

UNDERSTANDING THE CIVIL VIOLENCE IN IRAQ

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Abstract

The article is about the civil violence that has predominated in Iraq since 2004. Contrary to the generally accepted belief, it argues that the civil violence is not directly related to the attempts to reconstruct Iraq. The paper maintains that the violence is the consequence of a structural defect that is the creation of the previous regime. Policies, institutions and measures of the previous regimes have given rise to an uprooted state in Iraq, as a result of which, the society has always been in search of supporting mechanisms that could fulfill the functions of an absent state. This has led to the emergence of numerous alternative formations in Iraq, which were violence-prone by nature. This potential for violence was let loose with the collapse of the Saddam administration. The termination of violence will require the existing potential to be successfully but not forcefully managed.

Key Words

Civil violence, political reconstruction, power sharing, uprooted state, state-society relations in Iraq.

Introduction

The wave of state failures and civil wars following the end of the Cold War led many students of political science believe that there is a causal relationship between political reconstruction and civil violence. Indeed, in numerous significant instances, attempts to reengineer a failed state seemingly led to immense amounts of bloodshed. To most observers of Iraqi politics, what Iraq has been going through since the early days of 2004 is ample evidence of this relationship between political reconstruction and civil war. From this point of view, how power is going to be shared among the various groups that make up the Iraqi society constitutes the essence of the

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attempts to reconstruct Iraq and hence is the main reason of the ongoing violence. That means that the civil violence in Iraq cannot be stopped until the Kurds, Shi'ites, Sunnis and the other groups can find common ground on which to base the new political system.

Although it would be fallacious to dismiss this account of civil violence completely, there are also solid reasons to argue that not all cases of civil violence during the political reconstruction phase can be considered to be a consequence of reconstruction attempts. At least as far as the Iraqi case is concerned, the ongoing violence is primarily the result of structural defects that were shaped by the policies, institutions and strategies of the previous regime. To be more specific, the strategies, institutions and policies of the preceding regime made the soil fertile for the emergence of violence-prone organizations and hence an environment that is potentially violent by separating the Iraqi state from the Iraqi society. This potential for civil violence existed during the reign of the Saddam regime as well. However, Saddam and his administration were very successful in suppressing this potential for violence through their brutal and forceful preventive measures. The collapse of the Saddam regime let loose this suppressed potential. This implies that ending the civil violence in Iraq is going to require much more than finding common ground that satisfies everyone living in Iraq. What is needed is a structural transformation that will require the state and the society to establish a relationship whereby they depend on each other. Unless such a structure is created, the termination of the ongoing civil violence in Iraq is going to be difficult no matter how democratic the new political order and the new constitution are.

An Uprooted State

The Iraqi state is well known for its lack of national identity. However, what usually is considered to be a typical case of unsuccessful nation-building actually hints at a more fundamental structural deficiency that is the outcome of the policies, institutions and political construction that the various power holders of Iraq have employed ever since the inception of the state. The end result of these policies has been, purposefully or not, a gap between the state and the society that has manifested itself as a chaotic domestic political order which has been perceived as a weak or absent national identity by outside observers. Therefore “uprooted” is probably the best term to describe the Iraqi state. An uprooted state lacks a societal base

in the form of a reciprocal relationship with the society whereby the society and the power holders exchange demands and policy outcomes. Uprooted state mechanisms defined as such are not rare on the Middle Eastern political scene but Iraq is an extreme example.

The origins of the ‘uprootedness’ of the Iraqi state are to be found in the political trajectory of Iraq. Like almost all states on the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq was the artificial creation of the post-World War I plans to create a new world order. It is the amalgamation of the three former Ottoman Vilayets of Baghdad, Mosul and Basra. The Hashemite Kingdom of Iraq was created in 1921 under the British Mandate without taking into consideration the diverse cultural, ethnic, religious and sectarian backgrounds as well as the corresponding needs and demands of the peoples it brought together. This also was not uncommon as far as the states created in the aftermath of the World War I were concerned.¹ What distinguished Iraq was a constant failure or reluctance of the Iraqi power holders to embed the state deeper into the society. In other words, from the beginning onwards, the Iraqi state failed to develop as a nexus between the power holders and the society through which the latter transmit their demands to the former and the former produce policy solutions accordingly.²

The Hashemite Kingdom of Iraq provoked the immediate reaction of Kurds and Shi’ites; discrete acts of violence against the government and British forces followed.³ This was understandable considering that this new state did not live up to the expectations of the groups that it set out to bring together. Yet neither during the few decades the Kingdom lasted nor during the reigns of the following regimes did the power holders of Iraq mean to sincerely address the demands of the society. Suppression was considered to be the solution to overcome any pressure coming from society. Therefore the years following the removal of the king were marked by further restlessness and occasional chaos. Therefore it would be fair to argue that the distance

¹ See for example, 1994; B. Lewis, *The Shaping of the Modern Middle East*. New York, Oxford University Press; *The Middle East*. London, Weinfeld and Nicolson, 1995; M. Kramer, “Middle East, Old and New”, *Deadlus*, Vol. 126 No.2 (1997), pp.89-112.

² Kubba, L.(2000). “Arabs and Society: The Awakening of Civil Society”, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 11 No. 3, 84-92.

³ In 1920, the Shi’ites rose up against the British rule For details see T. Rajamoorthy, “Deceit and Duplicity: Some Reflections on Western Intervention in Iraq”, *Third World Resurgence* (2003).

between the state and society in Iraq continued to grow exponentially from 1958, when the king was overthrown by Abd al-Karim al-Qasim, until 1978. Yet the real detachment of the Iraqi state from the masses it was supposed to safeguard happened during Saddam's rule, who came to power in 1979.⁴

It can be safely argued that, the policies, institutions and measures taken and created during the reign of the Saddam regime were all meant to widen and accelerate the distance between the state and society.⁵ Having an autocratic, even an absolutist, state in mind, nothing less could be expected from the Saddam administration. However, the legacy of the previous regimes and the fragmented, fragile structure of Iraqi society, coupled with the fact that Iraq was a resource-rich country, eased the work of the Saddam administration in detaching the state from society. The goal was to hijack the state for the good of the members of the administration as well as anyone who was personally related to or supportive of Saddam.

What do we mean by an Uprooted State?

Before continuing on with the discussion as to what extent the Iraqi state was uprooted, the concept of an uprooted state needs further and more detailed clarification.

First and foremost it needs to be emphasized that uprootedness does not necessarily signify authoritarian regimes, although uprooted states are generally seen in authoritarian cases. I define an uprooted state as a state which lacks a societal base in the form of a reciprocal relationship between the state and society whereby the former is a nexus through which the latter transmits their demands to the power holders. Ideally, the power holders are primarily there to safeguard and serve the society while their self interest is limited to the extent that it does not override the welfare of the society.

⁴C. Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

⁵ This is mostly evident in how Saddam used the "tribal links" in order to entrench his party's stronghold within the society without having to build up any conduit between the state and the society. While this has enhanced the position of the tribes as access points to the Baathist regime, the gap between the state apparatus and the society was further weakened. For more details see A. Baram, "Neo-tribalism in Iraq: Saddam Hussein's Tribal Policies 1991-96", *International Journal Middle East Studies*, Vol. 29 No.1 (1997), pp.:1-31.

While such an understanding of the state is generally to be encountered in democratic countries, theoretically speaking, there is no reason to believe that this kind of a state cannot develop under an authoritarian regime. By the same token, not all democratic countries can be expected to be based on a perfectly un-uprooted state mechanism. Rather the notion of an uprooted state should be considered as the extreme end of a continuum on which different cases display varying degrees of uprootedness.

The most obvious indication of the lack of a reciprocal relationship between the state and society is the low level of public services and the low level of tax rates since the level of public services is an obvious indicator of the extent to which power holders meet the demands and needs of the society. The level of public expenditure is surely also related to the economic conditions of the country in question and to the amount of public revenues. Yet in uprooted states, public services are limited irrespective of the amount of public revenues. In some uprooted states even if there are sufficient resources to raise public revenues, these resources are either omitted or captured by the power holders in order, again, to advance their own personal interests. The resource-rich countries with lower levels of development constitute ample evidence for this situation. In the majority of these countries, the large amounts of the income that comes from the abundant natural resources are seized by the power holders and turned into public services only to a certain extent.⁶

Uprooted states are also characterized by low levels of tax revenues. As different studies in various fields of study have underlined, taxation goes hand in hand with accountability. Like it goes in the famous saying “no taxation without representation” taxation generally requires that the taxed have some voice in the administration that presides over them. This generally means the right to vote in order to hold the policy makers accountable for their misdoings, fixed terms of office on the part of the power holders, transparency of government to the maximum extent possible and the like.⁷ Seen from this perspective, taxation actually constitutes the backbone of the reciprocal relationship between the state and the society.

⁶ T. Gylfason, “Natural Resources, Education and Economic Development”, *European Economic Review*, Vol. 45, No. 4-6 (2001), pp.847-859.

⁷ M. Moore, “Revenues, State Formation, and the Quality of Governance in Developing Countries”, *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (2004), pp.297-319.

Therefore, it is only understandable that uprooted states have low levels of taxation. Apart from lacking the capacity to extract public revenues from the society, low levels of taxation in some cases suggests a reluctance to establish a link between the state and the society.

What goes along with low levels of public services and low levels of taxation are low levels of public expenditures, manifested in insufficient infrastructure. In uprooted states, even the most basic infrastructure needs are met only to a limited degree. The goal is not to enhance the general welfare of the society but to provide them with the bare essentials at the lowest level possible. Again, it is plausible to argue that insufficient infrastructure is primarily associated with the economic condition of the country in question. However, in uprooted states, economic well-being does not refer to the overall performance of the society in general but to the living conditions of the power holders. In other words, even if an uprooted state has the potential to develop a prosperous economy, this potential is generally under the control of the power holders.

This means that private economic activity in uprooted states is quite restricted. This is probably the case either because power holders put restrictions on economic activity or because there is not much opportunity for economic activity. If power holders deliberately restrict economic activity, they increase their chances to maintain the distance between the state and society since restricted economic activity will weaken the society. In addition to that, there is always the risk that other actors empowered by economic activity will challenge the position of the incumbents as the sole owners of the state mechanism. Therefore, in an uprooted state, restrictions on private economic activity turn out as a viable strategy on the part of the power holders.

On the other hand, in an uprooted state, alternatives for private economic activity might be restricted from starting simply because all profitable alternatives and resources will be under the control of power holders via state monopoly over almost all economic activities. According to this rationale, restricted private economic activity in an uprooted state would imply low levels of industrialization, a minimal number of private enterprises and above all an unnecessarily extensive public sector. By the same token, power holders would consider the expropriation of all possible economic activity as means to maximize their own benefits as well as a

means to create allies that are supportive of their rule. At the end, an extensive public sector would emerge, signifying a large circle of beneficiaries who take advantage of the existing order in the form of employment, bribes and stipends.

Defined as such, uprooted states can also be distinguished by their exaggerated obsession with internal and external security. Power holders of uprooted states put an excessive emphasis on internal security to identify traitors and probable challengers but not to ensure the safety of the society. Therefore, in countries with uprooted state mechanisms, we would expect to come across establishments like secret police, specialized teams and underground intelligence agencies. In other words, these establishments will generally be dedicated to preserving the status of the power holders and they will exist not to safeguard the society but to punish it whenever necessary and as ruthlessly as possible.

Accordingly, in uprooted states, external security would have a special meaning as well. A continuous accent put on a possible threat to the national interest of the country is helpful in creating a ‘rally around the flag effect’ that will assure the loyalty of the society to the state no matter how wide the distance between them is. In other words, the illusion of a constant threat to the national security would help to create an artificial feeling of togetherness among the members of the society and a futile sense of belongingness to the state that is actually very much distant. That way, the power holders of the uprooted state can soothe the society while keeping them at arms’ length. The exaggerated obsession with external security in uprooted states is first of all evident in the unreasonably belligerent foreign policy, huge amounts of military expenditures and a very rigid, exclusive nationalism that is usually based on made-up stories and myths. In addition to that, a large military sector also means a wide circle of beneficiaries that is potentially supportive of the rule of the power holders.

Saddam’s Iraq

The nature of the Ba’athist regime in Iraq remained in the shadows until Saddam decided to occupy Kuwait in 1991. Following the occupation of Kuwait and the war with the United States in 2003, the doors of Iraq opened to the international community. Until then, what really mattered was to balance out the general distribution of power in the Middle East in

general. The international community was not particularly interested in what was happening within Iraq except for the support given to numerous coup d'états.⁸ However, it can be safely argued that in those cases the goal of the external actors was to promote their own interests rather than to institute a well-functioning political system in Iraq or to understand what the Iraqi society actually needed. Even Saddam's rise to power was interpreted within this framework. As a matter of fact, Saddam's rise to power excited some observers of Iraqi politics and was initially welcome as a positive development.⁹ On the other hand, even if the international community had shown some genuine interest in what the Iraqi society actually needed, Saddam probably would have not released the required information. Therefore, the identification of the nature of Iraqi political regime during the reign of Saddam is not an easy task due to lack of reliable information. Assessing the Iraqi state structure alongside the above listed criteria is equally problematic because of lack of transparency. The most reliable information on the specifics of Iraqi politics under Saddam is yet to be released even though Saddam and his closest associates are gone.

Nevertheless, some basic factors that have shaped Iraqi politics can still be identified. The eight year-long war against Iran had the most consequential impact on Iraqi politics. As we will discuss below, what seemed to be wartime policies enabled Saddam, consciously or unconsciously, to suppress society in such a way that the existing distance between the state and society widened further. At the end of the war, Iraq was closer to a perfectly uprooted state in terms of the above-specified criteria.

The article by Alnasrawi shows how in economic terms Iraq approximated an uprooted state. To start with, at the beginning of the war, Iraq was in good shape in terms of economic indicators thanks to the increase in the oil revenue which rose from less than \$1 billion in 1970 to \$26 billion in 1980. After the war broke out, the oil revenue collapsed to \$10 billion in 1981. As a country that is primarily dependent on the export of a single resource, this sharp decrease in oil revenues had very serious consequences for Iraq. These consequences deepened the structural

⁹ Claudia Wright, "Iraq-New Power in the Middle East", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 58, No. 2 (Winter 1979/80), pp.257-277.

drawbacks that had already become evident in the country. First and foremost, huge segments of the society were distracted from their usual economic activities. Rural workers had been either drafted into the army or had migrated to the city. As a result, both industrial and the agricultural growth stagnated. Militarization of the economy was another consequence of the eight year-long Iran-Iraq war. In 1975, Iraq had 3% of its labor force in the armed forces; in 1980, this ratio had become 13% and by the time the war came to an end, 21% of the labor force was employed in the armed forces. At the same time, military spending continued to increase exponentially.¹⁰

That means, during the war with Iran the Iraqi society was deprived of any tool through which it could flourish and develop an independent, self-sufficient structure. In addition to that, not knowing how else to make a living, those who were deprived of their usual means of livelihood directed themselves towards the state. This led to a situation where the society, at least as far as the redistribution of the available resources was concerned, depended heavily on the state while it lacked any kind of institution, organizational power, political establishment, or structural opportunity, above all the will to pressure, to control, and to influence the administration. In other words, the war caused the existing situation to deteriorate and reinforced the conditions necessary for the proliferation of the uprootedness of the state structure. Under these circumstances, the further detachment of the state from the society was inevitable.

The second important factor that shaped the nature of the Iraqi state during the reign of Saddam was the invasion of Kuwait in 1991. The question of why Saddam decided to attack Kuwait in the immediate aftermath of a very devastating war has received different answers in different accounts.¹¹ However, the fact that the invasion further deepened the gap between the state and society stands clear. What the invasion of Kuwait did was to further disconnect the state from the society, like in the previous instances. What was different this time was the fact that the state and the

¹⁰ Abbas Alnasrawi, "Iraq: Economic Sanctions and Consequences, 1990-2000", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (April 2001), pp.205-218.

¹¹ Khadduri, M. and Edmund Ghareeb. *War in The Gulf, 1990-91: The Iraqi-Kuwait Conflict and Its Implications*. Oxford, New York, Athens, Oxford University Press, 2001; F. Karsh and I. Rautsi, "Why Saddam Hussein Invaded Iraq", *Survival*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (1991), pp.18-30.

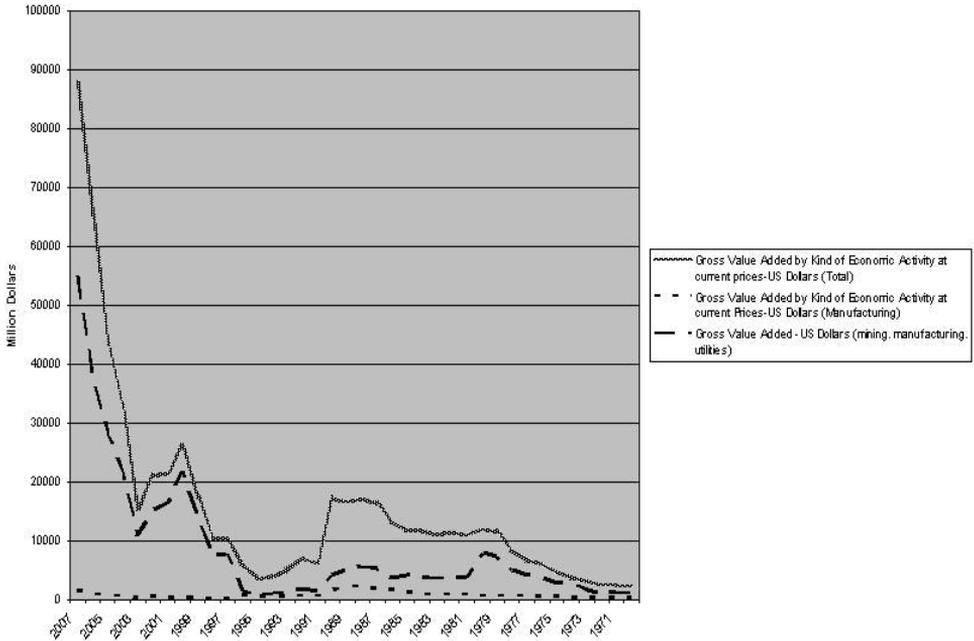
power holders started to lose their strength as well. Not only the invasion itself but also the sanctions that followed the invasion deepened the gap between the state and the Iraqi society.

UN sanctions, like Food for Oil Program, took society's control over the most basic matters away and handed it over to an outside actor. Sanctions, in that sense, utterly weakened the society. More significantly they completely took apart a state and society that were already detached from one another by drastically weakening the former. A structure that until that point maintained the distance between the state and the society through a power-control relationship now took a completely different shape. During this period, the state and power holders weakened and the foundations were laid for the emergence of alternative formations that were eventually going to substitute the gradually demising state of Iraq. These alternative formations were then going to fuel the potential for violence in Iraq once Saddam's rule completely left the scene of Iraqi politics.

The war with Iran, the invasion of Kuwait and the sanctions that followed the invasion were external factors that caused the deterioration and the alienation of the state from society. The uprooted state was an existing structural feature of Iraqi politics and these outside forces aggravated this situation. Saddam and his administration might have taken advantage of these external factors but to only to a certain extent. What had a more direct impact on the nature of the relationship between the state and the society was consciously chosen policies.

First and foremost, the Saddam administration put strict limits on industrialization, which they most probably considered to be a dangerous vehicle that could foster the growth of alternative circles that could potentially challenge their stronghold within the state apparatus. The most important economic activity in Iraq was oil exportation and that was under state monopoly. Any other economic activity had to be registered with state agencies and the volume of business was controlled rigorously; no business was allowed to grow beyond a certain limit. In rare cases the government let some businesses in very profitable sectors to flourish but at a certain stage, all of a sudden, the business would be confiscated and the owner of the

business would magically disappear.¹² Limits on industrialization not only aimed at preempting the emergence of new loci of power that could shatter the monopoly of the Saddam administration, but also aimed at increasing the dependency of the bulk of the society on the resources redistributed by the state. This, in turn, would pacify the society even more.



Source: UN Data

Figure 1 shows the gross value added by kind of economic activity and proves that value added by manufacturing constituted only a small fraction of it. This is only explainable by the fact that any kind of economic activity, except for oil production which was exclusively under state control, was restricted. Iraq did have the potential to develop a self-supporting private economy, yet the Saddam administration took all the necessary precautions to prevent this from happening.

Whereas there were strong limits on industrialization and private economy, the public sector was unnecessarily expanded. As shown above, a

¹² Foote and et al. “Economic Policy and Prospects in Iraq”, *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 18. No. 3 (2004), pp.:47-70:54.

significant section of the population was employed in the public sector, of which the army and other related military activities constituted a vital portion. Although a wide public sector as an indicator of an uprooted state might sound counterintuitive, it actually fostered a reduction in the distance between the state and the society by, first of all, functioning as a means to appease the discontented masses. In other words, those who potentially could rise up against the state refrained from holding the state responsible for the state's malfunctions since they were heavily dependant on the resources redistributed by the state. Salaries given out by means of the public sector functioned as the most efficient vehicle of such redistribution. On the other hand, an overly expanded public sector created a circle that was supportive of Saddam and the members of his administration, who held higher positions within the state apparatus. These people not only co-shared political power with the administration but also were willing to punish those who had the potential to stand up against the administration.

Table 1: Labor Market Data from the 1997 Census

| | Men | Women |
|---|------|-------|
| Civilian Labor Force as Percentage of Population aged 10+ | 66.8 | 7.5 |
| Shares of Civilian Labor Force Employed in: | | |
| Public Administration | 20.1 | 8.6 |
| Wholesale and Retail Trade | 19.3 | 4.5 |
| Agriculture | 18.3 | 24.1 |
| Manufacturing | 4.3 | 6.4 |
| Education | 2.6 | 37.4 |
| Mining and Quarrying | 0.6 | 0.7 |
| Other | 16.9 | 15.9 |
| Share of Civilian Labor Force Unemployed | 17.9 | 2.4 |

Source: As quoted in Foote et al., 2002 Annual Abstract of Statistics, Ministry of Planning¹³

Although the public sector in Iraq was unnecessarily extensive, public expenditures were not. As a regime based on an uprooted state

¹³ Christopher Foote, William Block, Keith Crane and Simon Gray, "Economic Policy and Prospects in Iraq", Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, *Public Policy Discussion Papers*, No. 04-1.

structure, the Saddam administration refrained from adopting any policy that would drastically better the welfare of society. Policies like the famous food apportioning scheme were not a sign of the welfare consciousness of the Saddam administration but were instead a sign of the incredibly despondent position of Iraqi society. It was a misfortune that a country like Iraq – used to being a self-sufficient agricultural producer – had to resort to a measure like the food apportioning scheme.

The paranoid obsession with internal and external security during the reign of Saddam was self-evident. On the domestic scene, the vast security apparatus was entrenched with secret police and informers;¹⁴ the fact that Iraq spent enormous amounts on a massive army was obvious to everyone. These excessive precautions concerning the security of Iraq were actually meant to maintain a physical barrier between the administration and society.

Alongside the obsession with security, the Saddam administration was characterized by a futile attempt to induce an exaggerated nationalism on the Iraqi people. This was further remarkable considering the fact that Iraqi society was highly divided along ethnic, religious and sectarian lines. The alleged goal was to suppress any kind of potentially segregation movement. However, it could be fairly argued that in reality Iraqi national identity was basically an illusion. Even for Saddam and his associates, what actually mattered was their link to their clans and tribes.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the idea of a completely united Iraqi nation still served Saddam's goals in suppressing society in general and specific factions in particular. As a result of the Kurdish and Shi'ite uprisings in 1991, the administration created three paramilitary forces: the Saddam Fedayeen, the Al Quds Army and the Baath Party militia.¹⁶ Each was meant to enhance the power of Saddam and his administration while making a reference to a delusive nationalism.

The Iraqi Ba'ath party, which actually was originally a socialist party that stood for united Arab nationalism, was an effective weapon that helped

¹⁴ J.M. Karagosian, *Repressive States and Insurgencies: Implications for Future Campaigns*, School of Advanced Military Studies, United States Army Command and General Staff College AY 05-06, 2006, pp.37-47.

¹⁵ A. Baram, "Neo-Tribalism in Iraq: Saddam Hussein's Tribal Policies: 1991-96" *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 29, No.1 (1997), pp.1-31.

¹⁶ Kevin Woods, James Lacey and Williamson Murray, "Saddam's Delusions: The View from the Inside", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85, No.3 (May/June 2006) , pp. 2-26.

Saddam effectuate his goals, especially in deepening the gap between the state and the society. Membership in the Ba'ath party was the main credential for gaining access to education, jobs, higher salaries, and other things.¹⁷ This created a class within the society that was utterly privileged and at the same time dependent upon the Ba'ath party. That helped Saddam to create not only a support basis for himself but also to create a dividing line within the society. Those who were active supporters of the Ba'ath party were rewarded with access to very scarce resources. In addition, the party was also a vetting mechanism for the regime and monitoring instrument for the government's security services to observe the loyalty of military officers and civilian bureaucrats as well as ordinary citizens.¹⁸

When Saddam's regime collapsed in 2003, what was left behind was a very weak, disorganized society that was in need of a supporting mechanism to replace the collapsed regime. However, the power holders of the provisional government either failed to recognize this need or refrained from developing the necessary mechanisms. Therefore Iraq was, even before the collapse of Saddam's regime, ripe for the emergence of alternative formations that could fulfill this supporting function. The Saddam administration was almost completely successful in discouraging these alternative formations although, for example, the Kurds of Iraq were able to institute an almost state-like entity. When the Saddam regime collapsed, there was no power left that could hinder the emergence of these formations. The foremost drawback of this situation was the potential for violence that these formations gave leeway to as a by-product. The question then is how and why these formations would lead to violence and how this has been functioning in Iraq.

Violence

The question of why uprooted states are more prone to civil violence has been the focus of various studies. As it will be discussed below, a strong causal relationship has been detected but, unfortunately, rarely put under an

¹⁷ O. Bengio, "How Does Saddam Hold On?", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 4 (2000), pp. 90-103

¹⁸ Judith S. Yaphe, "Reclaiming Iraq from the Baathists", *Current History* (January 2004), pp. 11-16.

empirical test. Therefore, many findings of these studies are tentative, yet still worth considering.

As the below review of the literature indicates, the closest link between civil wars and uprooted states is to be found in resource-rich countries as they are more likely to develop uprooted state mechanisms. Reliance on an abundant resource makes the detachment of state from society and its seizure by power holders easier since the revenue that comes from the extraction of the abundant resource makes the reliance on society in every aspect almost completely redundant.

In the literature on resource-rich countries, it is now a well-established fact that resource-rich countries are more prone to civil violence. Among the factors that account for the relationship between individuals in resource-rich countries, greed comes in first place. Roughly speaking, it has been argued that greed over the allocation of the income from the abundant resource is the foremost reason for civil violence in resource-rich countries.¹⁹ In addition, some studies depart from what they call a “looting mechanism”²⁰ which is based on the idea that violent factions in resource-rich countries use the revenue from the abundant resource to finance their activities.²¹ On the other hand, Ross argues resource abundance leads to civil strife by causing grievances among the population.²² Not very many studies emphasize the connection between uprootedness and civil violence. Moore, however, argues that the failure to build a link between the state and the society makes the emergence of actors like guerillas, private armies and other non-state actors more likely.²³ De Soysa likewise maintains that the absence of a link between the state and the society makes the rise of shadow

¹⁹ Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, “On Economic Causes of Civil War”, *Oxford Economic Papers*; Vol. 50, No. 4 (1998), pp.563-573; Paul Collier, “Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and Their Implications for Policy”, *World Bank*, 2000; Indra De Soysa, “Paradise is a Bazaar? Greed, Creed and Governance in Civil War, 1989-99”, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (2002), pp.395-416.

²⁰ Ross, “How Do Natural Resources Influence Civil War? Evidence from Thirteen Cases”, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (Winter 2004), pp.35-67.

²¹ Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, “Greed and Grievance in Civil War”, *Oxford Economic Papers*, Vol. 56, No. 4 (2004), pp.563-595.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Mick Moore, “Revenues, State Formation, and the Quality of Governance in Developing Countries”, *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (2004), pp. 297-319.

likely which bear the potential for the emergence of violent entities like mafia organizations.²⁴

As mentioned above, all the above summarized accounts are basically suggestions that need to be tested. Nevertheless, the Iraqi case makes it possible to infer the nature of the relationship between uprootedness and civil violence. Therefore, a closer look at the current situation in Iraq is quintessential.

The situation in Iraq

Violence in Iraq erupted right after the international invasion and the institution of the CPA. The eruption of violence was generally interpreted as the outburst of the Ba'athist resistance against the occupation and the newly emerging political order which inevitably reduced the power of the previous regime-holders while empowering their lifetime enemies, i.e. the Kurds. Shiites, on the other hand, turned out to be the key in this struggle whose alliance was going to make the difference. How to share the oil revenues and oil reserves is believed to be at the heart of the ongoing violence and attempts to end the violence usually focus on possible arrangements of the acceptable allocation of oil revenues and reserves.²⁵ However, a closer look at the nature of the civil war in Iraq revealed that large segments of the Iraqi insurgency curiously converged with organized crime.²⁶ Looney also argues that activities like street fights, kidnappings, assassinations, drug trafficking and money laundering has constituted a consequential segment of the civil violence in Iraq.²⁷ Graham-Brown suggests that the growth of black-markets in Iraq was facilitated by familial, tribal and other networks from the leadership downward in addition to the rising strength of criminal gangs.²⁸ In other words, the civil violence in Iraq does not constitute a good example

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ James D. Fearon, "Iraq's Civil War", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 86, No. 2 (March-April 2007), pp. 2-15.

²⁶ Robert E. Looney, "The Business of Insurgency: The Expansion of Iraq's Shadow Economy", *The National Interest*, Vol. 81 (Fall 2005), pp.67-72; S. Graham-Brown, "Multiplier Effect: War, Occupation and Humanitarian Needs in Iraq", *Middle East Report*, No.228 (Autumn 2003), pp.12-23; James D. Fearon "Primary Commodity Exports and Civil Wars", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (August 2005), pp. 483-507.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

of insurgency as defined by many political scientists. It has many layers that are not completely unrelated with each other, different types of organizations engaged in it, and these organizations have different sets of goals that are not necessarily associated with the resistance to the occupation. Violence is a means of survival for these organizations in an environment that is full with entities that compete with each other.

As explained before, the foundations for the emergence of these organizations were laid during the reign of the collapsed regime and were strongly associated with the uprootedness of the Iraqi state structure. In a political setting where society was alienated from the state and the state was a tool to suppress society and keep it at arms length, it was hijacked by power holders for their own good. Therefore, the emergence of alternative formations that somehow were going to uphold at least some segments of society was clearly inevitable. The already fragmented nature of Iraqi society was the primary factor that predetermined the nature of these alternative organizations. In other words, these alternative organizations were ethnically or religiously defined or were based on a sectarian identity only because Iraqi society was built that way. But alongside these socially-shaped entities, there were more functionally defined organizations as well. These functionally-based organizations were meant to meet the more vital needs of the society like food, oil, and other necessities, whereas the socially-defined organizations were there to provide a sense of belonging and shelter to a highly estranged society. As mentioned before, these kinds of entities were not the product of the post-Saddam occupation; they actually started to emerge as early as the first years of the Saddam administration. For example, the Dawa organization of the Iraqi Shi'ites, which is now one of the most prominent actors of Iraqi politics, first emerged in the early 1980s. Again, as mentioned above, the potential for violence that these organizations brought with them did not all of a sudden emerge in the aftermath of the occupation. As a matter of fact, the Dawa organization was involved in various terrorist attacks during the 1980s.²⁹ Yet, the Saddam administration was successful in managing these organizations and the potential for violence albeit forcefully and brutally.

²⁹ A. William Samii, "Shia Political Alternatives in Postwar Iraq", *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2003), pp. 93-101.

Understanding the Civil Violence in Iraq

The factors that give rise to violence-prone entities in uprooted states are not easy to determine. The first point that comes to mind is the possibility that these entities substitute for the state and its functions in a setting where the state is highly isolated and under the control of actors who abuse the state for their own good. At least, this seems to be what has happened in the Iraqi case.

The question of why these entities cannot co-exist with each other is the next question that needs to be addressed. There are different explanations in the existing literature with regard to this very question. For example, there are accounts that claim that entities like the ones that have emerged in Iraq use violence in order to guarantee the dedication of their members and their clientele. The logic behind this explanation is centered on the assumption that these entities act primarily as social networks that provide their members and clientele with welfare services in places where the government services are weak or absent. Departing from what is called the club membership model, this explanation stipulates that in order to limit their services to a very dedicated clientele, the willingness to participate in violent activities function as signals of this dedication. To be more explicit, any person who is willing to commit violent activities as radical as suicide attacks is considered to be a dedicated member who deserves to benefit from the welfare services that the organization is providing.³⁰

Alternatively, some argue that violence is the inevitable result of the competition between the alternative formations. Called the organizational approach, the explanations in this rubric start out with the presumption that all the organizations care about is their survival which sometimes requires the extinction of other organizations. Therefore, sometimes violence against other organizations becomes obligatory.³¹

³⁰ Eli Berman, "Sect, Subsidy and Sacrifice: An Economist's View of Ultra-Orthodox Jews", *National Bureau of Economic Research* (1998); Eli Berman, "Subsidized Sacrifice: State Support of Religion in Israel", *National Bureau of Economic Research* (1999); Eli Berman and David D. Laitin, "Rational Martyrs vs. Hard Targets: Evidence on the Tactical Use of Suicide Attacks" *Unpublished Manuscript*.

³¹ James Q. Wilson, *Political Organizations*, New York, Basic Books, Inc., 1973; Martha Crenshaw, "Counter Terrorism Policy and the Political Process", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 24, No. 5 (2001), pp. 329-338.

It is hard to determine which of the above explanations would account for the ongoing violence in Iraq without first conducting in-depth and on-site research on the issue. However, instead of the classical Hobbesian understanding of world order which argues that in a place without a leviathan, life is nasty, brutish and short, this alternative approach, which is based on the internal mechanisms of the organizations involved as well as their interaction with one another, might shed a more illuminating light on the specificities of the Iraqi case.

At the moment, civil violence has become a part of everyday life in Iraq. Even the most benign political transactions are associated with violence. All prominent political actors, like political parties, have some affiliation with at least one violent entity. Added to these are the organizations who are mostly involved with organized crime-type activities which nevertheless are also affiliated with politically-oriented organizations. This potential for violence, as it has been iterated various times throughout the paper, did not emerge with the American-led occupation and does not necessarily signify a struggle for power allocation among different groups that make up Iraqi society. However, the violence is the result of the structural deformation of the Iraqi state and its relationship with Iraqi society. This deformation will not be repaired by a new constitution even if this constitution seems to satisfy the majority of the Iraqi population as long as Iraqi society is engaged into the workings of the state and is recognized as the owner of the state. The question of how the oil revenues are going to be managed is going to have the most consequential impact on the future of Iraq. Unless the oil reserves and revenues are handed to local private actors, the disconnect between the state and the society will prevail no matter how democratic the new political order is in Iraq. It is obvious that the Iraqi economy is deprived of local private actors that are powerful enough to control the vast oil reserves of the country. This means that any kind of external and internal intervention into Iraqi affairs needs to be limited and has to leave room for the development of Iraq's own forces. No one expects this process to be smooth and non-violent but the permanent elimination of violence and lasting domestic peace depends on how the relationship between the state and society is going to be structured in the future Iraq.