

Narrative of Political Violence in Iraq: Some Observations

Manan Dwivedi*

Abstract

Iraq known as being part of the Mesopotamian waste was once a thriving Emirate. The paper argues that political violence of the order of the one witnessed in Iraq was due to the ethnic and sectarian within the domesticity of Iraq along with the external interventions. When a democratic deficit occurs and the popular feedback of the establishment and its policies cannot find an utterance and communication, then, the safety valve of the society in nations moves out rebellion becomes the order of the day. The paper analyzes and chronicles the internal security cleavages characterized by internecine political violence in Iraq within the rubric of the theoretical, Political Contest Model.

Keywords: Political Violence, Political Conflict, Islamic State, Political Contest Model, internal security

Introduction: Political Violence in Iraq and the Attendant Theory

Political Violence is a commonly faced and perpetual flashpoint in the internal security dynamics of some of the nations and regions with MENA being a case in point. Myriad ethnic, sectarian and religious cleavages mar the landscape of the State of Iraq. The Saddam Hussein era was rather stable and stolid but with the suppression of groups such as Kurds and Sunnis according to one reading of the narrative. In the-post Saddam Hussein phase, the

*Dr. Manan Dwivedi is an Assistant Professor at Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi.

nation lurches from one monstrous state of affairs to another due to internal fissures in the socio-political and diplomatic milieu. The American withdrawal from reconstruction and nation building exacerbated the internal security parameters and conditions. The paper analyzes and chronicles the internal security cleavages characterized by internecine political violence in Iraq within the rubric of the theoretical, *Political Contest Model*.

Political Violence amounts to the utilisation of forceful protests utilising weapons of arm as a final stage of rioting against themes and policies of a few establishments in countries, all across the spectrum of demographics, sects and nations in the larger international system. The spectacular impact of political violence by actors is aimed to attract the Media and public opinion attention of the international public sphere so that the rationale behind a rebellion or violence, whatever might be the case, can be, enumerated with a balanced argument.

In another explanation of the theme of Political Violence, when a democratic deficit occurs and the popular feedback of the establishment and its policies cannot find an utterance and communication, then, the safety valve of the society in nations moves out rebellion becomes the order of the day. In Iraq, too, the exigencies of the Saddam Hussein Regime propelled the entry of United States of Americas and the ongoing strife between the Shias and Sunnis along with the Kurdish revolt in the northern part of Iraq.

The United States of America and the State of Iraq are nations par excellence with overgrown and pending global role-playing responsibilities and popular expectations for yeomanly acts which

firms up a difficult-to-live-up-to philanthropic resolve (Dwivedi, 2019). Despite the inward looking parlance of homeland security as advanced by President Donald Trump, the US has perennially strived to intervene in conflict scenarios and amidst the rigmarole of failed and failing nations to stand tall with its objective of the Global Demos which can be referred to as a pertinent poser. Why does the US need to democratize the larger neighbourhood, the case study here being the state of Iraq? And, what legal, democratic and political legerdemain it needs to adhere to escape the appellation of a being a crudely interventionist nation state. The narrative of political violence in Iraq can never be complete without the role played by the external powers as they have a larger and influential role to play in the “happenings in the ensuing turbulence in the state of Iraq.

It is not that the onus lies only with the audience and the decision makers of the World Polity in order to circumvent the staid argument of “American Illegality” and “American Illegitimacy,” where-in, the nation with a Manifest Destiny has regularly intervened in national principalities such as Philippines, World wars, Europe, Serbia, Kosovo, the Korean Peninsula , Vietnam , the larger Indo China, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Iraq, Syria, Libya and other national principalities. The grandiloquent American penchant for philanthropy and the Don Juan invocation in its foreign policy sometimes stands alone as a much ravaged policy instrumentality though the intentions have been an avid amalgamation of the fulfilment of national interest imbued with a messianic zeal of restoring order in “torn states and societies.” as elucidated and pithily elaborated upon by Samuel P Huntington in his work, “The Clash of Civilizations”. The internal security

dynamics will, too, be a key factor responsible for the eruption of instability in the MENA region and the nation state of Iraq. The theme of American intervention is an extraneous facet of the troubles brewing in Iraq, but, it too remains a significant factor as an outside variant in determining the role in the internal dynamics. The internal security dynamics of Iraq are factored in by the sectarian divide within Islam and the rebelliousness of the Kurds, due to historical precedents along with the rise and decline of the Islamic State in the post 2018 period.

It is here that the deliberations and discussions on the states premised in West Asia gain their significance. Internal dynamics in the MENA region play a key role in deciding the violence and conflict in the state of Iraq, apart from the external circumstances such as the ones perpetrated by the American and other national interests. The theme that is intriguing and can appear and be treated as a research poser is, that, how did the conditions come to such a passé and which factors made some of the nations such as Iraq turn into “torn state and society,” in the light of the acts of domestic political violence. Though the issue of great power interventions has had a role to play in the West Asian conundrum, but an honest and straight fenced comprehension of the destabilization and imbalance in power equations in the State of Iraq can be pondered upon in the present narrative. Political Violence is a largely and comprehensively defined strategy and state of affairs where-in, both the State apparatus and the non-state actors have their cavalier and loud role to play in the context of the Political Contest Model. The stage is reached, where-in, the Democratic set up reaches a critical and collapsible stage and the larger context of sustenance of the society and polity needs to be

delved inside. The Political violence in the nation has deleterious impact of stability and well being of Iraq or any other besieged nationality. The ethnic and sectarian strife takes a toll on the peaceful intent of the country as it happened in the Iraq War as referred to by the Mainstream Media in Iraq. The violence involving the Kurds, Shia and Sunni sects of Islam are the *bête noir* for the efforts to sustain peace and quietude in the social and political ecosystem of Iraq as a contested nation.

The Saddam Hussein Era: Iraq Challenged

The Saddam Hussein era is replete with instances of the regional and international polity taking note of the dictatorial processes of the national leader in the uniform in Baghdad. The global scepticism and criticism of the American policy in Iraq can be delved inside with some of the ideas of the observers of international affairs. It has been contended by Paul R Pillar that, “The most extraordinary aspect of George W Bush’s administration’s launching of a war in March 2003 was the absence of any apparent procedure for determining whether that the war was a good idea. There was not a poor policy process or an incomplete one or a biased one, there was no policy process. Investigative reporters down the years have found no meetings, no policy papers, no debate in the White House situation room, or anything else that addressed that whether the war in Iraq was in the US interests or not as an input to a Presidential decision on whether to invade or not” (Pillar, 2014). Thus, the opinion of one segment of the global observers was that United States did not have a clear war rationale for entering inside both the Persian Gulf wars as we are considering both the Persian Gulf wars as part of a conjoined narrative. In the second Gulf War which was

launched in March 19, 2003, the war rationale as advanced by White House was that Saddam Hussein was sheltering Al Qaeda which included their diminutive leader Osama Bin Laden and that Iraq was linked to the sponsoring machine of global terrorism through Al Qaeda. What soured the domestic situation in Iraq? It can be attributed to the divisive role of various agents in a post-Saddam Hussein era.

Also, another allegation which was utilised was that Iraq was on its way to the creation of a stockpile of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the chemical, biological and nuclear mould. The Iraqi excesses amounted to the proportions of genocide in the Northern Iraq populated by Kurds where—in, towns such as Halabja and scores of sleeping Kurdish villages were decimated with their entire populations. Thus, the human rights record of the Saddam Hussein Regime was too a cause of concern for the Western community including the United States which after the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Towers, were concerned about their homeland security in a boundless manner. The September 11 attacks acquired a Pearl Harbour like pedestal in the itinerary of American reverses in the pantheon of American military, political and cultural history.

The critiques were out to hound the American strivings in Iraq. Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, when asked after leaving office whether the process for making war on Iraq was broken, replied, “There was never any policy to break by Condolezza Rice or anyone else. There never was one from the start, Bush didn’t want one, for whatever reason” (Suskind, 2004). Still, the school of thought represented by the personages such as Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and Richard Pearle reflected a

contradictory subset of the American foreign policy thought which was much more in the mould of the neo conservative strategic school of thought. For instance, since the terrorist attacks on USS Cole and the American embassy in Tanzania, till the Boston marathon bomb attack in 2013, the PNAC or the Project on New American Century, ruled the roost in the State Department. In this connection, even the doves in the policy making process were not able to make a dent in the entire rubric of the US policy in Iraq in both the Gulf wars though the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Richard Lugar went ahead to order a re-think on the US decision to enter Iraq and augment the strength of the combat forces in the nation. The bipartisanship was still being reflected by some older and traditional segments of the American Senate, as a fresh whiff of air in the larger American legislative firmament. Still, despite what America did in Iraq, the reasons of conflict lie embedded in the political and social dynamics of Iraq, which, can be perceived through the percept of the Political Contest Model. Rules are present in the case of the international interventions in Iraq and the MENA group of nations but the domestic circumstances leading up to the state of disability in Iraq ought to have been controlled and mitigated by a rules based internal order, but, that does not seem to have transpired in the context of Iraq.

The Roots of Political Conflict in the Iraq's Homeland

The Sanctions Regime in Iraq as a Precursor element in the Homeland in Iraq

The intervening years for the population in Iraq was one of suffering and misery as elaborate sanctions had been heaped upon the nation

as it was dithering and was perceived of being ignorant in its decisions to give a free hand to the weapons inspectors and the larger American interests. Sanctions definitely had a debilitating impact upon the way of life in Iraq that needs to form part and parcel of an academic discussion when one refers to the theme of political violence in the region and specifically Iraq. New York Times has reported utilising United Nations sources that, child deaths were recorded as a result of the west sponsored sanctions. New York Times reports that, "As many as 576,000 Iraqi children may have died since the end of the Persian Gulf war because of economic sanctions imposed by the Security Council, according to two scientists who surveyed the country for the Food and Agriculture Organization. The study also found steeply rising malnutrition among the young, suggesting that more children will be at risk in the coming years. The results of the survey appeared too in *The Lancet*, the journal of the British Medical Association" (Crosette, 1995). Cases of malnutrition and stunting of growth of children was reported by the population in Iraq, when, the blame was diverted the way of American sanctions in the besieged nation. The New York Times Report further adds that, "The percentage of Iraqi children affected by "wasting," or emaciation requiring urgent attention, rose to 12 percent in 1995, from 3 percent in 1991, Dr. Fawzi reported, adding that these figures are extraordinarily high, similar to those found in Malagasy and Myanmar. Several United Nations agencies, including F.A.O. and Unicef, have expressed concern about the damage being done to Iraqis, especially children, by United Nations economic sanctions." Thus, sections from the International organizations groups falling under the ambit of United Nations and other allied agencies mouthed these concerns about the emaciated and

'suffering' state of the children in Iraq after Persian Gulf War-I. The American viewpoint had a different pronouncement up its sleeves, which is the other side of the argument's tilt, which can also be enumerated as the American defence of the sanctions despite the humanitarian misgivings of some segments of the international opinion. The rationale of crime and punishment can be regarded as one of the reasons of the entire exercise of the sanctions being imposed upon Iraq.

Professor Lucas has mentioned in defence of the American sanctions that, "In the first place, if Saddam had been allowed to get away with one iota of his aggression towards Kuwait, it would have been only the first step to his domination of the Gulf region, and perhaps the Middle East more broadly. One should note that if he had got his hands on Kuwaiti oil and Saudi oil, in addition to what Iraq had, he would have controlled no less than 40% of the world's oil reserves. The reasons for Desert Storm being called off when it was were equally compelling. The United Nations mandate for the campaign was confined to expelling the Iraqis from Kuwait. To continue the march to Baghdad would certainly not have guaranteed that Saddam was overthrown, and even if he had been, it then would have probably involved us (the Americans and the British) sitting in Baghdad trying to govern the ungovernable" (Kirkfeld, 2000). Thus, whether one may attempt and escapes the exigencies of the all important "Oil Factor," still the centrality of the reasoning that international community attempted to contain the growing might of Saddam Hussein and the sceptre that the dictator might usurp the nationality of Saudi Arabia along with a major chunk of the oil resources, emerge as primordial factors in the discussion on the efficacy or the non-

efficacy of sanctions on Iraq leading to domestic conflict. The counter view about the non-efficacy and the deleterious ramifications of the sanctions on the Mesopotamian nation too can be brought about in bold relief which provides the counter punch to the American standpoint. Thus, sanctions though coming through not without the Global community, have a steadfast role to play in the misery and suffering due to shortages in the state of Iraq under the shadows of a fractious political leadership in Baghdad. The post-Saddam era in Iraq led to the exacerbation in the post conflict scenario with ethnic clashes led by Kurds in the North, the suffering of Yazidies and the traditional Shia-Sunni divide led to the creation of the Islamic State which is on the verge of being obliterated by the Government in Baghdad.

Professor Garfield in the same document cited above referred to the sanctions in Iraq. He contended that, “The political use of sanctions is important, but made specific criticisms both of the Oil-for-Food programme’s failure to incorporate an evaluation component and of interference by the in rectifying that failure. He distinguished between short-and long-term assets, citing the damage done to the latter – especially in the provision of clean water, reliable electricity, and literacy through primary education – by the Gulf War and the sanctions regimes. However, he emphasized that the grim picture of public health presented by contemporary Iraq was not inevitable. He criticized the failures of the Iraqi government to mobilize resources and co-ordinate the dissemination of vital information on water boiling, child-feeding practices, immunization, and breast-feeding, etc” (Kirkfield, 2007). The humanitarian portents of the economy hurting, education harming and health stultifying nature of the sanctions, too, have

been brought out in the above written detailed account. To scholars and audiences following the contemporary trends, the idea of a post nuclear and post Geneva talks-Iran suffering from debilitating sanctions without having fought an overt war with United States, too, serves as a reflection of how recalcitrant nations suffer from the sceptre of such impositions. The realism ordained happenings at the keel of military and political keel tend to hobble and ignore the impact which the political decisions can have on the day to day and humdrum lives of innocent and unsuspecting mortals in the effected regions and countries. All these internal differences and domestic strains led to the idiom of political violence in the state of Iraq.

The rise of Difficulty in Turf: The Rise of Islamic State

The idiom of the conflict with the 'sudden' rise of Iraq deserves a re-look, as, a separate timeline. Four years ago in 2014, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant group (ISIL, also known as ISIS) began a series of lightning advances across Iraq and Syria, taking advantage of regional instability to make rapid territorial gains. Since then, there have been hundreds of battles, gruesome killings and a US-led campaign of air attacks. Today, ISIL is a group in decline, driven out of its urban strongholds, as, local and international forces reclaim key territory. Initially the Islamic State conquered AlRaqqa in the nation state of Syria to serve as a platform and a plotting ground for the IS in Iraq, too. The Kurdish equation in the region continued to play a part in the rise of domestic political violence in Iraq. It was the State of power vacuum and tribalism in leadership conflicts, which initiated the post Saddam strife in Iraq. Another factor which can be cited as a key factor in Iraq's disunity and the disintegration of order is the

policies adopted by the Shia led Bagdad Regime which led to the disillusionment of the Sunni factions and other peripheral forces such as the brigade of Moqtada-Al-Sadr which peaked internal conflict in several parts of Iraq. The Sunnis felt isolated and felt that they were relegated to the backburner by the Nur-Al-Maliki Regime comprising of Shias. The Badr armies soon achieved the barometer of violence in the state of Iraq and became involved in acts of violence, sabotage and bombing in Iraq.

The Green Zone which was the name given to the US Stabilization Regime, soon, morphed into a common target in the capital of Iraq. At one point of time in 2005-2007, the entire city was in a state of siege by the Sunni rebels and Bard militia which resulted in the introduction of, "The Surge" in Iraq by the Bush Administration. Also, the various ethnic groups were soon at loggerheads with each other which resulted in the spawning of the Islamic State, thus, ushering in an era of homeland insecurity and political-leadership of chaos and anarchy. In the Book, *Forgotten war*, the activity and the gory details of insurgency in cities such as Fallujah, Mosul and Tikrit, form an incisive and significantly in depth scenario of political violence in post Saddam era in the Mesopotamian nation. Vice President Wilfred Nun wrote the Book, "Tigris gunboats" (Nunn, 2017) which draws a corollary between the torn state of affairs in Iraq during the British occupation and the American incursion in the 21st century. The author summarizes, "A fascinating story full of contemporary resonance written with authority by the senior naval officer at the time March 2007 which sees the anniversary of the fall of Baghdad - not in 2003, but 1917. Few people realize that the latest American-led invasion was prefigured by a poorly-resourced

but ultimately successful British campaign during the First World War. Where the Americans had overwhelming air superiority, the British enjoyed a similar advantage -naval power” (Nunn, 2017).

The Kurds related Sectarian Violence

In the context of Iraq, Kurdish freedom might lead to a civil war in Iraq, in the words of one scholarly observation. Sean Lilling writes in the Vox that, “The Iraqi central government in Baghdad and the semi-autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan are fighting over control of Kirkuk, a multiethnic region in north eastern Iraq, that sits atop some of the country’s most lucrative oil fields. It’s an area that has been a flashpoint between the country’s Arab majority and the Kurdish minority on and off for decades” (Lilling, 2018). The author further writes that, “The Kurds want Kirkuk to be part of a future independent state of Kurdistan, controlled from its capital, Erbil. The Iraqi central government, on the other hand, wants to keep Kirkuk — along with the rest of Iraqi Kurdistan — as part of a unified Iraq, controlled by Baghdad. When ISIS erupted on the scene in the spring of 2014, this fight over Kirkuk — and over Kurdish independence more generally — got largely shunted to the back burner as both Baghdad and Erbil focused on kicking ISIS out of the country. But, now that Iraqi and Kurdish forces, have pushed ISIS out of most of the country, those old divisions between Baghdad and Erbil have reared up again” (Lilling, 2018). Kurds have led a nomadic and challenged life since then and the presence of Turkey, Syria and Iran in the near vicinity makes the entire nation as a sanguine twilight zone which defeats the purpose of the sustainability of peace and order in ethnic and sectarian ridden strife in Iraq.

The Kurds too conducted a referendum which went against the sovereignty and territorial integrity a the status of Iraq. Patrick Cockburn writes in the Independent that, “An orgy of looting was going on inside the city, with the theft of everything from mattresses to fire engines. I saw two looters drive away a large yellow bulldozer, which they had just stolen. The Kurdish Peshmerga had taken over the city a few hours earlier, saying that they were there to fill the vacuum left by the disintegration of the Iraqi army and to restore order, though they did little to stop the looters” (Cockburn, 2017). The author furthers the fears and the scenario of the Kurds in Iraq, He writes that, “The Kurds still control Kirkuk, the oil capital of northern Iraq with a mixed population of Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen, as well as much of the surrounding province. The leaders of the US-led coalition during the invasion had feared that, if the Kurds captured the city, they would provoke a Turkish invasion, since Turkey had declared that it would not tolerate such a thing” (Cockburn, 2017). Thus, due to the three states, the status of Kurds is affected, the shadows of conflict continue to grow in Iraq as Kurds might be considered as rebels in Iraq and Turkey and Syria, but, the three nations which are facing the Kurd voice and action, are immensely effected by the Kurd militias such as YPG in Turkey. The recent move in the city of Afrin too poses a threat of great power and external involvement in the region where the Kurds are seeking a separate nation to be carved from the territories of Iraq, Syria and Turkey, with violent impact upon the Iraq.

The Shia-Sunni Divide Narrative of the Tradition of Sectarian Violence

The Islamic world has been ridden with violence since its initial days by the conflict and divergence between the Shia sect and the Sunni counterparts. These facts have been avidly noted and commented upon by the International relations scholars and observers on West Asia. The America based Council of Foreign Affairs reports that. "Islam's schism, simmering for fourteen centuries, doesn't explain all the political, economic, and geostrategic factors involved in these conflicts, but it has become one prism through which to understand the underlying tensions. Two countries that compete for the leadership of Islam, Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shia Iran, have used the sectarian divide to further their ambitions." The Shia Sunni Divide has roots in religious antiquity and the history of West Asia with a religious tinge. CFR reports that, "A group of prominent early followers of Islam elected Abu Bakr, a companion of Mohammed, to be the first Caliph, or leader of the Islamic community, over the objections of those who favoured Ali Ibn Abi Talib, Mohammed's cousin and son-in-law. The opposing camps in the succession debate eventually evolved into Islam's two main sects. Shias, a term that stems from shi'atu Ali, Arabic for "partisans of Ali," believe that Ali and his descendants are part of a divine order. Sunnis, meaning followers of the sunna, or "way" in Arabic, of Mohammed, are opposed to political succession based on Mohammed's bloodline." In the case of Iran apart from the antiquity of the schism, the countries such as Shia Iran and the Sunni Saudi Arabia, have a hand in the stoking of political strife between the two sects in Islam with the Shia minority ruling the roost and the rise in the disaffection amongst the Sunnis. It is the same Sunnis, who identified with the home bred people to

support the rise of the IS and opened a new chapter since 2014 in the rise of the Islamic State which soon became notorious for its cruelty and barbaric modes of assassination and torture in Iraq, not that Al Qaeda was enough to spread terror and mayhem in Iraq and the other destinations of Osama's terror.

Iraq has a unique and peculiar station in the regional Shia-Sunni divide. In the case study of Iraq, it is widely believed that Iran and Iraq have a Shia majority and one can delve inside a Pew Research Poll to delve inside the reality. The Pew Research Poll reports that, "The few available survey measures of religious identity in Iraq suggest that about half the country is Shia. Surveys by ABC News found between 47% and 51% of the country identifying as Shia between 2007 and 2009, and a Pew Research survey conducted in Iraq in late 2011 found that 51% of Iraqi Muslims said they were Shia (compared with 42% saying they were Sunni)" (Lipka, 2018). The author further reports that, "On some religious issues, including whether it is acceptable to visit the shrines of Muslim saints, the differences between the sects are more apparent. For some, the divide is even exclusionary. In late 2011, 14% of Iraqi Sunnis said they do not consider Shias to be Muslims (By contrast, only 1% of Shias in Iraq said that Sunnis are not Muslims). Even higher percentages of Sunnis in other countries, such as Sunni-dominated Egypt (53%), say that Shias are not Muslims" (Lipka, 2018). It is generally believed that it was the power and leadership vacuum in the State of Iraq which percolated to the turf of violence in Iraq. Iran's hand in festering the divide, too, cannot be ruled out. The norms of, who, to follow and where to visit the religious shrines, are the traditional and the historical antecedents of the rise of political violence in Iraq on the lines of

a sectarian divide. The similar schism is the root cause of turmoil between the Alawi sect and the Sunnis in the besieged nation.

The Political Contest Model in the context of Iraq

The idea of the Political context model remains embedded in the larger nature and trajectory of the conflict in Iraq. Gadi Wolfsfeld, a scholar of West Asian affairs posits an interesting analogy and a metaphor to comment and shed light on the nature of political violence in West Asia and Iraq. The author explains that the State and the non state actors are in a state of perpetual antagonism (Wolsfeld, 1990). The State actor with its accoutrements and the larger access to national and Institutional resources, holds an upper hand when it is pitted against an insurgent group, an ethnic conclave or a rebel coterie. The non-state actors are left with no feasible option, but, to act against the State actor by following a “Bamboozling strategy”. This strategy includes committing an act of violence, a market bombing or a suicide bomber attack in a public and crowded place in order to draw the attention of the federal and international community to further their cause of protest or secession.

The narrative creates an imagery that the Media and the Public Opinion markers create a Gladiatorial contest of the Roman amphitheatrical times. The image is similar to that of two charioteers advancing upon each other in the arcade with spears and iron balls with pointed protrusions. The citizenry is the audience and it derives a vicarious pleasure in the bloodbath which is continuing in the Arcadia (Wolsfeld, 1980). Such is the nature of political violence in Iraq as a case study, where-in, the Baghdad led Institutions are involved in a conflict with the Islamic State and the

Kurds along with conflict between the Shia and Sunni sects of Islam. Ideally, in the Iraqi scenario the Government in Baghdad has an access to all the country's resources including Oil revenue though IS also controlled places such Mosul, rich in oil fields for a few years. Thus, political violence in Iraq and the MENA region can be considered in the genre of a "Gory Spectacle" for the international community with the non state actors switching to the "Shock and Awe" variant of a strategy in order to popularize their victimhood in the context of the state of Iraq.

The Post Saddam Era in Iraq: Some Observations

Boris Tugrul writes that, "Having been founded as a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary movement, the PKK has acquired more diverse concerns by time, leaning more on such issues as women's rights and ecology and gradually leaving behind rigid ideological borders of orthodox Marxism and the idea of founding a sovereign nation-state, replacing it with the vague idea of democratic autonomy" (Tugrul, 1990). Thus, the rebellious streak was always the driving idiom of the Kurdistan movement owing its origins from the neighbouring Turkey. The author then refers to the historical perspective of the Kurd movement. He contends that, "It's a fact that there have been a relative silence in Kurdistan of Turkey in comparison with Kurdistan of Iran and Iraq since the failure of those movements. [...] After the resistance which ended up in failure in 1938, resisting Kurdish ruling class in the Kurdistan of Turkey received a vital blow. Most prominent elements of this ruling class were destroyed. The remaining were imprisoned and sent to exile." The author further writes that, "As an armed movement emerges and involves under those social and political conditions in favour of the disadvantaged social stratum,

this solid social structure begins to get debilitated and the newly involved movement rises as a rival power centre. More this newly involved actor gets stronger in terms of legitimacy, more the society gets fragmented between those who support the State and its authoritative extensions, which at times cannot be separated from each other.” Thus, the rise of Kurds as a prominent non state actor created a polarisation in Iraq and in the larger region which reverberates through the violence unleashed on the Kurds during the Saddam Hussein Regime. Thus, the political contest model of violent politics, comes into play here. The author further opines that as a conclusion, “Lack of plurality with regard to issue of legal representation of minorities and inclusiveness in Turkish political life and, therefore, physical and symbolic repressive approaches taken by the State against any formation considered threat to its unquestionable national unity and cohesion have hardly left any other choice for most Kurds with certain degree of national sensitivity.”

Gadi Wolsfeld further writes in the larger context that, “The competition over the news media is a major element in modern political conflicts. The Pro-Choice and Pro-Life movements in America, the Serbians and the Muslims in Bosnia, Amnesty International, Russia, Chechnya, Al-Qaeda and the American government, all compete for media attention as a means to achieve political influence. Each antagonist attempts to promote its own frames of the conflict to the news media in an attempt to mobilize political support for its cause. If we can understand the rules of combat and the factors that lead to success and failure in the arena, we will be one step closer to understanding the role that the news media play in such conflicts” (Tugrul, 1990). Apart

from the role of the Fourth Estate in highlighting internal violence and political conflict, the basic details and the factors responsible for the origins and the continuation of political violence also play out in a significant manner with Iraq being a case study.

One of the significant modus operandi of political violence leads to the belittling of the efforts at nation-building in the state of Iraq. Harith Hassan writes in the World Peace Foundation that, "One important lesson we learned from post-Saddam Iraq, is, that violence is still an important political tool and it is not only used by the state, but also by groups competing to control or demolish the state. The excessive violence in Iraq was an outcome of nation-building process that was based on exclusion. One reason why I think this is a significant dimension in understanding political violence in Iraq is that historically the worst types of this violence have actually targeted groups or communities that can be labelled as the 'internal others'" (World Peace Foundation, 2013). The failure at nation building too has been a theme which has stymied the process of peace induction in Iraq. The nation building exercise too has been limited due to the decreased control of the Regime in Baghdad since the last decade after the departure of the Saddam Hussein Regime. The internally displaced populations along with the "internal others" are the communities which have targeted each other and ushered in external interventions such as those of Iran and United States. We need to deliberate upon the exigencies of what went wrong in Iraq and not to be bothered about the tenets of US Foreign Policy in Iraq and West Asia. Generalisations might appear here and there, but, they are part of the general scheme of things in Iraq which might provoke the author to realise

terms such as the Grandiloquent American Dream, and the US, as, being a nation par excellence.

He further writes that, “In the 1970s, war waged by the state against Kurdish insurgents who, were portrayed as traitors and proxies of foreign powers that threatened Iraq’s integrity. At the beginning of the 1980s when hostilities with the new Islamic regime in Iran were escalating, tens of thousands of Iraqis were forcibly taken from their homes and sent to the borders with Iran. They were considered Iranian subjects who are not eligible for Iraqi nationality. In the official media they were labelled as a fifth column” (World Peace Foundation, 1990). Thus, Iran too has a stand in the continuing conundrum concerning the minority rights issues in the state of Iraq. The war waged by the Saddam Hussein Regime in the context of a rebel proposed Kurdistan, too, remains a cause of internal political Violence. In an instance, the town of Al Habaja was silenced by Chemical weapons by Saddam Hussein in the eighties which led to a casualty of around 20,000 Kurds, who slept in the night never to wake up again. Thus, the nature of Iraqi political violence, involving the Kurds has been gut wrenching and very insidious in nature which has added to the context of political violence in the region.

In the contemporary context, Iraq decided to go to polls for the 329 seats of representatives in Baghdad. These Parliamentary polls are important as it is the first electioneering exercise since the fall of ISIL in Iraq. Arwa Ibrahim contends in Al Jazeera that, “Today, Shia factions are divided into five coalitions, their fractured nature indicating that the government formation process will be long and complex. According to a nationwide poll conducted in March and featuring respondents from across

all 18 of Iraq's provinces, the top issues of concern include security, job opportunities, and the economy" (Ibrahim, 2018). Still, it is the Shias who will decide the fate of Iraq and the leader of the nation will be decided out of the coalition of Shias in the nation thus bringing back the charge of exclusionary politics since the times of Nur Al Malliki.

Conclusion

We need to ruminate and chew over the debates of the order of: the narrative of political violence in Iraq can never be complete without the role played by the external powers as they have a larger and influential role to play in the happenings in the ensuing turbulence in the state of Iraq. Still, the cleavages premised upon three concrete factors count for a lot. The Kurdish insurgency, the Shia Sunni divide and the rise of the Islamic state, are, those key factors which militate against the to-be- aspired for peace, stability and stolidity in the beleaguered and besieged state of Iraq. The state of political violence, is, also augmented by the idiom of a State vs. the non state actors violence in Iraq, where one person's freedom fighter can be equated as another person's terrorist, insurgent and unlawful militia, which holds true in the context of the State of Iraq. Thus, the primary significance to be revisited in the paper is not the idea of American and western intervention but the internal root causes of instability and up-rootedness, which, have added to the iota of political violence in the state of Iraq. The sectarian divide remains a key question which has cast its aspersions on the stability and peace in Iraq. The tribalism which was never the bane of the Iraq's origins and functionality, as, a nation was rendered imbalanced by the intervention of external actors along with the internal social-

political dissensions. Also we are not deliberating upon the theme of US Foreign Policy but a narrative premised upon, the Sanctions Regime in Iraq, the Saddam era and the post Saddam era times with all these segments to culminate upon the theme of the exigencies and undesirability of political violence in Iraq.

References

- Ibrahim, Arwa (2018). "Iraq Elections: All You Need to Know". Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/05/iraq-parliamentary-elections-2018-180503164932964.html>
- Crosette, Barbara (1995). "Iraq Sanctions Kill Children: U N Reports," *New York Times*, December 1.
- Tugrul, Boris (2018). "Political Violence and Social Change in the Kurdish Case From 1990 Onwards". Retrieved from <http://www.fes-sociologia.com/files/congress/12/papers/5216.pdf>
- Council of Foreign Relations, (2018). "The Shia Sunni Divide". Retrieved from https://www.cfr.org/interactives/sunni-shia-divide?cid=ppc-Google-grant-sunni_shia_infoguide&gclid=EAlaIQobChMIjqOys5K32QIVGdi9Ch1BWwTBAAAYASAAEgI_h_D_BwE
- Wolsfeld, Gadi (2018). "The Political Contest Model," Eds, Simon Cottle in , "News Public Relations and Power," New York: Sage.
- Dwivedi, Manan (). "American Dream and Serendipity: US Foreign Policy in a Changing Global Order," New Delhi: Pentagon Press.
- Lipka, Michael (2014). "The Shia Sunni Divide: Where they live and What They Believe and How They View Each Other". Retrieved from <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/06/18/the-sunni-shia-divide-where-they-live-what-they-believe-and-how-they-view-each-other>
- Cockburn, Patrick (2017). "Afraid of Their Waning power, the Kurds are Afraid of the fall of ISIS," *The Independent*, 22 September.
- Pillar, Paul R (2014). "Intelligence and US Foreign Policy: Iraq, 9/11 and Misguided Reform", Columbia: Columbia University Press.
- Suskind, Ron (2006). "The One Percent Doctrine: Deep Inside America's pursuit of its Enemies Since 9/11", New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Lilling, Sean (2017). "A Colossal Miscalculation" Why the independence of Kurds Might lead to a Civil War in Iraq. Retrieved

from <https://www.vox.com/world/2017/10/20/16495748/iraq-kirkuk-kurdistan-isis>

Nunn, Wilfred (2007). "Tigris Gunboats: The Forgotten War in Iraq, 1914-1917," Chatam Publishing.

Kirkfield, William (2000). "Sanctions on Iraq: Background, Consequences and Strategies," Campaign Against Sanctions on Iraq, United Kingdom.

Al-Qarawi, Harith Hassan (2013). "Political Violence and Failures of Nation Building in Iraq," World Peace Foundation, Retrieved from <https://sites.tufts.edu/reinventingpeace/2013/06/25/political-violence-and-failures-of-nation-building-in-iraq>