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Iraq: The Challenge of Nonstate Actors

By Faaisa Rashid

Introduction

There are few regions in the world that can parallel the history of Iraq. Often referred to as the cradle of civilization, Iraq is the place of compilation of the Babylonian Talmud that defines traditional Judaism, the homeland of Abraham in the Bible, and the capital of the Islamic civilization from 8th—13th century under the Abbasid caliphs. (Ostling) With such rich history come legacies for Iraq that date back to the pre-state-centric international system.

In this paper, I investigate Iraq's age old Shi'a, Sunni, and Kurd conflict and study the impact of foreign intervention on the competition for political representation amongst these three sects. I define foreign intervention as military involvement followed by interference in domestic affairs. My hypothesis is that foreign intervention exacerbates sectarian conflicts in Iraq because it brings political power to a contestable domain. I define sectarian conflict as disagreement with the current political representation and visualization of a political future as separate from the rest of the 'nation' of Iraq. The empirical indicators I use to measure exacerbation of Shi'a, Sunni, Kurd conflict include emergence of separate sectarian political parties and rebellions against the existing political order. Furthermore, I argue that the sectarian uprisings eventually die off as a repressive regime assumes control and coercively suppresses sectarian rebellions.

First, this paper discusses the significance of the Shi'a, Sunni, and Kurd conflict in Iraq. It then illustrates the history of conflict by explaining the emergence and internal logic of Shi'is, Sunnis and Kurds. It also examines the creation of Iraq in the back drop of post World War I British interests in the region, and relates it to Iraq's sectarian tensions. It then illustrates two cases of foreign intervention in Iraq—the British intervention in 1941 and the US led intervention in the 1991 Persian Gulf War. For both the interventions there is a life cycle that begins with a military combat and is followed by an exacerbation of sectarian conflict. Sectarian conflict is ensued by the emergence of a repressive regime. The statistical details of the life cycle vary through the two interventions; nevertheless, there exists a pattern. I also find that the conflicts between the sects are never strictly religious, but rather a blend of religious and political struggle. In the conclusion, I discuss the implications of my findings. Furthermore, I

embed the value of my research in the current dynamics of the world. Additionally, I identify weaknesses in the methodology of collection of the empirical data used for evidence and provide a critique of my own argument. In the end, I propose alternate methods of research on this topic.

Iraq's Sectarian Conflict: Does it really matter?

The Shi'a, Sunni, and Kurd issue is immensely significant for at least four reasons. First, it has caused political instability within Iraq, where the conflict amongst the three factions has marred Iraq's political history with coups, regime overthrows, and bloody suppression of insurgencies. Second, the conflict holds transnational importance as it poses a challenge to the sovereignty of not only Iraq, but also to the sovereignty of neighboring states. The Iraq-Iran war, which was based on a border dispute, and lasted eight years (1980—1988) is an example of one such challenge to the sovereignty of the states in the region. Furthermore, with the Kurds in Iraq turning towards their fellow Kurds in Syria and Turkey and aspiring for an independent Kurdistan, and the Shi'is inclining towards Iran, threat to the existing territorial boundaries of the region still looms high. (Menon)

Third, with oil reserves of 120 billion to 200 billion barrels (11 percent of world's proven reserves); Iraq ranks second only to Saudi Arabia in the world's largest oil reserves. The cost of extraction of Iraq's oil reserve is comparatively lower to other countries because about 40 percent of the reserves lie only 600 meters beneath earth's surface. (Ward) Hence, due to Iraq's position as a leading oil exporter, sectarian conflict within Iraq has always captured the attention of great powers, for example the involvement of Britain post World War I, and involvement of the USA and the USSR during the Iraq—Iran war.

Fourth, the Shi'a, Sunni, Kurd matter is a human rights issue. Through out time countless innocent people have been tortured and persecuted on grounds of sect. According to the official Iraqi documents about 5 million (both Shi'is and Kurds) were executed during the Ba'ath regime. Additionally more than 10 million were imprisoned and tortured. (Mahdi)

Conflict: Origin and History

Iraq's Shi'a, Sunni, Kurd issue is not recent. In fact it dates back many centuries. Even the creation of Iraq needs to be understood not through the lens of self-determination of the Shi'is, Sunnis and Kurds, but in the context of British interests. (Mc Whirter) With this outlook it is somewhat more comprehensible to grasp the tensions amongst sects that exist today.

SHI'IS

Both Shi'a and Sunni Muslims share the same belief in one God, the belief that the Quran is from God, and that Muhammad was the last messenger from God. Shi'is differ from Sunnis mainly because of their belief in the institution of Imamate. Un-

like Sunnis, who view Imams as prayer leaders only, Shi'is consider Imams as leaders of the Muslim community, law and authority. The Imams have religious wisdom and *walayat* (spiritual guidance) to rightfully interpret the Quran and the *sharia* (code of law derived from the Quran) and the Sunna (the teachings and practices of Muhammad). Shi'is believe only the Imams are infallible and therefore chosen by God to lead Muslims. ("The Columbian Encyclopedia")

The word *Shi'a* means 'party' and refers to *Shi'atu Ali* or Party of Ali. The Shi'a sect originated after a dispute regarding the succession of Muhammad after his death in 632 AD. Shi'a Muslims argued that legitimate succession lied in the lineage of Muhammad, and hence Ali, cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad, was the rightful heir to the *caliphate* (caliph—short form of vicegerent of the messenger of God and the commander of the faithful—is a representative of God on earth and a civil and religious leader of the Muslims). Shi'is see the appointment of the three caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman) preceding Ali as a conspiracy and a grave mistake. Traditionally Shi'is deem Ali—the fourth caliph to succeed Muhammad—and his eleven descendants, beginning with his sons Hasan and Hussein, as the Imams of Islam. Additionally, they believe that the twelfth Imam ascended to heavens in a supernatural form and will return to earth on the Day of Judgment as *Mahdi* or Messiah. ("The Columbian Encyclopedia")

Ali assumed caliphate in 656 AD after the assassination of the third caliph—Uthman. During his caliphate, Uthman had bestowed governorships of the important states to his kinsmen to strengthen the Muslim empire. Upon attaining caliphate, Ali dismissed these governors and subsequently experienced their rebellion. Most notable of these rebellions was that of Muawwiya (cousin of Uthman and governor of Syria), who waged wars against Ali in the name of vengeance for Uthman's blood. Those that fought alongside Ali in these wars later identified themselves as Shi'is. ("The Columbian Encyclopedia")

The emergence and consolidation of the Shi'is accelerated after the assassination of Ali in 661 AD by the Kharjites (originally supporters of Shi'is, who later accused Ali to have betrayed his God-given legacy for not waging war against Abu Bakr when he became the first caliph of Islam). The martyrdom of Hussein by the son of Muawwiya in Karbala in 680AD further united the Shi'is, who still mourn the event as inspiration to rise against oppression.

Ali is the only Shi'i Imam to have assumed leadership of Muslims. Throughout history, the Sunni rulers have been wary of the institution of Imamate and Shi'is have experienced persecution and oppression during the Umayyad dynasty (661—750AD), Abbasid dynasty (758—1258AD) and the Wahhabi movement (since the 18th century). ("The Columbian Encyclopedia")

Besides persecution, Shi'is have also experienced hindrances in freely practicing their faith. For example a prominent Shi'a practice is pilgrimage to the tombs of their twelve Imams. Six of the twelve Imams' (first, third, seventh, ninth, tenth, and twelfth) tombs are in Iraq. Furthermore, Najaf, Karbala, Kazimayn, and Samarra—the four most

sacred Shi'i shrine cities—are in Iraq. (Gray) Before the Iraq Iran War (1980—1988), during which Iranians aimed to recover the holy cities from Iraq, thousands of Shi'a pilgrims used to come to Iraq during Shi'is holy month of Muharram in the Islamic calendar. Under Saddam Hussein's regime Shi'is were restrained from freely practicing many of their rituals. ("The Columbian Encyclopedia")

Today, Shi'is comprise ten to fifteen percent of world's Muslim population. And according to the World Factbook, Shi'is form the majority of total population in Iran (89 percent), Bahrain (70 percent), and Iraq (58—63 percent). Hence, the Shi'a issues in Iraq transcend to neighboring states of Iran and Bahrain. ("The World Factbook")

SUNNIS

Before the death of Muhammad (632 AD) all Muslims were Sunnis. The word Sunni derives from Sunnah which means the practice and conduct of Muhammad. Sunnis also attach the meaning of "a middle path" to the word Sunni implying the more moderate position of Sunnis between the extremes of Shi'is and Kharjites. (Pike)

A majority of Sunnis consider Shi'is as Muslims, except for the three Sunni schools of thought in South Asia—the Berailvi, the Deobandi and the Wahhabi—that consider Shi'is to be apostates from Islam. Sunnis hold Ali in high esteem, but unlike Shi'is do not see the necessity of lineage of Muhammad for legitimate leadership of Muslims. According to Sunnis, the only criterion for legitimate authority is capable leadership skills, obedience to Islam and consent of the majority. Hence, the Sunni sphere of governance is not in the hands of religious leaders only. During the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties and later on in the Ottoman Empire, it was the absence of clerical hierarchies and centralized institutions that provided greater adaptability to local conditions while expanding into non-Muslim territories. (Pike)

To better understand the current Shi'a Sunni relations within Iraq and also between Iraq and Iran it is essential to trace back the conflict between the Safavid Empire (1501—1732) based in Iran and the Ottoman Turks. The Safavids, with their militant theology to spread Shi'ism through the force of arms and claim to descent from Shi'a Islam's Seventh Imam, were the first to declare Shi'a Islam as their official religion. Due to the presence of the Shi'a holy cities, such as Karbala and Najaf, the Safavids aspired to attain control of Iraq. On the other hand, the Ottomans wanted Iraq for two reasons—first Iraq held great symbolic value for Muslims all over the world because it had been the capital of the Islamic civilization for five centuries under the Abbasids, and second, the Ottomans wanted to maintain Iraq under Sunni control to provide a bulwark against the spread of Shi'a Islam to Asia Minor. The result was a prolonged conflict between the Safavids and Ottomans that widened the Shi'a—Sunni gulf. The wars were marked by brief periods of control by each side during which the opposite faction was suppressed and persecuted. ("Country Study…")

With the decline of the Safavids in early 18th century due to economic problems, political corruption and uprisings due to the coercive conversion of Sunni Muslims to Shi'ism, the Ottomans gained control of Iraq. Under the Ottomans, Sunnis flourished and gained administrative and political privileges. This resulted in the Shi'a—Sunni class cleavage. The landowner and business class comprised mainly of Sunnis and the Shi'is increasingly constituted the poor working class. ("Country Study…")

It was not until the weakening of the Ottoman Empire coupled with the intervention of the Western powers—primarily Britain—that the ideology of nationalism spread and the Shi'is and Kurds began to demand proper political representation in Iraq. However, after centuries of Ottoman rule, Iraq was not ready for a nation-state and after its independence in 1932, the country struggled to remain free of political instability in a backdrop of three competitors for political power—Shi'is, Sunnis and Kurds. ("Country Study…") It is noteworthy to recognize that the British intervention parallels very closely to the US intervention today that aims to spread the institution of democracy in the region.

The Shi'a-Sunni conflict over political power that intensified during the Ottoman-Safavid wars has transcended across decades and is extremely significant in the current state centric international system as it holds implications not only for the state of Iraq but also for neighboring states. (Menon)

KURDS

Often overshadowed by the Shi'a—Sunni conflict, the third largest ethnic group in the Middle East after the Arabs and the Turks are the nation of stateless people, the Kurds. Kurds were traditionally nomadic herders of Indo-European origin that inhabited the plateau and mountain area in south west Asia—including parts of east Turkey, northeast Iraq, and northwest Iran—before 3100 BC and through 1000 BC. After World War I, Kurds have been divided amongst Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria. Today, about half of the world's Kurdish population lives in Turkey. Additionally, Kurds account for about 15-20 percent of Iraq's population living mostly in Dahuk (Dohuk), Mosul, Erbil, Kirkuk, and Sulaimaniyah. ("The Columbian Encyclopedia")

After being conquered by the Arabs in seventh century, the Kurds converted to Islam and despite being ethnically closest to Iranians, majority of the Kurds are Sunni Muslims. Some Kurds are *Yazidis* (inhabiting mostly Mosul, Iraq) that believe the devil rules the world. Yazidis are despised and referred to as 'devil worshippers' by both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims. ("The Columbian Encyclopedia") Moreover, Kurds have a long history of foreign occupation. They were ruled by Seljuk Turks in the 11th century, by Mongols from 13th—15th century, by the Safavid Empire in the 16th century and by the Ottoman Empire from 17th—early 20th century. ("Country Study…") Under the Ottomans (especially between 1915—1918), Kurds (in particular journalists, intellectuals and human rights activists) were massively persecuted, and coerced to assimilate within Turkey through banning of Kurdish language and resettlement of Kurds in non-Kurdish areas of Turkey. (Vosbigian)Hence, after the defeat of Ottomans in World War I, Kurds demanded independence in the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. In 1920 under the Treaty of Sèvres, Kurds were promised an independent Kurdish state. However, after the ascension of Mustafa Kemal Pasha (later known as Ataturk)

in Turkey, Treaty of Lausanne was signed in 1923, which excluded the formation of an independent Kurdish state. Any revolts by Kurds were coercively suppressed. ("Country Study…")

Kurds even today hope for an autonomous state and these hopes become overt with change of regime in the region, as in 1958 when the Ba'athist government replaced the Iraqi monarchy. (Bruner) Unfortunately, the Kurds have only seen broken promises of independence thus far.

Iraq: Nation-State?

To better understand the sectarian conflicts that have marked the history of present day Iraq, it is essential to recognize that the boundaries of Iraq were carved out not by the nation of Iraq, but by the British Empire. (Mc Whirter) Iraq was created after the defeat of the Ottomans in the First World War and the subsequent liquidation of the Ottoman Empire.

Before World War I, British influence in the Ottoman provinces of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul was mainly limited to economic activities. However, with the emergence of Russia and Germany as a challenge to British influence in Mesopotamia, Britain invaded the region at the outbreak of World War I to secure land route to India. After significant effort, Britain seized control of Mesopotamia. (Haj, p. 27) When World War I ended, the League of Nations allocated mandates for control of Middle Eastern territories to Britain and France. Under the mandate, Britain demarcated boundaries based on British interests, which included political and economic control of the region. (Eisenstadt and Mathewson, p. 82)

The people of Iraq did not accept Britain as a legitimate authority and as a result rebellions arose through out the region. To counter the extreme resistance from all factions in Iraq, the British granted the Iraq's high class Sunnis power in return of submission and cooperation. Furthermore, much to the opposition of Shi'is and Kurds, the British stroke an agreement with the non-Iraqi, but Muslim Faisal I who was a member of Arabian Peninsula's Sunni royal family. (Mc Whirter) Under the agreement he would be appointed King of Iraq as long as Britain retained mandate of the region. Faisal I was crowned king under a constitutional monarchy, which was superficially democratic, but inherently under British control. During the monarchy of Faisal I, Britain developed military bases, corporations (in particular oil corporations), and a privileged trading status in Iraq. (Mc Whirter) Britain also continued to control Iraq's political and economic matters. Once a pro-British government was firmly established in Iraq, the British mandate was no longer needed and Iraq was granted 'independence' in 1932. (Mc Whirter) However, even after independence Britain continued to exert influence on Iraq and meddle heavily in its affairs. The Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930 retained British involvement in Mosul and Kirkuk oilfields and maintained British air bases near Baghdad and Basra. Furthermore, Britain still held the right to maneuver troops through Iraq. This infringement on Iraq's sovereignty gave rise to three major nationalist oppositional groups—the Nationalist Democrats, the Ba'ath, and the Iraqi communists. (p. 82, Haj)

It is important to view the prolonged political unrest and sectarian struggle in Iraq by keeping in perspective the aforementioned historical background of the creation of Iraq and its subsequent independence. Moreover, we must ask the question: Is Iraq really a nation state?

Foreign Intervention

In this section I will examine two cases of foreign intervention in Iraq—the British intervention in 1941 and the US led coalition against Iraq in 1990-1991 Persian Gulf War. Each intervention exhibits a life cycle. The first stage of this cycle comprises of military struggle between Iraqi and foreign troops. The second stage begins with termination of military action between the two sides. During this stage, a regime lacking legitimate authority attempts to enforce its power. Absence of legitimate authority initiates the third stage of the cycle, which is marked by exacerbation of the Shi'a, Sunni, and Kurd conflict, as each sect struggles to assert its political space.

In the first case study, the life cycle of British intervention ended with the overthrow of the repressive monarchy in 1958. In the second case study the life cycle ends with a Saddam Hussein's repressive regime regaining power. Both regimes faced intense rebellions and were overthrown subsequently.

1941—1958: Britain Intervention in Iraq

After 1939, the political space of Iraq entered a phase of conspiracies, coups, counter coups and rebellions. King Faisal I died in 1933, and was succeeded by his son Ghazi. However, King Ghazi died in a mysterious automobile accident in 1939. Because Ghazi's son was only three years old at the time, Prince Abd al-Illah was appointed as a regent. It was in this context that the 1941 anti-British military coup occurred and brought the pro-Axis Rashid Ali in power. With the twin support of Germans and the Vichy French government in Syria, Prime Minister Rashid Ali besieged the British air base of Habbaniya—a clear abrogation of the Anglo-Iraqi treaty of 1930. Owing to the threat of losing other military bases and control of oil reserves, Britain invaded Iraq in 1941. Britain justified the invasion by accusing Rashid Ali of violating the terms of Anglo-Iraqi treaty. This was the beginning of the first stage of the life cycle of foreign intervention—military combat between British and Iraqi troops. (Mills)

The first stage of foreign intervention was relatively short as Britain defeated the technologically backward Iraqi forces with ease. The Germans that were preoccupied with campaigns in Crete never sent aid to the Iraqi troops that was simultaneously adequate and timely. (Mills) Following Iraq's defeat, Britain forcefully re-imposed Prince Abd al Ilah as regent of Iraq. Thus began the second stage of the foreign intervention cycle. The re-imposition of monarchy lacked legitimacy and instigated grave resentment against the British and the monarchy. The successive governments of Nuri as Said (1941-44) and Hamdi al Pachachi (1944-46) were also pro-British and lacked proper authority. (Mills) It was in this authority vacuum that the Shi'is, Sunnis and Kurds began to assert their political space. This marked the beginning of the third stage of

the cycle of intervention where sectarian conflict exacerbates through the emergence of separate political parties.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the British pulled out of Iraq and the sectarian conflict assumed a much more distinct political cleavage. The Sunnis joined the Ba'ath party, which was a blend of Arab nationalism and socialist values. (Mills) The Shi'is increasingly joined the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP). Yitzhak Nakash explains the Iraqi Communist Party in the following words:

> Indeed, the massive adherence of young Shi'is to the ICP did not reflect so much their propensity to communism, as it did their search for political participation and social influence, and their attempt to bring about a new political order in Iraq. The appeal of communism to the Shi'is was closely related to the failure of Pan Arabism to act as a unifying framework in Iraq. (Nakash, p.133)

Nakash's explanation of the ICP supports my argument of exacerbation of sectarian conflict since I define sectarian conflict as disagreement with the current political representation and visualization of a political future as separate from the rest of the 'nation' of Iraq.

Meanwhile, inspired by the Kurdish Democratic Party in Iran, the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iraq was formed in 1945. The Kurdish Democratic Party demanded self rule of Kurds within Iraq, but in the 1950s began to assert the need for joint Kurdish cooperation across boundaries. Hence, in 1953 the name of the party changed to the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iraq (Ghareeb, p.35).

The three political parties struggled to assert a dominant political space. And in 1958 the monarchy was overthrown through the ICP assisted military coup in the back drop of growing antagonism against the pro-British monarchy. This marked the end of British intervention in Iraq. The royal family was executed and Brigadier Abdel Karim Kassem took control of Iraq. (Mc Whirter)

US led Intervention in Iraq: The Second Persian Gulf War—1991

Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990. There are three causes that are usually identified for this invasion. First, since Iraq's inception, it has laid claims on Kuwait. The validity of Iraq's claim is beyond the scope of my paper. Second, Kuwait holds economic value due to its high quality oil resources. And third, in the aftermath of the Iraq—Iran war (1980—1988), Iraq owed huge debts to Middle Eastern countries including Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. (Menon)

US along with other members of the United Nations demanded withdrawal of Iraqi forces. However, after Iraq's failure to comply, on January 16, 1991, US led allied forces (that included troops from other UN member states) invaded Iraq and her occupation in Kuwait. This marked the first stage of the foreign intervention life cycle. Iraqi forces were defeated with relative ease and on February 27th 1991 a ceasefire was ordered by President Bush. (Menon) This was the beginning of the second stage of the foreign intervention life cycle.

After termination of military combat, began the third stage of the 1991 foreign intervention—sectarian conflict emerged with both Shi'a and Kurd insurgencies. The Shi'a insurgency was engineered by the Tehran based insurgent leadership group—the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). The SCIRI delivered several thousand soldiers from Iran to support the Shi'a uprising in Iraq. The SCIRI aimed to take advantage of the authority vacuum in Iraq created by the Gulf War. It further aimed to gain support of the population and army of Iraq to bring about an armed revolt. (Cline)

The major uprising began in Basra in March 1991 and rapidly diffused to other towns. Within a few days the insurgents established control of over twelve towns in southern Iraq. Saddam Hussein sent Republican Guard units to suppress the Shi'a uprisings. Insurgents were arrested or brutally killed and eventually all the insurgent held towns were retaken by Saddam's regime. Since the terms of the cease fire had established "no-fly zones" in northern and southern Iraq, use of airplanes to suppress the Shi'a insurgents was prohibited. Hence, the Iraqi officials used helicopters. As the Shi'a uprising was suppressed in the south it emerged in the Kurdish north. Both the Shi'is and the Ba'ath party officials committed brutal atrocities to undermine the other. The Shi'is indiscriminately killed Ba'ath officials and their families and relatives. The government forces retaliated with equal if not greater coercion. Insurgents were arrested, tortured and massively persecuted. (Cline) The statistical figures on the insurgents considerably differ. It has been reported that around Karbala there were 50,000 insurgents. (Khadduri and Ghareeb, p. 194) The statistical records on fatalities don't fall in agreement either. It has been estimated that 50,000 to 60,000 had been killed. (Cline)

This uprising was a significant indicator of the Shi'a envisioning their identity as separate from other sects in Iraq. The Shi'is strictly demanded isolated Shi'a rule. In fact the driving slogan of the uprising was "Jafari (Shi'a) Rule." The uprising also indicates the Iraqi Shi'is ties with the Shi'is of Iran. (Cline)

In late March 1991, the Kurds began to assert their political space in Iraq by rebellion. It is reported that the CIA engineered the rebellion. However, after the onset of insurgencies, the Kurds were not provided the support they had been promised by the U.N. coalition forces. Government troops brutally suppressed the rebellion by massacring thousands of Kurds. This created a huge exodus of Kurds to neighboring states and it is estimated that one to two million Kurds migrated Turkey and Iran. (Iraq: History) The U.N. coalition forces eventually declared a "no fly zone" in northern Iraq for the protection of the Kurds remaining in the region. The Kurds gained control of a 15,000-square-mile autonomous region in northern Iraq populated by 3 million Kurds. (Bruner) The Kurdish uprising of 1991 signifies the Kurdish vision for autonomy in Iraq. This uprising also shows the Kurdish political and national identity as separate from other sects in Iraq.

Conclusion

The two case studies reveal a life cycle for both interventions where there is military combat followed by an exacerbation of sectarian conflict, which is further ensued by the emergence of a repressive regime. It is important to recognize that in the two case studies the conflicts between the three sects are never strictly religious or ethnic. In fact, the conflict is primarily over lack of political representation, which is often globally misperceived as also a conflict of sectarian and religious hatred. It is the political nature of the sectarian conflict that justifies its augmentation after foreign intervention. Foreign interventions create authority vacuums which allow different sects to assert their political space in Iraq.

One could argue that sectarian exacerbation does not occur due to foreign intervention solely because foreign intervention simply makes the empirical indicators for sectarian conflicts more easily available for data collection. Is it reasonable to assume that a repressive leader like Saddam Hussein would actually rally on sectarian dissent that would foment further sectarian conflicts? An alternate method of falsifying, or proving, the null hypothesis would be to conduct ethnographic onsite research. A challenge with ethnographic onsite research will be the necessity to conduct it over several foreign interventions. Maybe a practical alternate is collaboration of academic research and on-field journalists in Iraq.

So what does the foreign intervention life cycle imply? The life cycle predicts that sectarian conflicts subside as a regime asserts its rule. Bearing in mind the impact of the Shi'a association with Iran and the Kurds demand for Kurdistan, such a life cycle predicts sustenance of the current boundaries of Iraq. It further questions the validity and effectiveness of the current US intervention in Iraq. If military involvement is known to destabilize the politics of the region, then is spread of education in the masses and development of the country a better way to build democracy in Iraq?

Furthermore, important questions arise if the implications of my research are embedded in the fast-changing world dynamics due to globalization. How many times will the cycles of foreign intervention, followed by sectarian conflicts and repressive regimes repeat themselves in Iraq? Will the Shi'is and Kurds challenge the British carved boundaries of Iraq and change the current map of the world? Will the Kurds eventually get their claimed homeland, Kurdistan, as promised in 1920 in the Treaty of Sevres? What are the implications of the spread of democracy in the region, keeping in mind the Shi'a beliefs on the rights of political representation of Muslims? How will the definition of democracy have to be re-defined if Shi'is assume power in Iraq, and do foreigners recognize this dilemma?

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