11.
There Go the Neighbourhoods: Policy Effects vis-à-vis Iraqi Forced Migration

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Commentators frequently affirm that sectarian violence in Iraq springs from age-old ethnic tensions which long pre-date American involvement in the region. While the relevant sectarian *identities* do date back several centuries, sectarian *violence* has not persisted as a social constant throughout the millennia of regional history. Rather, outbreaks of sectarian violence have erupted on highly specific occasions, most of which can be explained through careful analysis of the particular social stresses at the time. As in other societies, when long-term shifts such as dwindling natural resources, mass migration, or changes in social identity are inflamed by deliberate and short-term policy choices, violence can break out.

In accordance with this presumption and projection of age-old ethnic tensions is the perception of Iraqi society as little more than an unnatural British creation of the early twentieth century, held together solely by brute force. Those who see Iraq this way envision three distinct ethno-sectarian regions: a Shi'i Arab southern Iraq, Sunni Arab central Iraq, and Sunni Kurdish northern Iraq. Particularly uninformed observers tend to view these Iraqi geographic divisions according to the tripartite 'no-fly zone' borders of 1991–2003. While this simplified portrayal does bear some general resemblance to ethno-sectarian reality, it provides insufficient contextual information to competently engage with Iraqi society.

In the wake of the 2003 Anglo-American invasion, occupation authorities instituted policies which in their effect—if perhaps not in their intent—encouraged a gradual, progressive, and incessant increase of social chaos and sectarianism that eventually culminated in the violent geographic consolidation of Iraq's ethno-sectarian mapping. Ironically, this remapping has all but created the Iraq that American policy makers imagined already existed in 2003.

IRAQ'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ORDER

The ethno-sectarian geography of Iraq which has recently undergone a violent remapping has its modern origins in—and often before—the era of Ottoman rule. The relevant groups do not neatly correlate with solely religious, ethnic, tribal, or national categories, since every unit is described in a way that is unique to it. For example, while Chaldo-Assyrians are defined by religion, Kurds are defined primarily by linguistic and tribal identity.

Most such groups emerged in the wake of what is widely described as the Ottoman 'millet system'. Under the nineteenth-century version of this regional social order, millets were defined on an exclusively extra-Muslim religious basis, with such groups including the ancestors of today's Greek Orthodox, Armenians, Chaldo-Assyrians, Jews, Egyptian Copts, Maronites, and several others.[1] Such groups largely governed their own communal affairs under the protection of an umbrella imperial system limiting itself to sovereignty fields such as defence, foreign policy, taxation, and domestic security. Throughout the Ottoman era, such millets lived in various rural and urban locales, largely apart and usually in peace. Meanwhile, Muslims were lumped together as majoritarian loyal subjects of the Ottoman ruler, the protection of whom justified the empire's existence. Muslim opponents of Ottoman rule—Anatolian Kizilbas, Safavids, Wahhabis, and others—were occasionally classified as 'heretics' and faced intense persecution.

Following the brutal intercommunal violence and population displacement which accompanied the empire's destruction, a more secular, urbanized, and nationalistic twentieth century emerged. Throughout this more recent era in Iraq, members of these groups increasingly came to intermarry, or at least live next to each other in progressively more heterogeneous and diverse urban neighbourhoods.[2] At the same time, such groups experienced several redefinitions of identity, most prominently adding intra-Muslim layers of previously unrecognized communal categ-

[1] This Ottoman system of ethno-sectarian classification dates only to the nineteenth-century era of *tanzimat* reforms. Prior to that, Ottoman usage of the term 'millet' was far less systematic, applying equally to Ottoman Muslim populations, foreign Christian communities, and certain ad-hoc instances of Ottoman Jewish populations. For further discussion of the evolution of Ottoman conceptions of 'millet', see Braude (1982).

[2] This is less true of rural spaces, where communities appear to have maintained a geographically 'mosaic' structure. Under this structure, in evidence in the Ninevah plains, the region is quite heterogeneous but each village usually contains just one group.

ories such as Kurdish, Turcoman, and Arab while grappling with attempts at creating national identities. Although violent eruptions did occur on occasion under both the Ottomans and various twentieth-century rulers, and the identity of such groups has never been completely stable, this more recent social system had reached a recognizable modicum of relatively mixed stability towards the end of the century. Intense cases of violence and forced migration which broke out in the 1980s and 1990s can be equally characterized as the result of violence between state and anti-state actors as between inter-communal actors.[3]

If we attempt to divide Iraq according to ethno-sectarian identity, then there are far more than the three major ethno-sectarian groupings frequently mentioned. Sizeable groups include Chaldo-Assyrian, Turcoman, Yazidi, Sabaean-Mandean, Shabak, Jewish, and Roman. In addition to these indigenous groupings, several third-county national (TCN) groups, including Palestinians, Mujahidin-i Khalq (MEK) Iranians, Iranian Kurds, and guest workers, have settled in Iraq over the past several decades, and have found their situations deteriorating following the collapse of the former Government of Iraq. Finally, even the three largest ethno-sectarian groups do not often act in an internally consistent fashion (Al-Tikriti 2003b).[4]

Sunni Islam, as its full name *ahl al-sunna wa al-jama'a* ('the people of custom and consensus') implies, is the umbrella grouping within Islamic identity, comprising approximately 80 per cent of the Arab world and worldwide Islam. As an umbrella construct, however, 'Sunni' is often not a very useful term for describing beliefs. Various ideological strands—Wahhabi, Naqshbandi, Deobandi, Nurcu, Ahmadi, secularist—within this umbrella constellation often say far more about individual religious identity than the reductionist term 'Sunni'.

The Iraqi Sunni Arab community, although constituting only about 15 per cent of the Iraqi population, has provided most of the ruling elite since the fifteenth century—which pre-dates the modern sense of the ethno-sectarian term 'Sunni'. The political elite status of this community thus pre-dates even the Ottoman era. Perhaps due to their ruling status—or perhaps due to the self-image of Sunni Islam as being the 'party of

[3] This violence can persuasively be classified as intercommunal in nature only if one accepts the proposition of complete Sunni Arab domination of all levers of state. While some do perceive the violence this way, it is by no means a consensus view.

[4] Much of the information for this section was previously posted by the author in a web forum which is no longer maintained.

consensus'— Sunni Arabs did not often see themselves as a group per se, and clan groupings or ideological strands have often carried more weight than this ethno-sectarian umbrella identity. Today, Sunni Arabs can be said to play a social role within Iraq somewhat resonant with 'whites' in the USA, whereby they no more think of themselves as 'Sunni' than most American whites see themselves as particularly 'white'.

The Iraqi Sunni Arab community has historically been quite supportive of pan-Arab ideologies. Since unification of Iraq with other Arab states would adjust demographic proportions in favour of Sunni Arabs, many Iraqi Shi'is and most Kurds remain deeply suspicious of this ideology. Just as Shi'i groups historically oscillated between Iraqi nationalist and pan-Shi'i ideological orientations, Sunni factions have tended to oscillate between Iraqi nationalist and pan-Arab orientations. When Iraqi nationalist opinions are in the ascendant, these two communities are perfectly capable of political cooperation against foreign elements. This was the case during the 1920 rebellion against the British occupation, and may yet be the case again.

Shi'i Islam is the second largest branch of Islam, originating from a seventh-century political movement. The most significant holy sites of Shi'i Islam are found in Najaf and Karbala, with other significant sites in Kadhimayn (Baghdad) and Samarra. These sites provide the religious focus for Shi'i Muslims worldwide and Iraqi Shi'is in particular. Although the origins of Shi'i Islam date back to the seventh century, it has been claimed that the Iraqi Shi'i community itself has been the majority communal grouping only since the nineteenth century mass conversion of most southern Iraqi tribal units to Shi'ism (Nakash 1994).

One difference between Sunni and Shi'i communities worldwide is the relatively high level of political participation of Shi'i clerics. The clerics, or *'ulama*, have long dominated communal leadership within the Shi'i community and were well on their way to setting up semi-independent state structures in Iraq prior to the First World War. Throughout the twentieth century, this clerical class was undermined by state efforts to control, co-opt, and subvert it. However, immediately after the 2003 evisceration of the Iraqi state, several *'ulama* figures came to play the primary political role within southern Iraq despite over eighty years of state opposition. Certain clerical families exert great influence on Iraqi politics, and their influence has grown rapidly since. Following the 2003 invasion, a power struggle emerged within the major Shi'i political factions. Although many Shi'is refuse to follow a political line defined by clerics, it is evident that the vacuum caused by the fall of

the Iraqi state created a situation conducive to a sudden and impressive resurgence of clerical power.

While Shi'i Arabs are the majority of Iraq's population, they have not historically acted as a single bloc due to the great variety of opinions and interests evident in that population. In the 1940s–1970s the most popular following among Shi'is was the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP). After this party was broken in the 1970s, many Shi'is turned to the religious Da'wa Party. It is mistaken to believe (as many commentators do) that Iraqi Shi'is are beholden to Iranian interests. One proof of their lack of attachment to Iran is that the vast majority of Iraqi troops fighting against Iran in the 1980–8 Iran–Iraq War were Shi'i. At the same time, each religiously defined Shi'i faction appears to maintain connections of some sort with counterparts in Iran.

As the Shi'is consider themselves to have been systematically oppressed throughout the past century (and beyond), they are unlikely to accept anything less than a predominant role in Iraq's new political order. The political language used by Shi'i communitarian groups has revolved around the creation of an Islamic Republic in Iraq following the protocols of the *hawzas* (committees of leading clerics). Donald Rumsfeld's statement on 27 April 2003 that an Islamic government in Iraq was 'unacceptable' might have caused conflict between the clerics and US occupation forces, if US officials had not backed down.

The Kurdish population is predominant in northern Iraq, with additional population centres in south-eastern Turkey, north-western Iran, north-eastern Syria, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. Although most Kurds are Sunni, their ethnic identity carries far more weight than their religious affiliation—even while their common membership with Sunni Arabs in certain groups like the Naqshbandi Sufi order is indicative of cross-affiliations which were once more important than ethnicity. Since the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Kurds in the four states with the largest Kurdish populations (Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey) have consistently sided with foreign interests against those of their host nation states. This legacy, combined with widespread linguistic differences between the three major Kurdish dialects, has rendered the Kurdish polity extremely fractured throughout the twentieth century.

The Kurds in Iraq have enjoyed de facto independence since 1991, following an extremely difficult period fighting the Iraqi state in the 1970s and 1980s. Kurdish northern Iraq weathered the 1990s far better than the rest of the country due to the relatively greater attention they received from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), their international financial

support, and their ability to act as a trading intersection—and free trade zone—between Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and Syria.

Iraqi Kurds are politically divided between two party confederations, led by Mas'ud Barzani (who inherited the role from his father) and Jalal Talabani. Both of these leaders have struggled for over forty years to gain control of the Iraqi Kurds, and both have failed. They have each worked variously with the Iraqi state, the USA, Israel, Turkey, Iran, and any other actor that has suited their short-term plans. The two groups together have proven able to maintain Kurdish self-rule in northern Iraq since 1991. No regional actor is willing to grant them independence, so they invariably remain locked in a delicate and tricky position of semi-sovereignty. Throughout the 1990s, Barzani's faction controlled the transit fees between Turkey and Iraq, while Talabani controlled more of the land and population of northern Iraq. This changed somewhat in 1996, when Barzani (with Iraqi state backing) temporarily pushed Talabani's supporters across the Iranian border until they returned several months later with Iranian backing and US mediation. If the reconstituted Iraqi state should ever violently attack northern Iraq (as occurred in 1991 and 1996), Barzani's supporters might again be expected to head for Turkey, and Talabani's supporters for Iran.

In the course of the 1990s, a nascent 'Kurdistan Regional Government' (KRG) was established, led primarily by Barham Salih. However, the KRG remained weaker than both of Iraqi Kurdistan's main factions until recent years. Although these two factions dominate Iraqi Kurdish politics, they neither encompass all of Kurdish politics nor do the views of their followers remain constant over time.

Ethno-sectarian categories are not the only ways to classify actors within Iraqi society. Tribal interests frequently count for more than religious or ethnic identity, and do not always intersect neatly—especially considering the high level of intermarriage. According to one source, there are some seventy-four tribal groupings in Iraq. While this source unrealistically treats tribal groupings as distinct geographic entities that can be mapped as such, at the very least it demonstrates that there are alternative ways to map Iraq than as a tripartite ethno-sectarian entity.[5] Several of the most important players in Iraqi politics are descendants of prominent families from several different groups who have dominated

[5] www.humanitarianinfo.org/iraq/maps/284%20A4%20Tribes%20in%20Iraq.pdf. This map, issued by the Humanitarian Information Centre for Iraq (HIC) in 2003, does not list its own source.

the old social classes of the country since at least the Ottoman era.[6] Other important figures in recent Iraqi history are 'new' in the sense that their immediate ancestors were largely or completely insignificant in yesteryear's political scene.[7] Although the significance of such familial lineages should never be underestimated in the Iraqi context, the importance of such affiliations is not constant over time.

Finally, in Iraq as elsewhere, political ideology has often counted for more than any other factor in terms of individual loyalty and identity. This was true for several potent political forces in modern Iraqi history, such as communism, Iraqi nationalism, Ba'athism, Nasserism, and certain others.

PRIOR POPULATION DISPLACEMENTS

Although the scale of Iraqi forced migration experienced in recent years is unprecedented, there are earlier cases in modern Iraqi history. The first major case of forced migration in modern Iraq was that of the Chaldo-Assyrian Christian community following widespread massacres in 1932. This was actually the second displacement of Chaldo-Assyrians in the century, the earlier case being before the establishment of Iraq during the last years of Ottoman rule, when great numbers fled traditional homelands in south-eastern Anatolia and north-western Iran for what is today northern Iraq following state-sanctioned violence during the First World War. Upon their arrival, they were recruited into the Assyrian Levies—military police units organized by the British to guard airports and attack their opponents within Iraq. Not surprisingly, once the British turned over full sovereignty to Iraq in 1932, many in the country turned against this group. Within a year, the newly independent Iraqi army massacred several thousand Chaldo-Assyrian villagers while the ailing King Faysal was in Switzerland seeking treatment.[8] Following these massacres, thousands fled Iraq. Most ended up in diaspora communities spread throughout Europe and the USA, particularly in Chicago.

[6] Prominent public figures such as Messrs Barzani, Chaderchi, Chalabi, Jabr, Khoei, Pachachi, and Sadr descend from families who have exercised power and influence throughout the twentieth century.

[7] Public figures such as Saddam Hussein and the Tikriti clans, Jalal Talabani, and others exercised no power prior to their own rise.

[8] These massacres remain a highly contentious issue among historians. For an account placing most of the blame on the Chaldo-Assyrians, see Husri (1974).

The next major population displacement was suffered by Iraqi Jews, who numbered more than 100,000 prior to their departure in the early 1950s. Why did the Iraqi Jews leave in such great numbers, and so quickly? There were certain outbreaks of communal violence, such as the 1941 *Farhud* riots and several celebrated bombings of Jewish congregations—some of which were later alleged to have been committed by Mossad provocateurs.[9] While Iraqi Jews did suffer these violent outbreaks prior to their exodus, this migration was largely an organized movement resulting from secret intergovernmental agreements between the newly established state of Israel and Iraq. Wealthier Iraqi Jews tended to migrate to Europe and the USA (including families whence sprung the corporate giants of Sassoon and Saatchi), while poorer families were mostly settled in a suburb of Tel Aviv. As demonstrated in Hanna Batatu's magisterial *The Old Social Classes and Revolutionary Movements in Iraq* (1978), and portrayed through several interviews in the 2002 UK television documentary 'Forget Baghdad', many of these Iraqi Jews were cadres and leaders of the Iraqi Communist Party, and many resented being essentially 'sold' by Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Said to Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion.

Following the 1958 overthrow of the Hashemite monarchy, thousands of monarchy supporters fled the country. This migration, while not so large in absolute terms, was significant due to the elite nature of and the wealth held by the population involved. Many prominent politicians and merchant families felt obliged to leave in the course of the revolutionary chaos, and most such families did not return—one notable exception being Ahmad Chalabi. These migrants largely moved without difficulty to the UK, Jordan, and other locations.

The next major population displacement was the first initiated by former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, and involved expelling Iraqis considered by the state to be 'Persians'. The origins of this distinction between 'Persian' Iraqis and all others dates back to the nineteenth century, when the Ottoman government provided a military draft exception to all those who claimed to be Persian subjects of the Qajar empire rather than Ottoman subjects. Not surprisingly, many individuals hoping to avoid military service claimed at that point to be Qajar subjects. When the modern state of Iraq was created in the 1920s, the descendants of these nineteenth-century Ottoman draft dodgers continued to be classified as

[9] For a summary of the *Farhud*, see Cohen (1966).

'Persian'. By the 1970s, when Shi'i communalism was on the political rise, and the 1980s, when Iraq was at war with Iran, the Iraqi state expelled over 200,000 such 'Persians' as a fifth-column security threat in a time of war—even though a great many of these people were not 'Persian' in any meaningful sense of the word. Following the failed 1991 uprising against the central government, another estimated 200,000 Iraqis fled from southern Iraq to Iran. As a result of the earlier mass expulsion and the 1991 mass flight from violence, some 200,000 registered Iraqi refugees resided in Iran just prior to the Anglo-American invasion of 2003. Since then, some three-quarters of these refugees were said to have returned to Iraq, although an estimated 10,000–50,000 of these subsequently returned to Iran (Boston Globe 2007).

The most renowned population displacement in recent Iraqi history is commonly referred to as the 'Arabization of Kirkuk'. Kirkuk, historically a cosmopolitan urban centre with sizeable Turcoman, Kurdish, Arab, Christian, and Jewish populations (in that order of magnitude), had long been a focus of politically resonant demographic competition since its development as an oil-drilling centre in the 1920s. Following the 1988 *Anfal* Campaign, which led to the deaths of tens of thousands of Kurds, the Iraqi government forced the collectivization and urbanization of the Kurdish countryside as a whole, and the displacement of the Kurdish population from what are today considered the 'Disputed Territories'. Combined with resettlement incentives offered primarily to Shi'i peasants from southern Iraq, the goal of this policy was to increase the Arab proportion of sensitive areas straddling the historical border regions between Arab and Kurdish rural populations.[10]

By attempting to Arabize the population in the 1980s and 1990s, the Iraqi state under Saddam Hussein laid the seeds for an aggressive counter-policy following the 2003 invasion. As if on cue, since the 2003 fall of the Iraqi state, Kurdish militias have moved into Kirkuk and Mosul, setting off increased sectarian tension and occasional bouts of ethnic cleansing and violence. In an effort to reverse thirty years of 'Arabization', KRG officials encouraged what can best be described as the 'Kurdification of Kirkuk' in the months and years after the invasion. In the course of this initiative, Kurdish militias reportedly ejected Arab families from farmland around Kirkuk, reportedly causing the deaths of dozens of people. Similar dynamics led to reports of summary executions of Turcoman

[10] One Arab informant reported using government-subsidized loans to build a new house in Kirkuk town in the 1990s—which he subsequently rented to Kurds.

individuals at Kurdish checkpoints (and vice versa) since 2003. One highly contested point about this reversal of the Arabization policy since 2003 is the proportion of 'original' Kurdish Kirkukis now settling in Kirkuk.

The final example of population movement prior to 2003 is what might be called the 'Sunnification' of a ring south of Baghdad. This ring, including the towns of Mahmudiyya, Iskandariyya, and Musayib, was settled with Sunni Arab residents throughout the 1990s. Not much is known about this migration, although the probable goal of the policy was to fortify the Sunni population of Baghdad in case of sectarian conflict. Resembling Israeli settlement policies in the ring around East Jerusalem, one of the legacies of this policy was a great outbreak of violence after the invasion, which led to US soldiers nicknaming the region as the 'triangle of death'.

All of these prior population displacements were in their own way as socially influential—and often as individually traumatic—as the more recent displacement. However, while the intent was similar in each case—the consolidation and homogenization of various Iraqi regions through the expulsion of unwanted populations—the scale was far more modest than today's displacement, at least in absolute terms.

SOCIAL CAPITAL DESTRUCTION SINCE 2003

Under Iraq's *ancien régime*, national space was dominated by a self-defined and self-consciously secularist approach, whereby communitarian or ethnic nationalist actors were violently suppressed by the state on behalf of those actors allied with the state. Within this paradigm, social divisions primarily reflected level of urbanization, class attainment, political power, tribal membership, or national identity.

Before 2003, one might usefully classify Iraqi society as being divided between Baghdad and the rest of the country, Ba'ath Party members and the rest of society, Kurdish nationalists and their opponents, communitarian activists and secularists, exiles and residents, tribal confederations, various class actors, and several other categories which no longer carry the same relevance today. Rather than recognizing the relevance of such classifications, American policy makers tended to force Iraq into a tripartite box allowing for only Shi'i, Sunni, and Kurdish divisions.

Through a process punctuated by assassinations, executions, bombings, intimidation, and other tactics forcing ethno-sectarian consolidation,

the communal variety previously evident has been transformed yet again. As a result, Washington's tripartite trap has taken on a life of its own and become something of a self-fulfilling paradigm, largely creating the Iraq that this policy community imagined. Forced migration and population displacement cemented this new communal make-up, and served to form geographic realities in line with the imagined vision of American policy makers. In effect, Iraq's 'imagined community' was imagined in Washington, DC—and continues to be so imagined.[11]

Invasion enthusiasts were quite clear that the Iraq encountered upon arrival would no longer be allowed to exist. Consistent with Condoleezza Rice's doctrine of 'creative chaos', early policies effected the complete elimination of the Iraqi state and symbols of common national identity. The first such decision was as much a passive non-decision as an active decision. In the wake of the initial entry of US forces into Baghdad, widespread looting broke out throughout the capital. Occupation forces—apparently in line with specific Pentagon orders—chose to protect sites deemed of financial and strategic importance to US interests while allowing facilities critical to either Iraqi state functionality or national cohesion to be looted down to the office furniture.[12] As a result, looters bred generalized anarchy, destroyed the administrative organs of state, and eviscerated institutions of common national identity such as the National Archives, (Saddam) Museum of Modern Art, Iraqi National Museum, Ministry of Religious Endowments Library, and several other prominent symbols of national culture.[13] Some of the most egregious looting appears to have been carried out by mysterious provocateurs more focused on symbolically significant destruction than self-enrichment.

This first passive decision of the occupation set the tone for much of what followed, with coalition authorities consistently neglecting institutions supportive of Iraqi national cohesion. The destruction of the nuts

[11] Benedict Anderson (1983) describes the process whereby national identity is socially constructed by elites. According to Anderson, no such identity exists without this creative process, and the existence of various nationalist communities depends on the imagination of the people involved.

[12] US forces proved fully capable of protecting sites considered worthy of protection, such as the Baghdad (formerly Saddam) International Airport; what would become the 'Green Zone', including the Republican Palace, the Rashid Hotel, and the Convention Centre; the Ministry of Oil; the Palestine Meridien, Ishtar Sheraton, Rashid hotels; and several other strategic locations.

[13] For an early situation report of the effects of looting on libraries and archives, see Al-Tikriti (2003a).

and bolts of state machinery and dismantling of national assets rapidly led to the breakdown of social capital, defined as the extent to which 'people in a community feel responsible for each other'. As Shankar Vedantam has argued, such social capital cannot be reconstructed from above, and once it has diminished it is exceedingly difficult to recover (Vedantam 2007). Easily destroyed, not so easily repaired. In the wake of this breakdown of social capital, sectarian-minded actors stepped into the vacuum while occupation forces continued to passively observe the unravelling of the national.

Soon after arrival, Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) administrator Paul Bremer issued his infamous de-Ba'athification order in May 2003, justified as leading the construction of a new social order entirely free from the taint of the former regime's crimes. In addition, with this order Bremer effectively dismissed the entire Iraqi management strata—more than 120,000 people—from state service, while at the same time forcing underground the single most visible remaining group of nationalist actors within Iraqi society. What was forgotten at the time, and remains unknown by many, is that so many members of the urban middle class had been Ba'ath party members that this order effectively alienated most of those who had held Iraqi society together for the previous forty years. Usually portrayed as anti-Sunni Arab in effect, in light of which groups the Ba'athist government had favoured, this order could equally be seen as damaging to secularists, Christians, smaller minorities, and feminists. However, by reductively tarring Sunni Arabs with the brush of Ba'athism, American policy makers encouraged revenge actions expressed in a sectarian fashion. At the same time, in light of the high correlation between the former cadres of government technocrats and Ba'athist membership, this order allowed exile groups—largely sectarian in nature—to fill nearly all governmental posts being opened up by occupation authorities at the time. This last outcome exacerbated tensions between exiles and locals who had never left the country.

In the same week, Ambassador Bremer announced the dissolution of the entire Iraqi military, an estimated 500,000 men under arms. Bremer's argument that the Iraqi military had demobilized itself in the course of the invasion ignored the financial reality of military patronage and the pyschological perception of American imperiousness on the local population. While CPA officials generally perceived the Iraqi military as 'Saddam's Army', most non-Kurdish Iraqis saw this same institution as a professional, secular, and national institution capable of keeping the country unified in a time of crisis. While certain units, such as the Special

Republican Guards, were widely perceived as tribal protectors of the former regime, the vast majority of the military was seen as largely outside of politics—and therefore clean and capable. The security vacuum caused by the final dissolution of this national institution was quickly filled by sectarian militias returning from exile in the summer of 2003.

Once Bush administration officials conceded that functioning Iraqi security forces were a necessity amid a growing insurgency, they began stating that US forces would 'stand down' when Iraqi forces would 'stand up'. Concurrent with this rhetorical statement, US officials strove to quickly re-form the Iraqi military in order to enable it to share security duties with coalition forces. However, rather than integrating militia members into Iraqi security forces while disarming militia units, advisers usually incorporated into security and police forces and entire units of party militias, leaving such units intact, legitimized, and better armed. At the same time, former Iraqi military officers were largely frozen out of the new institution, consistent with the earlier policies. As a result, civilians who did not share either the sectarian make-up or the political perspectives of the respective units quickly came to fear and oppose these new units.

One prominent example of this phenomenon was the second Falluja siege in November 2004, whereby Iraqi commando units comprised of former Kurdish militiamen and Badr Corps members supported the American attack on the city. Overall, this attempt to make up for Bremer's dissolution of the Iraqi military ended up encouraging sectarian tensions through its implementation. In an effort to reverse the damage, immediately following the January 2009 provincial council elections Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki invited several senior pre-invasion military officers to rejoin the Iraqi army—belatedly demonstrating their legitimacy and value.

Contending that thirteen years of sanctions and the invasion had rendered Iraq's economic structures obsolete, Bremer ordered the complete and immediate dismantling of Iraq's massive state sector.[14] Including dairy plants, cigarette factories, battery production lines, cement factories, and several others, this sector had long employed the

[14] Order 39 allowed for 'the privatization of Iraq's 200 state-owned enterprises, 100 per cent foreign ownership of Iraqi businesses, national treatment of foreign firms, unrestricted, tax-free remittance of all profits and other funds, and 40–year ownership licenses'. For further detail, see Douglas et al. (2007: 28).

largest bloc of the country's workforce. Arguments in support of this policy largely parallelled those used to support the dissolution of the Iraqi military, characterized by a search for a new start to replace a hopeless past. According to Naomi Klein, Bremer's 'shock doctrine' approach to Iraq's economic restructuring was intended to establish a model and utopian free trade regime—an approach applied equally in Iraq after the 2003 invasion and in New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.[15] In Iraq's case, the dissolution of hundreds of thousands of stable jobs further degraded social capital and led individuals to seek financial shelter through employment in sectarian militias.

Parallel with efforts to instantly privatize Iraq's state sector was a comprehensive $US18 billion reconstruction programme announced with some fanfare by the Bush administration shortly after the completion of the invasion. As 'no-bid' contracts were almost exclusively channelled to US corporate entities, Iraqi institutions were effectively frozen out of any stake in their own reconstruction programme. While Iraqi returnees frequently subcontracted several tasks on these contracts, locals often found that the only option open for them in this process was as manual labour. Not surprisingly, this programme orientation tended to alienate the Iraqi domestic elite, while its failure to share out reconstruction patronage resources added to the general economic collapse unfolding in the wake of the invasion.

On 13 July 2003, Ambassador Bremer appointed—according to an explicitly -sectarian population formula—a 25-person Interim Governing Council (IGC) to act as an advisory body to the CPA. A preponderance of diaspora returnees was chosen for this council at the expense of locals who had never left Iraq throughout the previous regime's rule—which increased tensions between these two categories of actors. Most notably, the nationally minded Muqtada al-Sadr was kept out of the IGC, even though his followers included a great deal of the urban poor of Baghdad and the rural poor of several southern provinces. Reacting to his exclusion from power, a month later Sadr announced the formation of his 'Mahdi Army', which quickly flourished into one of the major sectarian militias in Iraqi politics. Although Sadr's movement reflects something of a sectarian agenda, his ideology has always remained nationalist in orien-

[15] Naomi Klein (2007: 49–74) characterizes the 'shock doctrine' approach to post-conflict economic restructuring as the intentional use of widespread societal trauma—natural or manmade—as a cover for establishing free trade regimes in place of whatever had been present before.

tation, as opposed to several parties who found seats on the IGC. Such parties, notably al-Da'wa, SCIRI, PUK, and the KDP, advanced agendas incompatible with Iraqi nationalist goals. Notably, once al-Da'wa under Nouri al-Maliki adopted a more Iraqi nationalist viewpoint in 2007, it grew more popular at the ballot box—which appears to demonstrate the preference of the Iraqi public. Overall, the privileging of diaspora returnees over locals, combined with the population formulas used to structure the nascent government, forced a newly sectarian political reality from which Iraq has yet to recover.

In January 2004, Ambassador Bremer issued an order intended to facilitate the return of Iraqi refugees from outside the country, a policy goal that has only grown in urgency since that time. In a strong—some would say unrealistic—defence of property rights, Bremer's order stipulated that properties must be returned to their original, formerly expelled, 'Persian' Iraqi owners. While compensation was included in the order, it reportedly amounted to only about one-third of a home's original value. Occupants, in many cases consisting of large, extended families who had resided in the homes for more than twenty years, were given sixty days to leave the properties.[16] Although the defence of property rights was a positive goal of the order, its harsh terms encouraged Badr Corps militia members to expel Sunni families from homes without due process once they became part of the new Iraqi government in July 2005—which led to a new round of population displacement. While CPA officials established a property adjudication commission to decide cases concerning pre-2003 property disputes, its writ does not extend to more recent disputes, and there remains no similar entity to adjudicate post-2003 property disputes.

In June 2004, John Negroponte was appointed the first US ambassador to the new (re-)sovereign state of Iraq, and immediately became the senior US civilian official in the country. Due to his earlier career profile in Central America in the 1980s, several observers speculated about the policy reasoning behind his appointment, and by January 2005 the celebrated 'Salvador Option' came to be discussed openly as an option for counter-insurgency operations in Iraq. According to this doctrine, one party can end public opposition to its policies by eliminating those who publicly oppose those policies. Nicknamed after unproven counter-insurgency doctrines applied in El Salvador in the 1980s, this doctrine is characterized by the use of death squads targeting prominent individuals.

[16] Juan Cole's posting (2005b) included a pdf file of a petition in Arabic requesting that the order be rescinded.

During this same period in 2004–5, the kidnapping, assassinations, and disappearances of prominent professors, doctors, engineers, and lawyers rose dramatically.[17] The same military officer who advised Salvadoran police squads in the 1980s, Colonel James Steele, advised Iraq's Interior Ministry's 'Special Police Commandos' in 2005. It later emerged that Ministry of Interior officials were running their own prisons, dominated by former members of the Badr Corps.

Although much of this aspect of US policy in Iraq remains unproven due to the classified nature of such policies, fear of such a policy led to a mass migration of middle- class professionals by the middle of 2005. The mass migration, set off by a combination of dozens of prominent assassinations and individual death threats, further depleted the managerial cadre of Iraqi society and left behind a population dominated by sectarian militias with their young, poor, male, unemployed followings fighting over whatever was left behind.

Coalition counter-insurgency operations appear in some cases to have promoted sectarianism while aiding ethnic cleansing. In 'Operation Restoring Rights' in autumn 2005, the US military introduced its 'clear, hold, and build' strategy of counter-insurgency operations in Tal Afar (Poole 2005). Returning war veteran Scott Ewing described how US forces aided the ethnic cleansing of Tal Afar during that operation in the interest of promoting social stability. After evacuating the population of the Saray neighbourhood to nearby camps, US forces bombed the neighbourhood, regular US Army units aggressively searched all homes in the area, and US special forces assisted Kurdish Pesh Merga units in rounding up all military-age men remaining in the area for the final clearing of that neighbourhood (Ewing 2008). Months after President Bush cited this Tal Afar operation as a successful example of counter-insurgency operations, in March 2006 a massive truck bombing attributed to al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) killed 152 people in a primarily Shi'i neighbourhood market, demonstrating the sectarian repercussions of such operations (Al-Khairalla 2007).

As the security situation continued to deteriorate throughout 2004, voters began seeking safety in parties who promised to protect them in their neighbourhoods, villages, and towns throughout the country—a phenomenon especially aggravated by the sectarian nature of bombings

[17] According to the US Army's counterinsurgency manual, non-combatant supporters of insurgents are never less important than combatants, and are often more important. This may be seen as indicative of military policy vis-à-vis the population as a whole.

that had taken place up until that point. As a result, transitional parliamentary elections of January 2005 resulted in a landslide for sectarian grounded parties. In summer 2005, US diplomats shepherded a new constitution through a series of intense and heated negotiations among these elected parties and certain unelected political groups. As in previous processes enacted since the invasion, this negotiation was designed to progress along sectarian and regional lines rather than either tribal lines or along strict governorate borders—and the process was driven primarily by parties defined by specific ethno-sectarian agendas. Since there were many obstacles to such a constitution being passed, a deadlock arose in August 2005, which was broken only when a fait accompli draft constitution was agreed upon by such officials—with American blessing—in September 2005. As if to institutionalize the newly sectarian face of Iraqi politics, the constitution included provisions allowing for three or more governorates to band together as federal regions with certain prerogatives of sovereignty—creating the potentiality of de facto regional partition. At the same time, clauses ensuring the funnelling of oil revenues through such provincial structures, combined with ambiguous statutes concerning the freedom of such regional institutions to negotiate international contracts, encouraged fiscal fracturization of the national whole. Finally, the Kirkuk referendum guaranteed by the constitution ensured a sectarian poison pill for the future.

The next milestone—the one which consensus opinion holds started the ethnic cleansing—was the February 2006 bombing of the Ja'far al-'Askari shrine in Samarra. While this major event, which set off an eighteen-month orgy of sectarian Sunni-Shi'i killing throughout the country, was blamed on (AQI), there was no complete investigation of the event itself. While an AQI strike makes a certain amount of sense strategically, in that it would increase sectarian violence and potentially help AQI come to power, many Iraqis remain unconvinced that AQI actually committed the crime. The bombing was somewhat unusual according to al-Qa'ida's normal modus operandi in that the perpetrators were disguised by black balaclavas and did not kill anyone in the course of the bombing. Whoever perpetrated the act, this wholly symbolic event did more than any other to feed the mass migration of individuals within, throughout, and beyond Iraq.

In December 2006, following a lengthy trial which many criticized for being improperly executed, US officals handed former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to the Government of Iraq. Within hours of the handover, the Iraqi government carried out his highly contentious execution. As it

turned out, the execution fully pleased only certain factions within the Iraqi body politic, and proved to be yet another divisive policy choice. The timing of the execution, held on the morning of a religious holiday exclusive to Sunni Muslims, sent an intentionally sectarian signal to Sunni factions. Mr Hussein was executed for the lesser crime of ordering the attack and summary execution of over 143 Shi'i men and boys in the village of Dujail following an assassination attempt. Meanwhile, he was never legally charged for invading Iran or Kuwait, or for the execution of several thousand Kurdish Barzani tribespeople in the early 1980s, or for ordering Operation Anfal—which caused the massacre and displacement of tens of thousands of Kurdish civilians in the late 1980s. That such crimes were not even addressed during the trial upset not only Kurds, but also those who wanted to pursue information about Mr Hussein's connections with various Western governments in the 1980s (Cole 2005a). As it turns out, many of the facts about such connections appear to have died with the former president, whose dignity in the face of death has cast him posthumously as a saintly martyr to those inclined to support him. Finally, following internet broadcasts of the execution, rumours spread that Muqtada al-Sadr personally carried out the hanging of Saddam Hussein. Such rumours were based on the Sadr family history, whereby Mr Hussein personally ordered—and may have carried out—the 1980 execution of Muqtada al-Sadr's uncle Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr and aunt Bint al-Huda. The rumours were also based on the chants of the crowd at the execution chanting 'Muqtada, Muqtada, Muqtada', as well as on similarities—possibly 'photoshopped' similarities—between the executioner's beard and ring and Muqtada al-Sadr's. Whether or not Muqtada al-Sadr personally carried out the execution is not as important as the impression gained by many of an execution carried out as a form of personal and sectarian revenge rather than provision of justice.

Since February 2007 a policy regime which has generally received positive reviews in US government circles appears to have also encouraged population displacement—the completion of which contributed to the great reduction in violence. In the course of the 'Surge strategy', credited to General David Petraeus, Iraq suffered the peak of sectarian violence and population displacement, and Baghdad's neighbourhoods experienced the greatest amount of sectarian consolidation, whereby formerly mixed areas became either more fully Sunni or Shi'i. Some have referred to this process as the 'Shi'itization' of Baghdad, as those sectarian factions appear to have gained the most in the past year. Others have suggested that this process occurred due to nightly violence carried out

under the passive gaze of US soldiers who concentrated on attacking Sunni militias seen as their primary enemy during the day. As if to formalize this process, General Petraeus ordered the erection of several walls to divide and separate opposing neighbourhoods. While this tactic has been praised for reducing violence, neighbourhood residents themselves protested against these walls which appear to have been modelled on walls erected by the Israeli military on the West Bank.

Another policy carried out as part of the 'Surge strategy' has been the financing and arming of Sunni Sahwa 'Awakening Councils' to attack al-Qa'ida elements within their midst, especially in the al-Anbar governorate. While the tactic has been credited with reducing violence against the US military, it has effectively empowered yet another sectarian group, which may contribute to the further breakup and consolidation of this formerly mixed society.

POST-2003 DISPLACEMENT

In 2009 there are estimated to be as many as 4.8 million forcibly displaced Iraqis out of a total population of approximately 27 million, or roughly 15 per cent of the whole. Although these estimates must be handled with extreme care, the general magnitude of the displacement is not in doubt. For perspective, the displacement of 15 per cent of the US population would equal some 45 million people, roughly the population of the entire east or west coast.

The total of 4.8 million displaced includes roughly 2.8 million international refugees seeking official status and 2 million domestic internally displaced persons (IDPs). An approximate estimate of the distribution of this forced migration at this time includes the following: Iraq (northern Iraq—750,000, central and southern Iraq—1.25 million), Syria (1.4 million), Jordan (450,000), Egypt (100,000), Lebanon (50,000), Turkey (10,000), Iran (100,000), Sweden (27,000), and the USA (15,000).

The forced migration resulting in the above figures did not occur in a single wave, and there has been some disagreement concerning the characteristics of this migration (Chatelard 2008). While the numbers of the displaced and the origins of the forced migration are highly contentious, one can outline several waves of migration since 2003.[18] The first wave consisted largely of former regime elites who either anticipated or quickly

[18] For discussions of pre-2003 displacement, see Romano (2005) and Chatelard (2005).

realized the difficulties to come of remaining in Iraq after the invasion. These migrants tended to be sufficiently wealthy, highly educated, and well connected to move without great difficulty to comfortable destinations within the region. The second wave consisted of middle-class technocrats, professionals, and intelligentsia who were targeted as a class following the breakdown of social capital in 2003–5. Concurrent with the second wave began the movement of Iraq's 'micro-minorities', smaller groups who found themselves particularly vulnerable as order collapsed and society descended into widespread sectarian violence. While each of these groups—including Chaldo-Assyrians, Sabaean-Mandaeans, Yazidis, Shabaks, and others—experienced their own types of danger and obstacles, they all shared the common imperative to move. Many of these micro-minorities ended up taking refuge in northern Iraq, with others leaving the country for Syria or Jordan. The final, and largest, wave followed the Samarra bombing of February 2006. This movement involved all ethno-sectarian groups throughout the country, depending on where they found themselves in a locally vulnerable minority status. It is this final wave which brought about the consolidation and homogenization of Iraq's ethno-sectarian mapping.[19]

DISPLACEMENT POLICIES

Since Iraq's social breakdown accelerated in the wake of the 2006 Samarra bombing, certain policy choices appear to have been taken with the aim of solidifying the new reality rather than attempting a return to the *status quo ante*. In Baghdad, US officials have overseen the construction of partition walls between certain neighbourhoods considered mutually hostile. While these walls are credited with reducing violence, they have not proven popular with residents of those neighbourhoods—in fact, their announcement led to immediate protests in at least Adhamiyya (Iraq Updates 2007). The primary intention behind these walls may well be to augment security through restricting militants' access between such opposing, hostile, and relatively homogenous neighbourhoods. At the same time, however, such walls prevent interaction between non-militant residents, solidify the homogenizing nature of each neighbourhood

[19] The most detailed indications of this phenomenon are provided in International Organization of Migration (IOM) reports which have been posted since 2005.

behind the walls, trap whatever minority populations remain walled in and expose them to further violence by majority militias without a reduced possibility of external intervention, and tend to confirm ethno-sectarian boundaries due to their sheer physicality. In a nutshell, such walls may save lives in the short run, but they contribute to more permanent communal demarcations in the longer term.

Concurrent with the policy of walling off certain neighbourhoods within Baghdad, several provinces have initiated restrictions on civilian freedom of movement in an effort to limit the influx of an IDP population. Through such limitations, provincial officials are hoping to both reduce the risk of security transgressions from outsiders and reduce the humanitarian burden such population influxes might put on their social service networks. One prominent example of such limitation is the policy in the KRG stipulating that no one can enter the territory without first securing a Kurdish sponsor. While those who have reached KRG have generally been well protected, and while the KRG has emerged as something of a refuge for non-Muslim minority populations, this limitation is both legally problematic and another example of a policy regime which encourages sectarianization of Iraqi society.

Certain policy choices by NGOs and intergovernment organizations appear designed to encourage *in situ* settlement of IDPs rather than eventual return. One prominent example is the Iraqi Red Crescent Society's 2007 multimillion dollar appeal for IDP housing, structured in terms of model villages. This decision is usually defended as the more realistic approach, which it may very well be. At the same time, however, when coupled with the lack of emphasis on post-2003 property rights until this time, such a policy will likely encourage the solidification of the legacy of ethnic cleansing which has taken place in the past five years.

The Government of Iraq announced a major initiative in July 2008 to assist in the reversal of the ethno-sectarian remapping described in this essa. This initiative promised incentive packages to return to place of origin, an increased emphasis on property rights and protection of returnees, and other elements that might promote the reversal of post-2003 forced migration. Unfortunately, policy details have remained somewhat opaque and implementation uneven since this initiative's initial announcement. Up to April 2009 the return of Iraqi populations to their pre-2003 place of origin has remained minimal.

CONCLUSIONS

The effects of the ethno-sectarian remapping described here are widespread, potentially permanent, and highly problematic for the cohesion of the future Iraqi state and society. Communal consolidation has progressed to such an extent that Iraq has already evolved somewhat from a mosaic patchwork of geographically mixed sectarian clusters into the rough outline of three large regions coinciding with an idealized conception of the majoritarian ethno-sectarian identities of Shi'i Arab, Sunni Arab, and Kurdish. Those who either refuse or are not allowed to fit within these majoritarian identities have mostly been forced out, causing the nearly complete erasure of certain micro-minority communities such as the Sabaean-Mandaeans and Shabak; the external migration of roughly half of Iraq's Chaldo-Assyrian Christian populations; the entrapment and/or external migration of prominent third-country nationals such as the Palestinians, certain Iranian Kurds, and the Mujahidin-i Khalq Iranians; and the expulsion of minority clusters of majoritarian ethno-sectarian groups caught outside their region of dominance.

After allowing mass looting, destroying all remnants of Iraq's state structure, abolishing the military, alienating the country's secular and nationally minded professional class, and institutionalizing sectarian interests, US officials proceeded to blame 'age-old ethnic conflicts' when sectarian violence exploded throughout the country after the February 2006 Samarra shrine bombing. Some prominent commentators and policy makers even argued for tripartate state partition as a solution to this violence.[20] While a noticeable shift in US policy in 2007 eventually contributed to a calming of the violence, the remapping of Iraq's ethno-sectarian geography has not yet been—and may never be—reversed.

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[20] Prominent advocates for partition, whether 'soft' or otherwise, have included Sen. Joe Biden, Peter Galbraith, Leslie Gelb, Michael O'Hanlon, Kenneth Pollack, and others.

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