a well-prepared post-war reconstruction plan. This was because the existence of nationalist movements signaled that the masses truly felt oppressed and occupied under any kind of foreign powers.

After the US invasion of Iraq, Iraq faced exactly the same problems with education, the military system and national debt as it had under the British occupation. The US was also faced with an assignment to re-systematize Iraqi education which was hindered by the disagreements between the ethno-religious groups of Iraq. The Kurds and the Shiites supported educational and ethnic sectarianism. On the other hand, the Sunnis strongly argued for the Arabization of the educational system. In the different time periods, the British and American occupiers were faced with the same problems. For this reason, the US should have explored how the US could foster common Iraqi national identity in the post-Saddam regime as Saddam had done in his

era.¹²³

Another problem was to remake the military system in post-war Iraq. As soon as the war was over, the US dismissed the Iraqi army and gave them a chance to participate in insurgent or militia groups. However, the case of the British was different since the British advisors and assistance were fully accepted by Iraq without hesitation. After the British mandate, Iraq finally became a strong country in the Middle East. In comparison with the British case, the most considerable factor was that not only the US dismissed the Iraqi army and police as soon as the war was over, but also US decision makers did not guarantee that the Iraqi army could be strong enough to defend Iraq against all attacks, such as those coming from Iran or even Israel.¹²⁴ Politically and militarily speaking, the Iraqi army has to be strengthened to protect its territory and people from all attacks. If a self protecting military system is not established, no Iraqis will be in the army to fight against its enemies and to try to protect its people and territory from all attacks.

The last and perhaps most realistic problem was the Iraqi national debt. In order to control Iraq effectively, the British practiced a fiscal policy designed to pay for half the costs of the British stationing and other administrative costs. Iraq could not refuse the policy because the British could deploy its military to retaliate against Iraq' refusal. However, after the British occupation, the fiscal situation of Iraq was not

¹²³ Yaphe, 396.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 396-97.

relaxed at all. In post-Saddam Iraq, the economic situation was getting worse and the national debt was increasing.¹²⁵ This was directly related to the economic sanctions and political intervention in Iraq from the 1990s to the early 2000s. To rebuild the political system in Iraq, the reduction of the national debt should have been a priority. This is why if fiscal and economic clearance were established, foreign investors could welcome Iraq to invest their moneys in Iraq's economic and social reconstruction.

In terms of the US invasion, the Iraqis had few employment opportunities and no one was able to help rebuild the social order because policemen and economic infrastructure no longer existed in Iraq since 2003. However, in order to rebuild Iraq from its current state today, the country needs four elements, such as general security, economic reconstruction, social reconstruction and political reconstruction. General security for a safe environment, economic reconstruction to promote foreign investment and social reconstruction for the renewal of a civil society and political culture will play a significant role in political reconstruction for a legitimate and capable country.¹²⁶ Under the insecurity of Iraqi politics, the Iraqis could not wait for their state to be rebuilt by the US and the international community. Indeed, it was time for the Iraqis to take autonomous action to better their situation regardless of the expectations of the US and its allies. It was undeniable that eventually the US promoted the Iraqis to be participants in the activities of nationalist groups or so-

¹²⁵ Yaphe, 397.

¹²⁶ Larry Diamond, "What Went Wrong in Iraq," *Foreign Affairs*: 2-3, <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20040901faessay83505/larry-diamond/what-went-wrong.htm>.

called insurgent groups that fuelled internalized and violent ethno-religious conflicts among all the ethno-religious factions. The absence of a post-war reconstruction plan brought about this increasing conflict in Iraq since 2003. As well, the only way the Iraqis could live with political and economic security was the withdrawal of the US-led allies from Iraq and letting the Iraqis determine their future.

3.3.3 Power Shift Causing Power Struggles among Ethno-Religious Factions

The US failure in rebuilding political order with understanding Iraqi economic trouble in post-Saddam Iraq disenfranchised the fundamental human rights of the Iraqis and drove them to despair. In addition to instilling overall disorder and depression in Iraqis, the US was not able to provide a clear-cut post-war reconstruction plan. This obscurity led to the Iraqis recognizing the US and its allies as the occupying power like the British about seventy years ago. As a result of this change of recognition, nationalist movements and insurgent or militia operations flowed from three main ethno-religious factions throughout the country.

The struggles for political power between the Sunnis and the Shiites were not a new face in the Middle East as well as in Iraq. As a part of the ideology and politics of Jihadi groups, Sunni identity was combined with al Qaeda, the Taliban, militant Wahhabis and others from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia since the eighteenth

century.¹²⁷ Within the context of Sunni identity, the anti-Shiite movement emerged from South Asia and Afghanistan in the 1990s in cooperation with the Taliban and al Qaeda.¹²⁸ It is clear that Sunni militancy was not created by shifting power from the Sunnis to the Shiites in Iraq. However, the anti-Shiite militancy was more severe when the Sunnis lost political power and religious superiority to the Shiites for the first time in about ninety years since the establishment of Iraq.

To comprehend the more complex ethno-religious conflicts, the understanding of Iraqi reality was the point. Since 2006, Iraq has witnessed the height of violent ethno-religious conflict among the country's ethno-religious groups.¹²⁹ Indeed, the US-led allies were not the main targets anymore. The Iraqi ethno-religious conflicts became more internalized and criminalized in the wake of the struggles of three key players; the Sunnis, the Shiites and the Kurds. In addition, these conflicts also started taking on new aspects because there were numerous conflicts that overlapped with each political agenda. These conflicts were carried out by all participants existing in Iraq, such as the struggles between the Sunnis - the Shiites, the Sunnis - the Kurds - Shiite Sadrists, the Kurds - the non-Kurds, Sunni tribal forces - Sunni al Qaeda, Shiite Sadrists - Badr forces and the Shiites - Shiite Sadrists.¹³⁰ Needless to say, Iraq was in chaos and its entire territory was the battlefield.

Although the conflicts between two main religious groups stemmed from a

¹²⁷ Vali Nasr "Regional Implication of Shi'a Revival in Iraq," *The Washington Quarterly* (2004): 7.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹²⁹ Stansfield, 3.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

power shift, the consideration of whether Iraq could be unified or federalized brought the Kurds as the third key player in the battlefield of ethno-religious conflicts.¹³¹ The Kurds' main interest was forming the Kurdistan Region in northern Iraq because for a long time period they were suppressed and unrecognized. Under the new political dimension, they simply argued that the only solution was federal not for Iraq, but for themselves.¹³² Although the best solution seemed to put the divided nation into one state, the outcome of such an arrangement was unclear. In comparison to other proposals, it seemed obvious that a federal government could be the best resolution for the Kurds' survival under the disastrous Iraqi situation.

Perhaps the most dangerous problem of ethno-religious conflicts was their role in the breakdown of social unification. As Iraqi social units, each ethno-religious faction should have tried to meet the common goal of rebuilding the state with a strong political system based on strong social unification regardless of their individual agendas. However, as a result of a variety of internalized ethno-religious conflicts, social cohesion as a tool for political unification has not yet come to fruition in Iraq.

In the case of Iraq, there were many key players who were able to affect political reality such as the central government, local leaders, and ethno-religious components. However, the central government did not pay attention to others to

¹³¹ Stansfield, 3.

¹³² Ibid., 5.

negotiate on the effective reconstruction of Iraq.¹³³ In Basra, city governors were controlled by powerful local groups such as Fadilah and SCIRI. In the Sadr city of Baghdad, the Jaish al-Mahdi played a role as the state authority. As well, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) played a decisive role in Kurdish politics under the authority of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).¹³⁴

Under such circumstances, it was not easy for other components to negotiate and find a way for social cohesion in the short run, which would have led to political unification in the long run. As mentioned in Ch. 1, adoption of an election law for Iraq's national elections failed in October 2009. This was because of three key players' political disagreements on the voters' apportionment and registries among the Kurds, Arabs and Turks in Kirkuk. As a result of their political dissent, it was necessary to delay the elections until 16 January 2010.¹³⁵ The weakness and even the breakdown of social solidarity in Iraq could likely have had a negative effect on forming political stability and unification. To stabilize Iraqi politics, all Iraqis who were in ethno-religious, political or social unity from insurgents or militias and localities to the central government should have recognized the Iraqi reality and promoted agreement among ethno-religious factions first of all.

¹³³ Michael Schwartz, *War without end: the Iraqi debacle in context*, (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2008), 253.

¹³⁴ Stansfield, 6.

¹³⁵ Tawfeeq and Kamjoom, *CNN.com*, 29 October, 2009.

3.4 CONCLUSION

In the history of current Iraq, Saddam's invasion of Kuwait brought about US direct intervention in Iraq with strong UN economic sanctions and US military operations. With the invasion of Kuwait, Saddam Hussein tried to strengthen his political hegemony in the region as well as decrease domestic and economic difficulties in terms of acquiring assets and attracting economic investments. Since Kuwait discovered oil in its territory, Kuwait investments in Iraq decreased significantly because Kuwait no longer felt inferior to Iraq or afraid of Saddam Hussein.

As a result of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Iraq suffered under UN economic sanctions for over ten years. Indeed, the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 611 was strongly focused on economic sanctions, which led to the Iraqis suffering from disease and malnutrition instead of checking or toppling Saddam's regime. This is not to say that the Gulf War was to save Kuwait from Iraq or the Iraqis from Saddam's dictatorship. The political aim of the US in the war was to obtain secure oil resources from Iraq. UNSCR 688 was not related to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, but was instead related to Saddam's suppression of the Kurds.

The UN economic sanctions played a significant role in the US intervention in Iraq to achieve US political goals. In terms of UNSCR 611, 687 and 688, Saddam's regime was fully controlled by international forces. In the wake of the controlled

Saddam regime, obtaining oil resources was easy for the US, but ethno-religious conflicts among the Iraqis were no longer of US concern.

In post-Gulf War Iraq, Saddam's suppression of political minorities remained. When the Shiite revolt broke out on 1 March 1991, Saddam destroyed it with US permission to use helicopter gunships. Although the Shiites' revolt was too weak to win against Saddam's regime, the US permission of using military equipment and missiles was not an action for the Iraqis, in particular the suppressed Iraqis. This proved that the US aim of the Gulf War was not to protect the Iraqis from Saddam Hussein or save Kuwait from the war as well, but to protect US political interests in Iraq. In this sense, the Gulf War was not to topple Saddam Hussein because the US prioritized its own profit instead of regional security through ousting the dictator.

Ethno-religious conflicts were more complex than ever before the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. This was not only because the US was not concerned with learning lessons from the experience of the British mandate, but also because the ruling group and the ruled vertically changed. This is not to say that one group was better or more suitable than another in regime change of Iraq. Within the context of the distribution of the regional, ethnic and religious factors, the power shift from the Sunnis to the Shiites was significant. The empowerment of the Shiites was strongly related not only to the situation of internal Iraq, but also to the broader regional

troubles, which were likely to be extended from Lebanon to Pakistan in general¹³⁶ and to the neighboring countries, such as Turkey, Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in particular.

¹³⁶ Nasr, 7.

IV. THE RELATIONS OF NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES WITH THE RECONSTRUCTION OF IRAQ

4.1 THE PREDICTABLE POLITICAL ASSIGNMENTS OF SHIITE IRAQ

Since the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, Shiite Iraq was established by the United States of America. Although power competition between the Sunnis and the Shiites is not new, from a political perspective, Iraq is the first Arab Shiite country in the region. In the history of Iraq, it is the first time that the Shiites have had political power and controlled the entire territory. In this sense, it is very important to note why the US established a fully Shiite controlled state in Iraq immediately following the collapse of Saddam's regime. Initially, the US could have installed some governing body for Iraq before it could feasibly promote democratic actions to elect political figures and compose Iraqi parliament in terms of democratizing the post-Saddam regime.

The most credible reason for regime change was that no one wanted a dictator in Iraq and to be betrayed by the dictator again.¹³⁷ In Iraqi history, one Sunni dictator suppressed the Shiites and the Kurds and exerted himself only to aggrandize that power regardless of the negative effects Saddam's actions had on the people. It seems that this history of Sunni dictatorship was why the US decided to establish post-

¹³⁷ Yitzhak Nakash, "The Shi'ites and the Future of Iraq," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 4 (2003): 17, <http://0-www.jstor.org.lib.aucegypt.edu/stable/pdfplus/20033646.pdf>.

Saddam Iraq with Iraqi Shiites from the beginning of the preparation for war in 2002. Furthermore, Shiite sectarianism and their long period of suppression by Saddam Hussein encouraged the US that the Shiites' government would play a beneficial role in democratizing post-Saddam Iraq. However, in exchange for giving opportunities to political minorities, the Shiites and the Kurds, the US could intervene in Iraqi politics and obtain oil resources from the Shiite government and the Kurdistan region.

If the factors that led to regime change to the Shiites were Saddam Hussein's Sunni religious affiliation, the US reconstruction of Iraq was very unsystematic and seemed inappropriate given the newly reconfigured political context. Because the Bush government only considered regime change as a short-term US goal, it could not recognize the effect of regime change on reconstructing the state in Iraq. For this reason, the first Bush administration's policies in the 1990s led to Iraqi suffering from economic crisis and malnutrition while the White House enjoyed greater access to Iraqi oil resources.

When it comes to exploring the three predictable political assignments of the Iraqi Shiite government, such as the possibility of potential bilateral relations between Iraq and Iran, the negative effect of Sunni militancy on Shiite dominance and post-Saddam Iraq, and the US interests in Saudi Arabia as a result of the revival of the Shiites in Iraq, these will play a continual and strong role in the reconstruction of state in Iraq. This is because, although these challenges to the central government are not

directly affecting reconstructing Iraq, their indirect influence cannot be ignored. The geopolitical problem the Shiite government has comes from neighboring Iran which is one of the other Shiite led states as well as one of the US defined “rogue states.” Indeed, Iran has historically encouraged and influenced ethno-religious conflicts in Iraq in terms of supporting the Iraqi Shiites.¹³⁸

In the case of Ayatollah Abdulaziz al-Hakim who has been recently died, the head of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), he was interested in creating a Shiite Islamic Republic in Iraq, similar to that in Iran. In addition, the al-Badr Brigade of SCIRI was trained by Iran's Revolutionary Guards to attack Saddam Hussein.¹³⁹ In this regard, building up Shiite Iraq could give rise to strengthening Shiite power in the region. Although there is little possibility that the Iraqi Shiites will build a close relationship with Iran because the Iraqi Shiite government will not use Iranian theocracy as its main political ideology, the US will be concerned about potential bilateral relations between the two Shiite countries.¹⁴⁰

Secondly, in terms of the power shift from the political majority to the minority, reunifying Iraq will not be easy for all Iraqis. With regime change in favor of the Shiites, cultural and religious identifications of public space have changed. This is because Shiite politics by the Ulama involves transforming the former Sunni culture and Sunni religious sites to reflect Shiite values and culture. Furthermore, the

¹³⁸ Nakash, 20.

¹³⁹ Nasr, 11.

¹⁴⁰ Nakash, 22.

outbreak of more internalized religious conflicts will likely challenge the Iraqis as a result of regime change. For example, the Shiite government will enforce Shiite law and theology on the Sunnis causing the loss of sectarian identities. This political situation can make the Sunnis who lost their power become more anti-governmental actors.¹⁴¹ In this way, it is more than possible that Sunni militancy will play a decisive role in undermining Shiite dominance as well as the instability of post-Saddam Iraq.¹⁴²

In addition to the internal and external considerations of Shiite Iraq, the Shiite government will affect the US interests in the Middle East. The revival of the Shiites in Iraq jeopardizes the US interests in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia because, as the holy place for the Sunnis and Islam, Saudi Arabia could lose its Sunni leadership in the Middle East to its two neighboring Shiite countries, Iran and Iraq. Most importantly, the empowerment of the Shiites can give rise to religious conflicts between two religious sects in other Muslim countries as well.¹⁴³ To sustain Sunni dominance in the region, the resistance of al Qaeda, Wahhabi activism, and the Iraqi Sunnis will become more violent and organized, posing an immense threat to US interests.¹⁴⁴ Although instability in Iraq does not necessarily negatively affect the interests of the three neighboring countries, the US troops stationed in Iraq will be embroiled in conflicts among ethno-religious groups which are related to Iraq's

¹⁴¹ Nasr, 17.

¹⁴² Ibid., 20.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 19.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 19.

neighboring countries. This is because in different ways and concerns, each country is trying to influence the reconstruction of Iraq.¹⁴⁵

4.2 REGIONAL CONCERNS WITH THE SHIITE DOMINATION IN IRAQ

4.2.1 Iranian Concerns with Post-Saddam Iraq

Iran is playing a more influential role in the future of Iraq than even the US. Indeed, Iran has been inherently included in Iraqi affairs. Before the US invasion of Iraq, Iran was concerned with the collapse of Saddam Hussein. Since late 2002, the Iranian government had its say on post-Saddam Iraq goals and plans through consultation between several Iraqi opposition leaders and Iranian-based Iraqi Shiite groups in Teheran. As a matter of fact, Ahmad Chalabi, Massoud Barzani and Ayatollah Muhammad Baqar al-Hakim met in Teheran to discuss the post-Saddam regime.¹⁴⁶ This was because Iran made sure that the US invasion only intended to topple Saddam Hussein as well as Iran's relations to Shiite groups in southern Iraq could have a positive effect on gaining support from Iraq.¹⁴⁷

Although geopolitically Iran has strong ties with the Iraqi Shiites, maintaining positive relations with this sectarian group can be explained from more than just geopolitical and religious factional perspectives. Another perspective reflects Iran's concern for using Iraqi territory as its battleground against the US. This would allow

¹⁴⁵ Stansfield, 8.

¹⁴⁶ Geoff Simons, *Future Iraq: US Policy in Reshaping the Middle East*, (London: Sagi Books, 2003), 173.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 173.

Iran to fight the US from a protected position outside of its land.¹⁴⁸ The US government would not be able to attack Iran while Iran supports the Shiites' militias in fighting the foreign occupiers as it would commit the US troops to unending ethno-religious conflicts and increasing casualties. However, this situation would not only prevent a US attack on Iran, but it would also benefit the Iranian hegemonic strategy.

From the Iranian hegemonic perspective, the only state that hinders Iranian hegemony in the Gulf region is the US with the presence of its military. In this sense, it seems clear that unless Iran gives up its nuclear program in Teheran, US military actions against Iran are an inevitable consequence.¹⁴⁹ Although Iran's nuclear capabilities are far less sophisticated in comparison to Israel's, giving up the nuclear program is the only way in which Iran can avoid becoming the next US target. Unlike Iran's political support for post-Saddam Iraq for geopolitical and hegemonic strategic factors, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia seeks to hinder Shiite dominance in Iraq to keep and strengthen Sunni dominance in the region.

4.2.2 The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as the Keeper of Sunni Dominance

One of the Iraqi neighboring countries, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is a very important religious country for Muslims because of the holy places of Mecca and Medina that are located within its borders. In addition to the holy places, the

¹⁴⁸ Stansfield, 8.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 8.

conservative Islamic sect, Wahabism, was also born in Saudi Arabia. Since the eighteenth century, Sunni identity emerged from Saudi Arabia for the first time and later combined with al Qaeda, the Taliban and militant Wahabis.¹⁵⁰ From the beginning, Wahabism consisted of "religious fanaticism, military ruthlessness, political villainy and the press-gang of women to cement alliances" because Muhammad Ibn Wahhab justified his theological ideas with those of Muhammad Ibn Saud's interests.¹⁵¹ As the birth place of Sunni identity, Saudi Arabia opposed the US war against Iraq in 2003 to keep the "former bastion of Arab nationalism"¹⁵² out of the hands of the Shiites, to avoid fighting with Iran, and to protect its territory and people from the terror of al Qaeda.

Establishing the Shiite government in Iraq is not only a problem with external perceptions of the state of Iraq itself, but also with the oil-rich areas of Hasa province in Saudi Arabia. If the Shiite government is perfectly settled, Saudi Arabia will have to pay more attention to the expansion of the Shiite in the region as it affects the Shiite populated and oil-rich areas of its Hasa Province. This province could call for its autonomy based on its tribal relations to the Iraqi Shiites.¹⁵³ From the perspective of Saudi Arabia, the Shiite dominant Iraq will be able to not only decrease Sunni expansionism in the Gulf region but to also cause Shiite dominant oil-rich areas to

¹⁵⁰ Nasr 7.

¹⁵¹ Tariq Ali, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and Modernity*, (London: Verso, 2002), 75.

¹⁵² Stansfield, 8.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 8.

secede from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Regardless of the Shiite victory in Iraq, the federalization of Iraq with three major provinces controlled by the Sunnis, the Shiites and the Kurds will also play a major role in Saudi politics. This is because if Iraq stabilizes and the US troops withdraw from Iraq, the country could suffer from "a full-scale Sunni-Shiite civil war."¹⁵⁴ With a vacuum caused by the withdrawal of the US troops, Iraq could be the frontline of civil war supported by neighboring countries. Civil war could also give rise to fighting between Saudi Arabia and Iran to gain its own political, strategic and religious superiority in Iraq.¹⁵⁵

Saudi Arabia faces unsolvable challenges with the withdrawal of the US troops from Iraq. Indeed, Saudi Arabia provided the US with the permission to station an American air force base on its territory in the 1990s. This base also played a significant role in the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Although Saudi Arabia asked the US troops to withdraw when the war was over, they are still stationed in Saudi Arabia. The withdrawal of the US troops from Saudi Arabia was one of the chief demands of al Qaeda, meaning that Saudi Arabia became the high target of al Qaeda terrorists.¹⁵⁶ As compared to the sectarian cases of Iran and Saudi Arabia, the situation of the Kurds has been different. Unlike the Sunni-Shiite power struggle and the question of Shiite expansionism, the Kurds' problems are concerned with their existence in terms

¹⁵⁴ Stansfield, 8.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 8.

¹⁵⁶ Simmons, 191.

of gaining their political autonomy in the reunified or federalized state.

4.2.3 Turkey and the Kurds

Unlike the cases of Iran and Saudi Arabia, the concerns between Turkey and the Iraqi Kurds are very controversial. After the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, Turkey has tried to prevent the establishment of a Kurdish state.¹⁵⁷ In addition, the Iraqi Kurds strongly warned in March 2006 that they would consider any Turkish people as their enemy and fight against them.¹⁵⁸ For example, when the author was in Arbil in 2005, Turkish truck drivers who entered Iraq to deliver foodstuffs to the South Korean Military camp were often killed by Kurdish insurgents. Within this insecure situation, they felt afraid to enter Iraq and hesitated to deliver foodstuffs regardless of high price. In these ways, the situation between the Iraqi Kurds and Turkey was tense enough to erupt into war.

Like Saudi Arabia's concern with Saudi Shiites' desire for autonomy, Turkey was also concerned with Iraqi Kurds' encouragement of Turkish Kurds to pursue their autonomy from Turkey. As a means of discouraging Turkish Kurds from their autonomy, the "Turkish highest court banned the largest pro-Kurdish political party."¹⁵⁹ As well, the attempts of the Iraqi Kurds to secure Kirkuk meant that the Turkmen in Kirkuk would suffer from "Kurdish occupation." Furthermore, the oil

¹⁵⁷ Stansfield, 9.

¹⁵⁸ Simmons, 153.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 154.

fields in Kirkuk would belong to the Kurds.¹⁶⁰ In order to stop the Kurds' actions on Kirkuk, Turkey sent 1,500 Turkish troops to northern Iraq to hinder "an influx of refugees and terrorist activity."¹⁶¹ However, Turkish policies toward the Kurdistan Region were unsuccessful because the US supported the Kurds by accepting their demands and did not desire Kurdish integration into Iraq.

From the Kurds' perspective, they were fearful of Turkey because they considered Turkey to be a threat of their territorial integrity and independence. The most important interest of the Kurds has been their autonomy whether in reunified or federalized Iraq. When Turkey spoke about Kirkuk and its oil, the only concern the Kurds had was keeping their territory independent from Turkey. On 10 April Kurdish and US troops jointly occupied Kirkuk. This military action showed that the Bush administration was not willing to ignore the Kurds' demands and break up the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.¹⁶² From the US perspective, access to the Kurdistan Region is very important in order to obtain Kurdish oil fields. American oil interests from the Kurdistan Region have made the US difficult to stand against Kurdish demands.

4.3 COMPONENTS FOR RESHAPING POST-SADDAM IRAQ

The regime built by the US and the Iraqi Shiites is not a perfect component of Iraq. This has to do with the fact that post-Saddam Iraq is controlled by the pro-

¹⁶⁰ Stansfield, 9.

¹⁶¹ Simmons, 154.

¹⁶² Stansfield, 9.

American Iraqi Shiites who were political minorities before the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. This brand new Iraqi regime has been challenged by the small number of delegates who wanted to be represented in Iraqi politics.¹⁶³

Although the Iraqi Sunnis are mainly dissatisfied with regime change, they will try to recapture their political power from the Shiites by opposing the central Shiite government and participating in heavy insurgent activity. The legitimacy the Iraqi regime enjoys from the Shiites and particularly the pro-American Shiites is not enough to easily defend against attacks by the Iraqi Sunnis, the Kurds and even the Shiite militia groups, such as Muqtada al-Sadr. In addition to the struggle for a configuration of power among the three key players, the way to share oil and its revenue in Iraq will be one of the important obstacles to Iraqi stability in the near future.

In this sense, the cohesion of ethno-religious groups is necessary for the Shiites to establish strong political participation and an acceptable Petroleum Law in Iraq. If all Iraqis who are committed to different ethno-religious and political groups desire a strongly cohesive Iraqi future, they can create as strong and reasonable political system through their cooperation. However, if they are not ready to cooperate, democracy and political or economic formulae given by "the developed" or any other proposed political ideology will not work well in Iraq.

¹⁶³ Dodge, 714.

4.3.1 Bringing the Key Players into Iraqi politics

The most considerable challenge for the Iraqi government has been the participation of Iraqis in the conduct of state affairs. In terms of the participation of the Iraqis in building the Iraqi political system, the Iraqis will get a double advantage based on ethno-religious factional demands and national reunification. In order to promote each side's political participation, the central government has to pay more attention to relatively alienated but influential groups such as the Sunnis, Muqtada al-Sadr and the Kurds, and then bring them into Iraqi politics. However, in the case of the Interim Government of Iraq, the new government was riddled with party members who were living in exile from the time of Saddam's regime.¹⁶⁴ There was little difference between Saddam's revolutionary Iraq and post-Saddam Iraq, except in the shift in power from Sunni sectarian rule to Shiite sectarian rule. In the beginning of the state reconstruction process, many useless arguments and demands were made among political components or participants.

First, it was necessary for the Shiites to consider the position of the former powerful Sunnis. Although the Sunnis recognize that overthrowing the Shiite government is impossible, they will try to oppose the central government in terms of planning insurgents' operations and promoting the Iraqi Sunnis to participate in their operations. If the Shiites try to bring the Sunnis into Iraqi politics on the condition of renegotiation for federalism or unification and the distribution of Iraq's oil, the Sunnis

¹⁶⁴ Dodge, 718.

would probably accept. This is likely because of the lack of unified Sunni interests due to the many disputed issues and divisions in the Sunni insurgent groups based on conflicts between "home-grown Islamists" and al Qaeda, and Islamists and Ba'thists.¹⁶⁵ Within these controversial situations, Iraqi insurgent groups strongly oppose al Qaeda and establishing the Islamic state of Iraq. In addition, the Iraqi Sunnis are afraid of the anti-Sunni movements and sentiments of the Shiites.¹⁶⁶ For these reasons, the possibility that the Iraqi Sunnis would accept negotiations with the Shiites is real.

The Sunni Arab insurgents are playing a deadly role in reconstructing the Shiites government in Iraq; however, there is another considerable threat to the central government, which is the Sadr Movement led by Muqtada al-Sadr. Through the western media, the Sadr Movement is recognized as "insurgents" like al Qaeda. Although its military right wing, Jaish al Mahdi, has been targeted by the US and Iraqi governmental forces because of anti-American and anti-government activities, from many Iraqis' perspective, Sadr is a charismatic leader and a figure of great political importance.¹⁶⁷

In this sense, Muqtada al-Sadr has actual support and popular political legitimacy from many Iraqis for being "one of them" and "home-grown," as opposed to the leadership of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI)

¹⁶⁵ Stansfield, 4.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 4.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 4.

which is identified as "Made in Iran."¹⁶⁸ This signifies that Muqtada al-Sadr has more legitimacy than the pro-American Iraqi Shiite government, which is supported by little more than US troops. Within this context, the US should bring Sadr into the scope of Iraqi politics as a key factor in keeping Shiite moderation and developing secure and strong political participation in Iraqi politics.¹⁶⁹

Since the establishment of Iraq in 1921, the ardent desire of the Kurds has been the recognition of the Kurdistan Region in northern Iraq. After the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Kurds finally had a chance to form their state and then publicly claim that Iraq should be a federal state. This is because the only way for the Kurds to protect their nation from chaos in post-Saddam Iraq is to become part of a federal state. However, as long as the Kurds can secure their right to exist in the region, it matters little to them whether Iraq will be federal or reunified.

In Kurdish history, there was suppression, massacre and ethnic-cleansing under Saddam's regime as well as bombing, sanctions and betrayals by the United States.¹⁷⁰ In spite of this brutal Kurdish history, when the US intended to attack Saddam's regime in 2003, the Kurds saw an opportunity for their ethnic autonomy. If the Shiite government can give the Kurds a region of their own, then strong relations between the Shiites and the Kurds follow. For the Kurds, either autonomy in a federal

¹⁶⁸ Stansfield, 4.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 4.

¹⁷⁰ Simmons, 135.

state or in a fully independent Kurdistan is acceptable.¹⁷¹ Therefore, since the primary Kurdish demand is autonomy, if the Shiites and the Kurds work together with a common political agenda, the Shiites' conflict with the Kurds will be easier to resolve than that with the Sunnis.

4.3.2 Oil as Problem Solving

In addition to US political and practical goals, oil also plays a significant role in internally rebuilding post-Saddam Iraq with the Iraqi ethno-religious groups. However, Iraqi oil is publicly controversial because now it is controlled by the US-backed Shiite government in Baghdad. Additionally, the US government runs the Iraqi oil industry like an American corporation.¹⁷² In the past, Iraqi oil played a crucial role in OPEC countries and the international market. However, if Iraqi oil is controlled by the US, it will not have a significant effect on the OPEC interests and the US can control the Iraqi oil resources in the name of guaranteeing adequate energy supplies for the world oil demanders.

Furthermore, the US decided to control Iraqi oil not only in order to obtain secure oil resources from Iraq, but also in order to support US currency. Indeed, the US economy is strongly affected by the global pricing of oil in dollars in particular. For these reasons, the US prefers all governments to hold US dollars as their foreign

¹⁷¹ Simmons, 135.

¹⁷² Ibid., 342.

currency reserves instead of Euro. If the OPEC countries made a decision to hold Euros instead of dollars and to begin selling their dollars to buy Euros, the US government would have to raise taxation for more revenue.¹⁷³ In order to maintain its secure oil resources in Iraq and to support the dollar in OPEC countries, the US must maintain control of Iraqi oil resources.

Within the context of oil resources in Iraq, Iraqi oil plays a significant role in ensuring Iraqi reconstruction because, at least in the short term, an effective petroleum law is needed. However, the most important factor in relation to the petroleum law is based on state federalism. In order to impose petroleum law, negotiations for state federalism among the ethno-religious participants has to come first.¹⁷⁴ The positions of the three key players on the petroleum law will then follow. From the Sunnis' perspective, in order for the Iraqi oil resources to benefit all Iraqis, they have to be administered by the central government. In particular, the Ministry of Oil in Baghdad must centrally distribute the oil revenue. In this sense, the existence of a centralized petroleum law is needed not in terms of the involvement of the regional or local governments such as the KRG or "a Basra-centered entity," but in terms of the dismissal of the Ministry of Oil and Natural Resources in Arbil in the Kurdish Region.

The Kurdish perspective is different from that of the central government. Their positions give rise to the contracts designed by the constitution of Iraq, but each side's

¹⁷³ Simmons, 343.

¹⁷⁴ Stansfield, 7.

terms of recognition are different. The central government established the administration of oil resources and wants responsibility for administering the resources in terms of including the Kirkuk and Basra fields. Furthermore, it wants to maintain its responsibility for the distribution of oil revenues across the state.

However, the Kurdish perspective of the constitution is that regional governments are responsible for managing and administering oil fields, including new ones. Kurds mostly maintain the right to manage oil fields within their territory and to distribute oil revenue within the region and sometimes to the central government according to their constitutional agreement.¹⁷⁵

Since Iraq's three main political groups failed to come to an agreement on the Petroleum Law in 2007, they have maintained different perspectives on the law that should be promulgated. In January 2007, Iraqi Oil Minister Hussein Shahrahstani declared that all Iraqi oil companies would be administered by the Ministry of Oil in Baghdad with the passing of a new law. However, the side of KRG Prime Minister Nechervan Barzani strongly rejected the announcement of the central government and argued that the constitution should protect the right of the Kurds to administer their own fields.¹⁷⁶ In addition to the perspectives of the Kurds and the Shiites, Sunni negotiators argued that the constitution should have been renegotiated in order to

¹⁷⁵ Stansfield, 7.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 7.

strengthen their cooperation in the National Assembly.¹⁷⁷ If this disagreement continues and a solution is not reached, the entire legislative process, not only of drafting a petroleum law but also larger issues of political cohesion, will be shakable.

4.3.3 What Happened in the Name of Democratization

Iraq has been devastated by the US and its allies, particularly with regard to its priceless cultural heritage and countless civilian casualties. Although the US could not, understandably, protect and prevent the looting of 170,000 artifacts from the Baghdad Museum, the looting was welcomed by the US and the British.¹⁷⁸ A comparable example of the foreign occupier unjustly taking artifacts from the occupied land can be seen when the Israeli forces invaded West Bank. The Israeli military tried to destroy Palestinian educational infrastructure including school records and children's paintings as a means of denying and destroying the national identity of Palestinians. Like the case of the Israelis, the US troops encouraged the looting as a payback against the Ba'th regime. The looting served as a message to the public that Saddam's regime and its guard were finished, and the destruction of Iraqi cultural heritage was a means for eliminating the national pride and identity of the Iraqis.¹⁷⁹ It also symbolized the ignorance of the foreign troops and the beginning of their occupation. However, the most important factor to note with this encouraged looting is that the US

¹⁷⁷ Stansfield, 7.

¹⁷⁸ Simmons, 323.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 323.

did not qualify as a liberator or a "democratizer" because of its justification for doing anything in Iraq.

From the beginning of the US invasion, there was no "democratizer" or democratization in Iraq. Indeed, the US government and the Washington strategists used forged documents, "shaky" evidence and hypocrisy to wage war against Saddam Hussein.¹⁸⁰ According to UN observers, the Iraqis suffered from starvation, poor healthcare, bombings and lootings. Furthermore, all things the US did to reconstruct basic services, order and representative government in Iraq failed.¹⁸¹

Since the post-Cold War era, the US began to justify its imperialist policies with democracy or the democratizing process in the third world, in particular in the Middle East.¹⁸² In the case of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the US revealed its military aggression and justified it by claiming to save and liberate the Iraqis from their dictator, and by democratizing them. There was no planned process of democratization in the US when it attacked Iraq. General Norman Schwarzkopf who led the 1991 Gulf War spoke to Congress about the Middle East: "Middle East oil is the west's lifeblood. It fuels us today, and being 77 percent of the free world's proven oil reserves, is going to fuel us when the rest of the world runs dry."¹⁸³

During 1991 to 2003, although the Gulf War was over, the US and the British air forces destroyed all air and other bases in the region. For instance, there was

¹⁸⁰ Simmons, 327.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 330-31.

¹⁸² Zalloum, 42.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 43.

Operation Desert Fox in 1998, in which 1,100 missiles were launched on 359 Iraqi targets in the eight months after starting this operation.¹⁸⁴ Until the end of the 1990s, the US deployed about 22,000 additional US military troops, 200 air fighters and 19 war vessels to the region. More than 500,000 Iraqi children died as a result of health problems caused by economic sanctions and missile strikes by the US and the British forces.¹⁸⁵

If democracy is supposed to be combined with aggressive and violent processes like it has been in Iraq since 2003, "American democracy" seems increasingly inappropriate for "the rest" of the world, and only a proper form of governance in the US. George W. Bush was not the first US president to act unilaterally as the US is very familiar with unilateralism even in its short history. For example, Bill Clinton argued in 1993 that "the US will act multilaterally when possible, but unilaterally when necessary."¹⁸⁶ "American democracy," which was combined with military operations, could have been considered by the world masses as similar to the propaganda of al Qaeda which also staged violent operations, such as 9/11 in 2001. Indeed, there was little difference between al Qaeda and the US in the case of killing non-combatants to achieve political goals.

4.4 CONCLUSION

¹⁸⁴ Zalloum, 46.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 46.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 68.

With the collapse of Saddam's regime, the Shiite government was established in Iraq. Although it was possible that the US had various reasons for building the Shiite government of Iraq, the state has been surrounded by three expected problems. First, in the Middle East, Iraq is the first Shiite dominated Arab country. One of the powerful neighboring countries, Iran, can play a threatening role in both Iraq and the Middle East. From the perspective of the US, Iran is "a rogue state" strongly standing against the US in terms of MND and supporting Shiite insurgent groups carrying out their operations in the region. If the Shiite government of Iraq has a strong relationship with the Iranian Shiite government, the US cannot make Iraq secure and will have to withdraw its military troops from Iraq. This means that the casualties of the US and its allies will increase and Iraq could witness more violence.

In addition to the potentially closer relations with Iran, regime change to the Shiites means that the social, religious and cultural history of Iraq will change. The previously Sunni religious and cultural heritage sites will be changed to those of the Shiites, putting the Sunnis in a difficult and subordinate position. These situations could give rise to the disenfranchisement of the Sunnis in Iraq which could then encourage them to participate in anti-governmental activities. If the Shiites pay no attention to political minorities, it will be obvious for the Iraqi Sunnis that both the power shift and the Sunnis' loss of political and religious positions will have a negative effect on reconstructing Iraq.

In tandem with the internal challenges to the central government, the post-Saddam Shiite regime and the US are facing unsolvable problems with neighboring countries in the region. These problems will negatively affect the Iraqi Shiite regime and the US interests in the region. In the case of Iran as "a rogue state" for the US, Iraq is a very significant geopolitical state. In terms of supplying weapons and money to the Shiite insurgent groups, Iran can stop or delay a future US attack on Iran. More violent ethno-religious conflicts and the casualties of US troops will dissuade the US from invading Iran for a short time. From Iran's perspective, a US attack on its territory would be devastating so the Iranian government will do everything to stop a US attack in terms of buying time and renegotiating with the US directly or indirectly through the IAEA.

The cases of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Turkey are similar in part. These two countries are paying more attention to the Iraqi Shiite government and the Kurdistan Region. From the perspective of Saudi Arabia, the empowerment of the Iraqi Shiites plays a negative role in influencing the Saudi Arabian Shiites to pursue their own autonomy within the Saudi Arabian territory. In terms of support from the Iraqi Shiite regime, the Saudi Arabian Shiites can be encouraged systematically. In addition to the Saudi Arabian Shiites' autonomy, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as the symbol of Sunni Muslims will have difficulty in keeping and upholding its Sunni leadership and significant role in Muslims' holy land as well as in the Middle East

As compared to the Saudi Arabian problems with regime change in Iraq, the Kingdom has an external threat composed of internal political situations. The US troops which are stationed in Saudi Arabia are provoking al Qaeda to attack the Saudi family. Although the US government promised that after its invasion of Iraq, the US troops would withdraw from Saudi Arabia, they did not and will probably not withdraw from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This means that the withdrawal of US troops from the Kingdom as one of al Qaeda's political demands will play a decisive role in al Qaeda's decision to attack on Saudi Arabian territory. Indeed, the Saudi family is faced with two different threats against its regime.

The relation between the Kurds and Turkey constitutes a case similar to that of Saudi Arabia. Although Turkey has no direct threat from al Qaeda, the Turkish Kurds' call for autonomy could be encouraged by the Iraqi Kurds as a result of the establishment of Iraqi Kurdish autonomy. Indeed, the Turkish government paid more attention to disturbing the Kurds' autonomy and banning the pan-Kurdish political parties. Also, Turkish troops were sent to the borders between Turkey and the Kurdistan Region to stop Iraqi refugees from entering Turkey. From the Turkish perspective, the achievement of the Kurds' autonomy would be the most destabilizing factor in Turkish politics. If the Turkish government does not pay attention to the Iraqi Shiite government and the Kurdistan Region, Turkey may permit the Turkish Kurds' autonomy within Turkish territory.

To strengthen political power in the process of rebuilding Iraqi politics, the increase of political participation among the three key players-the Shiites, the Sunnis, and the Kurds-is necessary. Even though there are sophisticated and new programs from the international community for shaping Iraqi politics, the importance of political participation cannot be ignored. In terms of bringing the Sunnis, the Shiites and the Kurds into one political agenda or system, the central government should try to unify them under one national flag but within the reality of the Shiites' government. In addition to increasing political participation among the main players, the central government is also facing problems with oil resources in Iraq. It is strongly related to the national oil revenue so it is possible that they have no concession among the Sunnis, the Shiites and the Kurds. Disagreements regarding oil distribution can give rise to continuing ethno-religious conflicts. Finding a way to solve the oil problem, in terms of enacting the petroleum law and enforcing it among ethno-religious Iraqi groups, will be the highest priority.

Within the context of the insecure new Iraqi regime, the effects of the US presence in Iraq since 2003 are significant to note. Many things the US troops did in Iraq do not qualify them as a "liberator" or "democratizer." Indeed, the US troops never focused on preventing the looting of the Iraqi businesses and homes, and even allowed looting artifacts from the Baghdad Museum to inform the world that Saddam's regime with the Ba'th party was over. This could not be seen as the action of

a liberator, but rather as an occupier that helped to destroy Iraqis' heritage, in particular culturally and religiously Sunni oriented heritage.

Most significantly, US imperialist tendencies revealed their true colors after the Soviet Union collapsed under the name of democratizing the third world, in particular post-Saddam Iraq since 2003. In the situation of Iraq, the US achieved its political aim, which was to procure oil resources from Iraq in the post-Gulf War era. In addition, when the US intervened in Iraqi politics with the UN economic sanctions, in terms of carrying out Operation Desert Fox in 1998, it launched many missiles for eight months. Until the end of the 1990s, about 22,000 US troops were sent to Iraq by the US government. As a result of these military operations, over 500,000 Iraqis died including non-combatant Iraqi civilians. This was not the necessary precondition for the process of democratizing Iraq, but rather for weakening the Iraqis, their cultural and religious values, and even for Saddam's human rights offenses.

V. CONCLUSION

The March-April War, the Operation of Iraqi Freedom or the US invasion of Iraq was to attack Iraq, topple the Saddam Hussein regime and then give regime power to the Shiites. This means that the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 was not for carrying out humanitarian relief and liberating the Iraqis from their dictator, but for changing Iraqi regime control from the Sunnis to the Shiites and for obtaining secure oil resources from Iraq.

Before attacking Iraq in 2003, the Bush administration had made a rough plan for its attack since 2002. When Bush made a decision to attack, the collapse of Saddam's regime was in the interests of two powers, the US and Israel. At the end of the Gulf War in 1991, Saddam launched missiles into Israel to stop the attack of the US and its allies on Iraq. As a result of the missiles, Israel felt threatened by the existence of Iraq and then started to intervene in US decision-making to label Iraq as a main target.

As mentioned in Ch. 1, in terms of credible evidence, Iraq was not a threat to the US and the allegation of a strong relationship between Saddam and al Qaeda was invented to justify its invasion. To obtain secure oil resources from Iraq and to protect Israel, the US invaded Iraq and transferred the regime to the Shiites in accordance with the anti-Saddam figures, such as the Kurds and the Shiites. Since Saddam's

regime collapsed in 2003, the reality of the Iraqis has become worse than that under Saddam's regime. Moreover, the Iraqis started to consider the US as an occupier, not a liberator.

Also, the "Pre-War Reconstruction Plan of Post-War Iraq," which was studied in Ch.3, did not work well as Bush expected. Every Iraqi infrastructure was destroyed by the US bombings and military operations, and the Iraqis have lived with danger and insecurity ever since. Furthermore, ethno-religious conflicts grew violent, internalized and intensified among the Iraqis. The Iraqi chaos was worsened by the poorly designed US Iraqi future program, meaning that its program was less beneficial to Iraq than Saddam's management of the country.

From the beginning of the establishment of Iraq in 1921, Iraq was artificially built by the British authorities according to their interests. This means that Iraq was composed of different ethnic and religious groups with different languages, histories and religious factions. Most importantly, the Iraqis did not want one unified country like modern Iraq. As a result of establishing Iraq by the British power, different ethno-religious groups were united and managed under the British mandate. This is to say that the ethno-religious conflicts among the Iraqis did not emerge from the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, but from the establishment of Iraq under the British authorities in 1921 as explained in Ch. 2.

Since the British mandate, ethno-religious conflicts emerged because the

Kurds wanted autonomy, the Shiites could not play a major role in Iraqi politics, and the Sunnis wanted to hold on to political power in terms of discriminating against the Shiites and refusing to grant Kurdish autonomy. Since the Sunnis' refusal of Kurdish autonomy, the Kurds have struggled with them to fight for their autonomy in terms of staging uprisings in 1922 and 1924 oppressed by the Sunnis. The period of the British mandate was the starting point of ethno-religious conflicts among the Iraqis, meaning that Iraq was a conflicted country because of three key players each having their own political agenda.

In the period of the monarchy, there was also little difference in the relationship among three key players. Since 1932, the Sunnis started suppressing the Shiites and the Kurds in terms of the Sunni oriented politics. In that period, the Shiites carried out a series of revolts in collaboration with the Shiite clergies. The most significant problem between the Sunnis and the Shiites was that the Sunnis refused to accept the Shiites as their political and religious partner. The period of the monarchy also played a significant role in initiating Kurdish political parties, such as ICP and KDP. These Kurdish parties also had a positive effect on promoting the Kurds to be political advocates and standing against the Sunni dominated Iraq. If the Kurds were well-armed with political parties, this meant that the conflicts between the Sunnis and the Kurds became intensified.

Iraq controlled by the Ba'th party and Saddam Hussein was the peak of ethno-

religious suppression and conflicts in its history. Saddam considered the Shiites as his political enemy and did not give opportunities to them to participate in Iraqi politics. Furthermore, he used chemical weapons with military operations to suppress the Kurds and uprooted them from their hometowns in the name of "Arabization." Saddam's only concern was to keep his political power regardless of the Shiites' political participation and the Kurds' autonomy. All crimes he committed during his era were to protect his power, meaning that Saddam Hussein was engaged in a large scale of massacre of Iraqis by torture, bombings and chemical weapons for his political power.

If the British mandate was the starting point of ethno-religious conflicts among the Iraqis, Saddam's invasion of Kuwait was also the starting point of the US direct intervention in Iraqi politics since 1990. Since the Gulf War, the US directly started intervening in Iraqi politics in terms of UN economic sanctions and military operations. From Saddam's perspective, he invaded Kuwait to gain confidence and political hegemony in the region and decrease economic difficulties because as soon as oil was discovered in Kuwait, the money flowing from Kuwait vanished.

However, the Gulf War played a significant role in revealing US imperialism. Although the US pretended to save the Kuwaitis from Saddam's invasion, the main US goal was to obtain secure oil resources from Iraq. Unlike UNSCR 611 and 687, UNSCR 688 was strongly related to Saddam's crimes against the Kurds. At that time,

the US main goal was not toppling Saddam, but obtaining oil from Iraq. However, economic sanctions and political intervention in Iraq gave rise to the Iraqis suffering from insecurity, disease and malnutrition. Within this situation, Saddam Hussein was not completely controlled by the US and the UN, but the Iraqis, including children, were controlled and suffered from Saddam's punishment.

In post-Gulf War Iraq, Saddam still suppressed political minorities in terms of using weapons to destroy them. Ironically, when Saddam attacked his so-called enemies, he had US permission to use helicopter gunships and arsenals. On 1 March 1991, Saddam suppressed the Shiite revolt under the permission of the US by using weapons and military equipment. However, after the Gulf War, the locations in which the Shiites and the Kurds were living were classified as no fly zones. If Saddam did not have permission of the US, he could not attack the Shiites. This meant that the US was in Iraq not to save and to protect the Iraqis from Saddam Hussein, but to achieve its political goals and to protect the Israelis from a direct threat to Israel. If Saddam was a direct threat to the Iraqis and the US, he should have been toppled in the Gulf War.

Although ethno-religious conflicts among the Iraqis were in existence, the US invasion of Iraq made these conflicts more brutalized than those of Saddam's regime. This is to say that the US played a role as an occupier in the post-Saddam regime because it was not concerned with Iraq's future after the fall of Saddam. Bush's plan

for the invasion of Iraq was focused on overthrowing Saddam's regime, not on liberating the Iraqis and democratizing Iraqi politics from a dictator. After the collapse of Saddam Hussein, there was nothing planned about the political participation of the Iraqis, but about the attempt to establish the Shiite government in terms of removing officials, soldiers and policemen from the post-Saddam regime.

The establishment of the Shiite government in Iraq faces problems which are based on the relations between the Shiite governments of Iran and Iraq, the regime change causing the Sunnis' loss of existence in Iraq, and diplomatic problems with its neighboring countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey. Iran is trying to use the Iraqi Shiite government to stop US military actions against the Iranian territory in terms of supporting the Shiite insurgents. This is because making Iraq insecure in terms of increasing the US casualties in Iraq means that Iraq is not insecure to withdraw the US troops from there and it is not enough for the US to attack Iran.

From the perspective of Saudi Arabia, establishing the Shiite government in Iraq means that the Saud family has to feel afraid of the Saudi Shiites, who have many oil fields in Saudi Arabia, because they can propose their autonomy within the territory of Kingdom. Furthermore, if the US troops are not withdrawn from Saudi Arabia, al Qaeda can attack it in the wake of the stationing of the US troops. Turkey is also in a similar situation with Saudi Arabia. If the Kurds have their autonomy in northern Iraq, the Turkish Kurds also can request their autonomy in Turkey.

This thesis shows that the situation in Iraq is not simple as the Bush administration thought before the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The post-Saddam regime in Iraq is surrounded by many political factors which can play a fatal role in rebuilding the state in Iraq. Internally speaking, ethno-religious conflicts among ethno-religious groups are dissolvable in the short run. Externally speaking, the problem with neighboring countries cannot be ignored. However, when the Bush administration made a plan for attacking Iraq, the US decision makers did not care about post-war Iraq meaning that they just thought of Saddam as the key target while they were not concerned about the Iraqis as the protected. In Iraq, there have been military operations and occupation under the name of democratizing and liberating the Iraqis.

The "Pre-War Reconstruction Plan of Post-War Iraq" was doomed to fail from the beginning. One of the practical problems gave rise to this was the acute lack of pre-knowledge about Iraq and the Iraqis' situation. In terms of paying attention to the Iraqi Shiite exiles who wanted to overthrow Saddam Hussein, the US government did not have enough regional information and did not know Iraqi reality before and after its invasion of Iraq. Another practical problem was based on the political prematurity of the Iraqis after the invasion. The Shiite government was strongly dependant on its future political role given to them by the US and its allies. This caused the Iraqis to feel powerless and then they did not focus on political participation in reconstructing

the state.

The most considerable problem this thesis showed was the factual reason for the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. It was not the Operation of Iraqi Freedom in which many US allies, including the author, participated, but it is undeniable that the war was the US invasion of Iraq. The war between the US and Iraq was to topple Saddam Hussein, not to liberate the Iraqis like the Gulf War was not to liberate the Kuwaitis from Saddam. The humanitarian relief and liberating Iraqis were a sort of bait to carry out the US military operation against Saddam's regime and to reveal US imperialism to obtain secure oil resources from one of the oil producing countries similar to what the US did in Iran in the past.

In addition to practical problems with the US future program for the post-Saddam Iraq, justifying the US invasion of Iraq with humanitarian relief and reconstruction was a conceptual problem. To liberate the Iraqis from Saddam, the US troops destroyed valuable infrastructure, cultural heritage and educational facilities by bombings that maximized civilian casualties. It does not make sense to the world public because the US was not in Iraq to save the Iraqis, but to destroy the Ba'th and Saddam regime. The Bush administration wanted to have a military victory in terms of destroying all traces of Saddam and his followers. Furthermore, the US invasion can present a valuable lesson to the world masses that if democratizing or liberating the people who suffer from dictators, the programs or operations should be combined

with military operations and political intervention. It is pretty obvious that although some countries are not "the rogue states" like Bush defined, they are supposed to be destroyed if the US interests are not compatible with these countries.

However, in order to make strong Iraqi politics, the most important thing is increasing and strengthening the participation of the Iraqi public in Iraqi politics or the process of rebuilding Iraqi politics. Bringing the Sunnis, the Shiite and the Kurds into Iraqi politics is the best way for the Iraqis to do this. The US troops stationed in Iraq cannot do something for the Iraqis because they do not know how to shape the Iraqi future. Indeed, the US did not pay attention to the post-Saddam regime because Saddam was the key target and he was removed. Also, it did not consider the problems with removing Saddam and transferring the regime to the Shiites. In this sense, in terms of renegotiating the revenue of oil and promoting the political maturity of the Iraqis, they have to keep focusing on reconstructing Iraq with their own hands. The US is familiar with bombings, military operations and occupation, but unfamiliar with reconstruction, liberation and democratization.

The March-April War in 2003 was a result of the coexistence of the US imperialism for obtaining oil and the Israel lobby to protect its territory from its main threat, Iraq. From the beginning, there were no humanitarian relief, liberation of the Iraqis, democratization of Iraqi politics, and rescue of the Iraqis from Saddam Hussein. As well, there was no well-designed Iraqi future program and smart decision makers

in the US who were able to learn from mistakes the British authorities made in its Iraqi mandate period. Although the US has strong military power, its military operations and political intervention in a few countries of the third world have ended in failure so far like the cases of Vietnam in the past and of Iraq in the present. In addition, although the US is now rebuilding and democratizing the state in cooperation with the international communities, the author regrets that the US did not carry out the processes of rebuilding and democratization as soon as Saddam's regime collapsed.

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