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# **Intolerance and Liberal Democracy in Post 2003 Iraq**

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# Abstract

Much literature on the topic of democratization in post 2003 Iraq claims that cultural factors have impeded a process of effective and sustained democratic development in the country. In many instances however, these claims are very general and fail to specify and theoretically defend how exactly, cultural facets relating to attitudes and behavior such as lacking religious tolerance, have functioned as variables conducive toward obstructing a process of democratization in the country. For the sake of specificity in terms of the correlation between culture and failed democracy in Iraq, the objective of this investigation has been to explore intolerance, or more specifically religious intolerance in Iraqi society since 2003 as found, and theoretically assess via theory of democratic political culture, its implications upon components of liberal democracy. This entailed three systematic stages facilitating theoretically grounded results. First, the identification of intolerance in Iraqi society via actions or behavior reflecting discrimination as a proxy indicator of the former. Second, an assessment of these findings in terms of their implications upon liberal democracy components. And lastly, subjection of democratic political culture theory to those liberal democracy implications observed and discussed in the prior stage. What was found, is Iraqi social intolerance to a greater or lesser extent acting as a variable conducive toward obstructing liberal democracy. This is illustrated by the direct negative implications and effects upon liberal democracy components, resulting from a prevalence of discrimination between Sunnis and Shia Muslims as both a product, and likewise a reflection of religious intolerance in Iraq.

Key Words: Social Intolerance, Liberal Democracy, Democratic Political Culture, Sectarianism, Discrimination, Inequality, Sunni Muslims, Shia Muslims

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The US's "fight against terrorism" in Iraq, entailed two primary objectives toward ensuring, "...*long-term safety and stability of our world*" (Bush.W 2003 Feb). First, the elimination of tyrannism and second, the establishment of democracy (Bush.W 2003 Feb, Nov). The logic being applied by the Bush's administration, reflecting adherence to idealism and democratic peace theory, was that a free Iraq with proper democratic institutions would in turn result in a more secure world. This implicitly implied that democracy could and would effectively function in the country given an absence of despotism and prevalence of proper democratic institutions. Accordingly, on March 20<sup>th</sup> 2003, the US invaded Iraq: Saddam was removed from power, the political system was dismantled, and the Iraqi military was disbanded. The U.S laid out a liberal democratic governing structure foundation. This included a model of, "...free and fair elections, accountable and transparent political institutions, preservation of civil and political rights, and support to civil society organizations"(Bridoux.2012: 330). In 2004, sovereignty is handed back over to the Iraqis and by 2006, a new Iraqi federal government and constitution based on separation of powers and equality, officially comes into effect (DFAT.2014).

## 1.2 Research Problem

Since Iraq's government inception in 2006, the country has overall failed to reflect positive liberal democratic development. This, is reflected by both, Bartelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) consecutively since 2006 rating Iraq's general state of democracy low and likewise, by Freedom House's (FH) ongoing rating of the country as not free in terms of liberty, freedom, and political rights. (BTI.2006-2014) (FH.2006-2014)

Liberal democratic institutional changes in Iraq have not led to liberal democracy. As Bridoux 2012 argues, the institutional liberal democratic model left behind by the US, has failed to address cultural factors such as religious conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims, which are at the heart of Iraq's ongoing social and political struggle (Bridoux.2012: 330 343). Along these lines, Bridoux 2012 suggests that Iraq's failure to attain liberal democracy, is attributed to the absence of a liberal democratization transition at the social level (Bridoux.2012: 329). This lack of social democratization as Basham 2005 early on warned, is argued to be attributed to Iraqi cultural factors related to lacking support and fostering of; democratic norms, values, and practices by the citizenry (Basham.2005:1,17). These claims, primarily derive from supposed implications upon liberal democracy of historically rooted deep state of religious conflict in Iraq, characterized by ongoing conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims. Ottaway 2005 reflecting upon these divisions, made similar claims as Basham 2005; positing that democracy in the country would be dependent upon the populations ability to overcome coercive intolerant practices and harness consensus and toleration between the different religious groups that compose its society (Ottaway.2005:1,7). These three authors in other words on a very general level imply that contextual factors related to culture in Iraq, would go on to function as impediments toward the realization of liberal democracy in the country. This line of thought as Basham 2005 specifically argues, suggests on a wider theoretical level that supportive cultural values in Iraq such as social tolerance, are essential toward the long-term development and survival of democracy (Basham.2005:1).

In contesting Iraq's lacking ability at attaining liberal democracy, pegged with claims suggesting cultural impediments to democracy in the country (including intolerance); this thesis thus seeks to explore intolerance in Iraq since 2003, and assess the implications of the latter upon liberal democracy components. Importantly, this investigation parts with a causal understanding of social tolerance or rather intolerance as a variable potentially attributed to Iraq's incapacity to attain liberal democracy.

This paper concludes by positing that in fact; religious intolerance identified in Iraq, is causally attributed to having acted to a greater or lesser extent, as a variable conducive toward obstructing liberal democracy.

### **1.3 Research Question**

In what manner is social intolerance in Iraq since 2003 identifiable, and do findings suggest that intolerance has functioned as a variable negatively impacting liberal democracy components?

### **1.4 Aim of paper**

To potentially shine light on the negative implications that cultural factors including intolerance in society, can have toward negatively impacting the fulfillment of a liberal form of democracy in a given context.

### **1.5 Scope**

This investigation will assess intolerance in post US invasion Iraq (2003-2013) via combination of qualitative and quantitative evidence which will then be subjected to liberal democracy components. Although Iraqi society is made up of varying religions and ethnicities in which more than one social conflict between groups can be identified, due to lack of space, this study will sole focus on the most predominant social conflict in post war Iraq concerning Sunni and Shia Muslims. Intolerance between these groups will be assessed in the form of behavioural aspects broadly pertaining to both the political and social landscapes of society.

As a disclaimer, i do not argue nor is it the focus of this paper to defend that intolerance in Iraq has ultimately impeded a process of liberal democratization. This paper does otherwise center around intolerance acting as a variable at least in part having obstructed components of liberal democracy in Iraq.

### **1.6 Limitations**

To begin with, the potential of political/religious biases in sources of information used is a reality. In this regard, and considering primarily the incorporation of secondary source, some findings presented in the analysis may be distorted or inaccurate. Likewise and in some instances, lacking availability of quantitative data toward supporting/cross checking qualitative findings, may also be argued in some instances to put in question the legitimacy of some of the evidence presented.

In addition, and although the investigation actively aims to adopt a neutral standpoint, an unconscious personal bias in the selection and interpretation of information is a realistic factor which may have impacted the assumptions made in this paper.

## **2. Methods**

This investigation is in the form of a case study by where information has been collected by studying the characteristics of a particular “entity” (SP.2014:2), in this case being the country of Iraq post 2003.

The case study incorporates a combination of both inductive and deductive methodology. Overall however, the methodological framework is deductive in nature as the investigation parts with a theoretical framework upon which then, findings are subjected to toward making theoretically supported assumptions.(James.2014). Within this overall deductive framework, induction is likewise applied as a means of guiding the type of information retrieved for analysis. (Bryman.2012.p26): Here and although actions reflecting discrimination is thematically predetermined for investigation as a variable addressing the theoretical framework applied, the research process nevertheless likewise parts quite widely in a qualitative fashion. In this regard, general observations inductively lead to the uncovering of facets addressing both; the predetermined theme and subsequently, the theoretical framework selected. (Bryman.2012.p26).

The logic behind the partial incorporation of an inductive qualitative approach toward retrieval of information, is that it may and in fact has, allowed for findings in the empirical material to be identified and understood in a manner enabling the prompting of new insights. (Macdonald, Headlam. 2014:47).This insight might otherwise have been less explicit if the approach was completely deductive, resulting from the “narrow natured” (RMKB.2006) characteristics of the former. Nevertheless, the deductive ingredient in this investigation provided structure and guidance via the application of a theoretical framework and a predetermined category of investigation which further, overall allowed for the study to remain on target toward addressing the research question at hand.(Liehr, Smith.2014:3)

### **2.1 Outline and Analytical Approach**

The following in three stages and as this study was conducted, will outline more specifically how this investigation is carried out and will be presented.

#### **Stage 1: Findings**

##### **Guiding theme for data collection**

As stated, this study aims to understand how social intolerance in Iraq has been manifested since 2003, and what impact findings have upon key components of liberal democracy. To facilitate this task and establish at least a minimal form of direction in the empirical material investigation process, behavioral aspects reflecting discrimination as a more concrete physical proxy indicator of lacking tolerance/intolerance, has been selected as a “guiding theme”, although nevertheless and as discussed, the investigation likewise parts broadly.

As Cambridge Online defines, discrimination, relates to, “treating a person or particular group of people differently, especially in a worse way from the way in which you treat other people, because of their skin color, sexuality, etc”(C.O.2014). Discrimination here is thus resemblant of intolerance or intolerant attitude as it entails lacking acceptance of diversity via the unequal treatment of an individual or group on the basis of their skin color, sexuality or beliefs (Bergen.2012:113).

For the sake of abstaining from the argument of whether the egg came before the hen or vice versa, behavioral aspects suggesting discrimination will thus be logically interpreted as both reflecting, and likewise as a manifestation; of intolerance or intolerant attitudes.

### **Type of Data**

Findings presented will be primarily in the form of qualitative and quantitative secondary source evidence. These derive from literary sources in the form of; academic articles, online articles, news media, NGO'S/INGO'S, United Nations documents, government documents, and democracy and freedom assessment organizations. Likewise, and as a primary source of information, an interview conducted with an Iraqi NGO has facilitated some qualitative evidence that will be presented in the study.

This stage will accordingly present findings suggesting intolerance as reflected by the discriminating nature of aspects identified within Iraq's broader conflict-characterized context. These findings will relate to both the political and social landscapes of Iraqi society.

### **Stage 2: Interpretation of findings**

This stage of the investigation will aim to bridge data and theory by first, qualitatively interpreting findings (Macdonald, Headlam.2014:49), in terms of their impacts upon liberal democracy components. In other words, Intolerance in Iraqi society which will be reflected at this point by findings suggesting widespread discrimination in Iraq society, will be assessed in relation to impacting liberal democracy components.

More specifically, the subjection of findings to liberal democracy components, will be done via a systematic comparison method by where comparisons will be made between; relative empirical information derived from cumulative findings, and predetermined components of liberal democracy which preliminarily, are suspected to become obstructed. (Alexander, Bennet.2005p1).

These components adopted from Diamond (1999), Stanford (2014) and Rice (1997) include:

- Freedoms of; "expression, belief, opinion, discussion, speech, publication, and assembly." (Diamond 1999:11).
- Equal access to education and employment as political resources. (Stanford 2014).
- Presence of a Civic culture (Rice.1997:100)(Stanford 2014).
- Absence of reserved domains of power (Diamond 1999:10,11).
- State decisions and control determined by elected accountable officials (Diamond 1999:10,11).
- Constrained executive power via horizontal accountability and autonomous power of government institutions including the judiciary and parliament (Diamond 1999:10,11).

- Equal access to the political process regardless of race ethnicity or religion. (Not prohibited from expressing interests and participating in the political process)(Diamond 1999:10,11).

### **Stage 3: Concluding theoretical implications**

Observations made in the prior stage regarding the negative impact of intolerance in the form of discrimination upon liberal democracy components, will in this section be subjected to the overall cause-effect logic defended by theory of democratic political culture. This will be the final stage toward attaining theoretically supported core assumptions that address the research question earlier stated.



### **3. Theory**

#### **3.1 Theoretical Framework**

The overall argument that leads this study, relates to Diamond (1999) positing that tolerance in society, forms an indispensable ingredient of liberal democracy (Diamond.1999:166,173). Here it is otherwise assumed that a rather lack of tolerance or intolerance may obstruct the fulfillment or attainment of liberal democracy (Diamond 1999:166,173). Theoretically grounded, this argument adopts a standpoint denominated as democratic political culture.

This theoretical framework selection has been motivated by the direct correlation of theory selected with arguments made by the three authors earlier listed. This generally; entails claims pointing in the direction of correlation between culture and democracy by where the former in Iraq is argued to have acted as a variable obstructing democracy. The following will accordingly review theory of democratic political culture and discuss the role of tolerance or intolerance as a core component of the former.

#### **3.2 Conceptualizing Theory of Political Culture**

The concept of political culture has come to be theoretically applied as a means toward understanding and assessing the emergence and development of democracy: Democratic political culture theory, challenging institutionalism by where democracy is argued to develop given only presence of efficient democratic institutions, assumes that cultural aspects, in addition act as important variables toward the development and sustainability of democracy (Benavides.2011:11). The modern conception of this theory pioneered by Almond and Verba in 1963, posits that democracy and its effective and sustained functioning; is dependant not only on proper democratic institutions, but likewise on the degree to which its subject population and elite class possess and adhere to specific democratic norms and behavior patterns(Almond,Verba.1963) (Tessler,Gao.2009:197).

At its core, democratic political culture theory assumes a casual approach to mass and elite attitudes as conditioning behavior which further are argued to determine political performance and structure in society (Diamond.1999:163) This does not however, assume a full on causal deterministic approach to the understanding of political cultures impact by where the latter has a sole one way determining effect upon political structure and performance. Causality here as Diamond draws form Gabriel Almond, in fact works both ways: Political culture influences structure and behavior but likewise, structure and performance is also believed to have an impact on political culture (Diamond.1999:164).

Elements or rather variables that make up a democratic political culture revolve around categories reflecting norms and values which address; consensus, equal integration, and perceptions toward higher authority. These include; interpersonal trust, social tolerance, peaceful resolution of conflict via compromise, and acceptance of democratic institutions as legitimate (Parrot.1997:21 in Blokker.2008:163). Within this political culture framework, this thesis will only focus on tolerance as a variable addressing democracy. The following will accordingly discuss Social tolerance/intolerance and its relation to liberal democracy.

### 3.3 Social Tolerance/Intolerance

Social tolerance according to its neo-classical understanding, entails peoples *acceptance* of diverging views and beliefs (Bergen.2012:113). A tolerant society as Green & Gurevich (2001) describes reflects; *recognition* and *acceptance* on equal terms, of the *identity* and *uniqueness* of different members or groups of society with diverging views and/or beliefs.

Tolerance, is argued by theory of democratic political culture as a crucial variable for the effective functioning and development of democracy. In terms of liberal democracy, and considering it centers around upholding individual liberty and equality in society, it may thus be argued to require a citizenry which respects diversity (GarciaRivera et al.2002 in Tessler&Gao.2009.p199). Tolerance is considered indispensable here for two main reasons: First, liberal democracy places emphasis on equal treatment and inclusion in society of all citizens regardless of views or beliefs (Diamond.1999:10,11)(Tessler.Gao.2009.p199). For this to become legitimate, individuals must first *accept* and *respect* that all people are equally entitled access to resources regardless of a persons or groups views and beliefs (Tessler.Gao.2009.p199). Second, tolerance toward opposing viewpoints and beliefs is essential for enabling political contestation and open exchange of ideas, which is an important component of liberal democracy (Tessler.Gao.2009.p199). In this regard, lacking respect toward the right to freely express, impedes the important role in a democracy of citizens to advocate their needs and concerns, and further to hold leaders and government accountable (Tessler.Gao.2009.p199).

In short, as liberal democracy entails respect for diversity and equal opportunity and inclusion into the political process of citizens, it is thus defended here to require tolerance as; equal legal and political rights and likewise, as mass social orientation which recognizes, accepts, and respects; the identity, beliefs, and uniqueness of different factions of the population, as equal (Green&Gurevich.2001:208). Toward liberal democracy, tolerance must hence not only be reflected constitutionally, but likewise also in practice via moral adherence to the concept of; equal rights, and inclusion regardless of individual or group preferences.

This rhetoric as part of democratic political culture theory, otherwise assumes, that an otherwise lack of tolerance or intolerance, is *causally* attributed to impeding or negatively impacting a liberal conception of democracy. As Green & Gurevich (2001) note, without tolerance for differing ideas where equal representation and popular interest is suppressed, the chances of liberal democracy survival becomes diminished. This is attributed to the potential in surfacing; of inequality resulting from intolerance which further as Tessler & Gao (2009) describe, increases the risk in outbreak of violence, conflict, and civil war (Tessler&Gao.2009:199).

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Contextual Observations

Iraq for hundreds of years has suffered from ongoing historically rooted conflict concerning a religious hierarchy power struggle between Shia and Sunni Muslims. This conflict derives from succession controversy following the death of prophet Muhammad in 632 A.D which since then, has manifested itself with ongoing periods of discrimination and oppression between the two groups (Berzegar.2011).

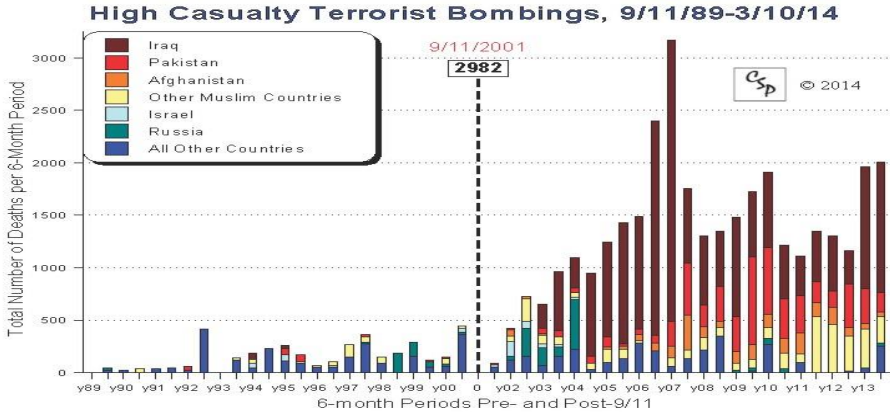
In recent times, this divide has been sharply accentuated following the most recent U.S intervention. Decades of Sunni rule and oppression against Shias during the Hussein era, abruptly came to an end in 2003 with the countries invasion and dismantling of its political system. A subsequent political power vacuum enabled following the collapse of Saddams regime, pegged with a democratic institutional structure left behind by the U.S has, as Basham (2004) early on warned; given the Shia Muslims majority in Iraq; an opportunity to rise over Sunnis, dominate the country, and exact revenge against past wrongdoings (Basham 2004:10). Although bold claims, along these lines what has been witnessed in Iraq since 2003, is the near complete transfer of political power toward Shias and away from Sunnis. This power acquisition has been regarded by Iraqi opposition and the international community, as illegitimate and focused at alienating Sunnis from Iraqi society (F.H.2014) (BTI.2013). This has in effect had profound impacts outside the political landscape, which in great part is responsible for causally fueling Iraq's internal violent conflict (Councilman.2013)(U.N.2013). In the Sunni community in this regard, it has sparked acts of violent retribution against Shias which has in turn, provoked a similar response by the latter toward the former. More broadly and according to Councilman 2013, this tradeoff, has since 2003; fueled vicious patterns of hostility between the groups. This has resulted in the deepening of Sunni-Shia religious divisions and reinforcement of extremist polarization and discrimination in Iraqi society (Councilman.2013).

These broad contextual findings point in the direction of religious intolerance in Iraq. Toward understanding the potential impact that intolerance may have upon liberal democracy in Iraq, the following and guided by the above, will proceed with a more in-depth look at findings suggesting violent tradeoff between Sunnis and Shias, as a reflection of discrimination.

**4.2 Sectarian Violence**

Religiously motivated violence between Sunnis and Shias found, reflects discrimination in Iraqi society perhaps most evidently and adversely. Violence primarily between these two groups is reflected in graph X below indicating deaths resulting from acts of terror in the country between 2003 and 2013.

**Graph 1**  
*High casualty terrorist bombings*  
 (WRSC.2014)



Illustrated here is the emergence of worrying trends in deaths resulting from violent acts of terror following U.S intervention in 2003. These attacks have been sectarian in nature and primarily in the form of bombings targeting general populations and individuals in places including; mosques, schools, government buildings, crowded city locations, and transportation systems (HP.2014).

**Interpreting the numbers: Factors motivating sectarian violence and extremism**

Oppression between Sunnis and Shias has progressively deepened religious divisions and intolerance in Iraq since 2003 (Councilman 2013). Feelings of hatred, revenge, and paranoia, continuously fueled by acts of hostility, have negatively conditioned the relationship between these two Muslim factions (Councilman 2013): As Ruhayem (2012) describes, Iraq “.. is a world in which people see enemies everywhere, and sectarian identity determines how they think”. Sectarian hostility targeting general populations according to Councilman (2013), has become a standardized means by which sects belonging to these two Muslim factions respond to threats and attacks between each other (Councilman.2013). As Codesman and Kahzai (2013) note, this tradeoff has been enabled and continuously reinforced by ongoing acts of violent hostility between the groups resulting in further violence and ongoing deepening of divisions (Cordesman&Khazai 2013:5). More specifically and as IFRAD similarly describes, sectarian violence has had the effect since 2003 in motivating; expansion in number and size of Sunni and Shia extremist groups, extremist polarization of previously peaceful grass-root movements and organizations and subsequently, ongoing patterns of sectarian violence (IRFAD.2014).

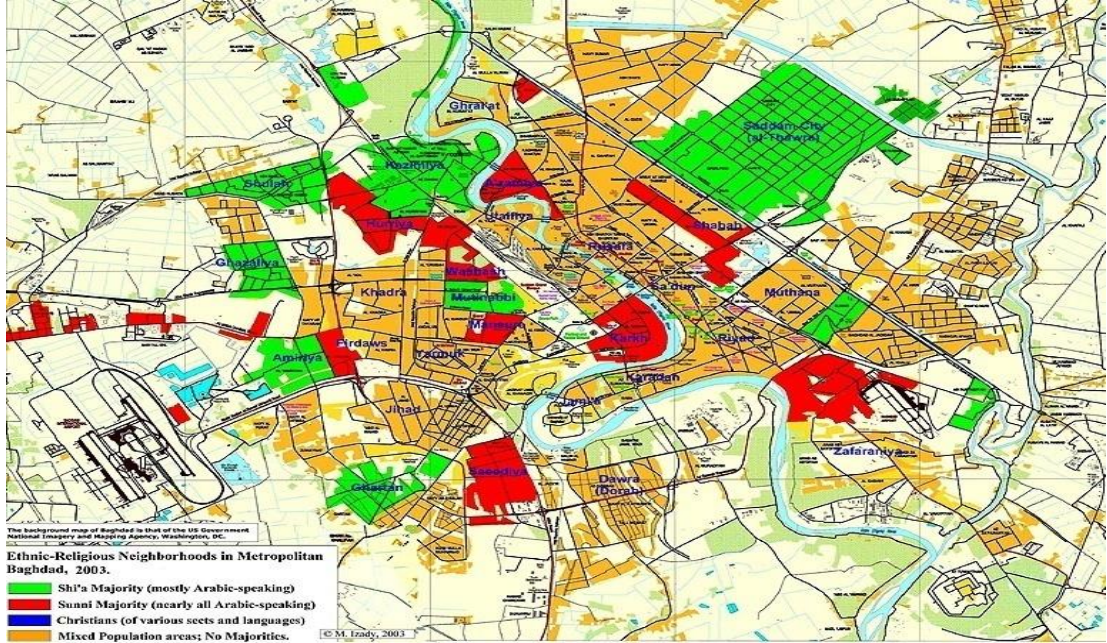
Along these lines and as Minority Rights and Councilman (2013) describe, retribution between sects has been a major driver in the perpetuation of sectarianism and violence in Iraq (M.R.2008) (Councilman.2013).

This may be argued to be reflected in the graph above by subsequent high death rates following instances of sudden sharp spikes in graph above: The first upsurge as BBC describes, is attributed to the bombing by Sunni militias in February of 2006 of a Shia shrine in Samarra resulting in the deaths of hundreds (BBC.1 May.2014). This event is regarded as responsible for unleashing a strong wave of perpetual attacks between the groups (refer to graph X), resulting in further deepening of the Shia-Sunni hatred divide (BBC.1<sup>st</sup>.May.2014). This is reflected on a rather short term basis, with the months of May and June that followed which on average experienced more than 100 sectarian violence related deaths per day in the country (BBC.1<sup>st</sup>.May.2014).

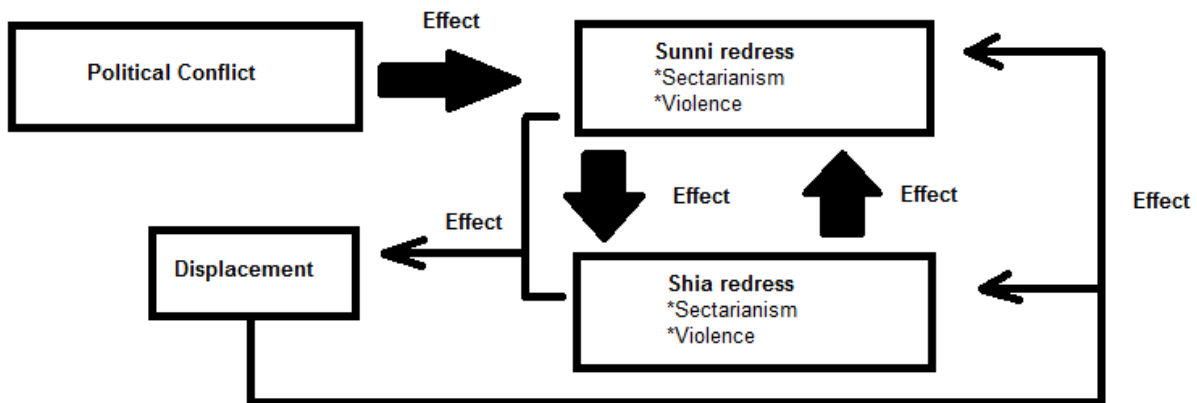
Secondly, the other upsurge in 2013, is attributed to being a sectarian response to the government ordered storming by security forces, of a peaceful Sunni protest camp earlier that year in Kirkuk (HRW.2014). As in 2006, this event reflecting government driven discrimination against Sunnis as will later be covered, is according to Dunlop (2014) and reflected in the graph above, in great part responsible for triggering the last major upsurge of sectarian violence in the country (Dunlop.2014). These observations illustrate and suggest the adverse reinforcing effect that sectarian attacks have had in motivating sectarian sentiment and retribution in the form violence between both Sunnis and Shias.

As Codesman and Kahzai (2013) describe, the impact that this conflict is having in terms of displacing populations, is also an important component reinforcing sectarian sentiment and fueling violence. (Codesman and Kahzai.2013:12). These effects further illustrate the extent of, and adverse effects of sectarian hostility in Iraq since 2003: City districts are no longer of mixed Sunni-Shia composition resulting from sectarian violence (AP.2012) (BC.2014). This is most prominently demographically illustrated in Figures 1 and 2 regarding Baghdad, in which profound religious distributional changes are reflected in the city between 2003 and 2009. What is observable, is the diminishment of religiously mixed neighborhoods which as Thurber (2011) describes have become homogenized on the basis of sectarian identity (Thurber 2011:1).

**Figure 1** Ethnic Religious Neighborhoods in Metropolitan Baghdad. 2003(Lzady.2003)







### 4.3 Obstruction of Peaceful Protest

Findings have been presented which reflect discrimination in the extreme form of sectarian violence. Alongside sectarian violence as a means of condemnation, there has likewise been peaceful organized attempts to protest in Iraq. On many occasions however, these attempts have violently obstructed resulting from government and Shia gang intervention.

Since 2011 more specifically, there has been a surfacing of peaceful Sunni demonstrations across Iraq with attendance rates in the hundreds of thousands (UN.2013:3). These protests have primarily been motivated by discontent over government policies and functioning including discrimination in state employment, and with financial, administrative and legal corruption as will accordingly be reviewed (UN.2013:3). Since 2012 however, peaceful Sunni demonstrators have been subject of severe acts of discrimination:

Although guarded by Iraq's new constitution, in practice and according to findings, freedom of assembly has been obstructed both by government and organized pro government Shia gangs. As an anonymous NGO staff member from IRFAD Iraq I interviewed asserted, "...the Shia government oppresses Sunni protesters. They come out and do peaceful protests.. they try to do this, but no way they can because of Shia government" (IRFAD.2014). As GICJ (2013) similarly describes, peaceful demonstrators have experienced threats and violence by part of the Iraqi government. The hostile environment for peaceful demonstrators is verbally reflected here by Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August of 2013 where he promised to end demonstrations against the political process (GICJ.2013). General of land forces Ali Ghaidan similarly affirmed that year that he was determined and authorized to take action against all protesters (GICJ.2013).

Hostile promises have been accompanied by violent attacks by government forces against peaceful Sunni protesters (IRFAD 2014). One of many events in this regard was the deadly raid by security forces in April of 2013 on a Sunni peaceful protest camp near Kirkuk (HRW 2013). According to HRW (2013), security forces attacked demonstrators without provocation, leaving dozens dead and many injured (HRW.2013).

There have been many more cases like this which have resulted in Sunni peaceful protester attacks and deaths in cities including Falluja, Anbar, Salah ah Din, Diyala, Ninewa, Ramadi and Baghdad (IRFAD.2014)(HRW.2014).

Violent oppression against peaceful Sunni protesters is also evident by part of Shia pro government groups. On June 10<sup>th</sup> and February 25<sup>th</sup> of 2011 in Baghdad, pro government Shia gangs armed with weapons beat and stabbed peaceful Sunni demonstrators and sexually assaulted various women (HRW.2011). Security forces, whose role should be to defend the populace against such acts of violent hostility, have purportedly been standing by as aggressors carry on their attack on unarmed protestors (HRW.2011). Based on testimonies, HRW further notes that these attacks have had a profound effect in ability to exercise right to peaceful assembly and protest, and have in addition had substantial psychological impacts (HRW.2011). In fear of attack, and based on testimonies from organizers, many protesters have as a result stopped attending peaceful demonstrations as a result (HRW.2011).

#### **4.4 Discrimination In Education**

Discrimination is also reflected in other sectors of Iraq's public sphere. As Councilman (2013) notes, religious discrimination has impacted nearly all aspects of life including education and employment.

Higher education in Iraq has been found to have significantly suffered from religious divisions since 2003. Findings suggest that Iraqi universities have been subject to severe acts of discrimination resulting from academic venue divisions along sectarian lines (GCPEA.2013:21). As Freedom House (2013) notes, universities operate in, "highly politicized and insecure environments" (F.H.2013).

Deterioration of religious coexistence in Iraqi society as illustrated earlier, has likewise and similarly, negatively impacted universities. This has ultimately had the effect of displacing Sunni students from universities located in Shia areas, and vice versa (Cancela-Kieffer 2007 in Paanacker.2009:33). Student displacement here, has been found to be attributed to two main factors with strong religious intolerance/discrimination undertones.

First, according to Sawahell (2012), institutions across the country have fallen under control of Sunni and Shia sects depending on the region in which they are located (Sawahel.2012). Control over universities has also in many cases been transferred to Shia political parties such as; Supreme Council in Iraq controlling Baghdad university, Sadr group controlling Al-Mustansiriya university, and the Al-Dawa Party controlling Al-Nahrain University (Sawahel 2012). Sectarian control over these institutions according to Sawahell (2012), has been accompanied by administrative discrimination which include admission requirements and scholarship approvals based on sectarian affiliation (Sawahel 2012). In addition, and as Mamouri 2014 describes, sectarian control of institutions has in effect and in many cases, resulted in curricular content manipulation (Mamouri.2014). As Jawad (2007) notes, curriculums in universities across the nation have been modified to accommodate particular sectarian beliefs (Jawad.2007:522 in Paanacker.2009:33).

The second factor relates to violence targeting higher education institutions. This includes 31,598 violent sectarian attacks against students and staff that have occurred since 2003 as a result of religious polarization and division in higher education (Sawahel.2012). Included here are the deaths of nearly 500 academics between 2003 and 2006(Hodges.2006).

The subsequent effects of sectarian attacks on students and professors and administrative policies which reflect discrimination on the basis of sectarian affiliation, has ultimately led to



drastic changes in religious composition of universities across Iraq (Sawahel.2012) and , has forced many students to relocate due to lacking security (Ajeeli.2014).

#### **4.5 Discrimination in Employment**

Discrimination on the basis of religious affiliation has also been found reflected in the statal employment sector. Evidence is reflected shortly after the U.S invasion where systematic firing of Sunni employees from state institutions was carried out on the basis of direct or suspected connection to the previous Sunni Baath party (FH.2014). Since then, these individuals have been unable to obtain state employment as a further result of sectarian favoritism in hiring; especially severe within state bodies including the military and police forces as well as in the political sphere which will later be covered(FH.2014) (USDS.2010:8). Shias on the other hand according to I.O (2013), have been actively recruited and employed by state security bodies (I.O.2013). In effect, tens of thousands of Sunnis have subsequently lost their jobs since 2003 (I.O.2013).

The higher education system has also been hit hard with employment discrimination. Implementation of sectarian agendas by part of education minister Ali-Al Adeb as also part of the de-Baathification scheme, have successfully purged many Sunni's from educational institutions (AP.2012). In addition and resulting from the sectarian control and polarization of universities as previously discussed, has been the hiring of staff on the basis of religious affiliations (Sawahel.2012). As an anonymous Iraqi university professor interviewed in 2012 alleged, Shia religious orientation "has become an exclusive passport for anyone to assume any high position" (Anonymous 2012 in Sawahel 2012). Academic, scientific, and administrative positions according to Sawahel (2012) have since 2003 not been determined by level of expertise, but rather by sectarian affiliation (Sawahel.2012).

#### **4.6 Inequality in the political landscape**

Former president of the Iraq National Group, Laith Kubba, early on warned that sudden introduction of democratic reform in an Iraq composed of multiple competing religious/sectarian groups, would jeopardize democracy resulting from conflict arising from the institutionalization of politics along religious/sectarian lines (Kubba.2003. In Basham.2004.p11). In accordance with Kubbas claim and overall, Iraq's political system has since democratic reform, been dominated by ongoing conflict and deadlock resulting from power struggles deriving from competing agendas centered around paroqial sectarian interests. (F.H.2014) (BTI 2014:13).

This crisis since the new governments inception in 2005 according to HRW (2014) and BTI (2014), has been notoriously known for the controversial political actions of the ongoing governing Da'wa Shia party (executive) headed by current prime minister Nouri al-Maliki (BTI.2014:13) (HRW.2014). The ruling cabinet has been strongly accused of corruption and undemocratic practices which have increasingly come to be regarded as sectarian and authoritarian moves toward politically marginalizing Sunnis (HRW.2014) (BTI 2014:27-28). It is primarily these actions, that Freedom House attributes to a rise among the population of; political distrust, violence, and deepening of religious division in Iraqi society (F.H.2014).

In line with the above, the following will present findings which reflect religious discrimination in the political landscape by part of Maliki and his cabinet since 2005.

Bartelsmann Transformation Index and the Institute for the Study of War provide evidence which reflects a series of non tolerant actions by part of the government since 2006. First, this includes accusations of centralizing power by placing under direct control (bypassing parliament) key independent government bodies via replacement of opponent Sunni heads of agencies (BTI.2014:13). As ISW (2013) notes, this includes Maliki taking advantage of a lack of oversight on military appointments to directly as opposed to parliament, replace senior military officers with other members of Shia religious orientation. In addition and similarly, this also includes the targeting and replacement of senior Sunni officials from the central bank, integrity commission, national police, and high electoral commission (ISW.2013)(BTI.2014:13). These parliamentary bypassed and Sunni biased replacements according to ISW (2013) have enabled Maliki to greatly influence the functioning of these bodies and has further allowed him to “check his political opponents and protect his political allies” (ISW 2013). Second and similarly, Maliki according to BTI (2014) has gone to the extent of creating extra constitutional bodies that are only accountable to the prime minister which again, bypass parliament, and further have no legal framework and hence no oversight or accountability (BTI.2014:6). As ISW (2013) describes, these security bodies such as the Office of the Commander in Chief (OCINC), have allowed Maliki to bypass the defense and interior ministries and establish an informal chain of command that reaches military and police commanders on the ground (ISW.2013). According to ISW (2013) the OCINC has allowed Maliki and his party to assert direct influence over both “.. the targeting of individuals and the conduct of operations” for political purposes (ISW.2013). Thirdly and facilitated by the centralization of power via creation and control of government bodies, has been, according to ISW (2013), the ongoing selective targeting and purging of Sunni politicians by Maliki since 2007 (ISW.2013). This includes previous vice president Tariq alHashimi and finance minister Rafi al-Issawi among others, on unjustified charges of terrorism (BTI.2014:2).

These findings, clearly reflecting targeted Sunni discrimination in the political landscape, has fueled Iraq’s political crisis and deadlock and has further led to accusations by the opposition of unconstitutional behavior and the presidents breaching of power sharing agreements (BTI.2014:13,14). These “autocratic actions” according to BTI (2014) have been enabled by Maliki; “evoking the specter of a Baathist threat”, as a political instrument to justify the sidelining and persecution of Sunni political members which further has been facilitated by the establishment of illegitimate chains of command (BTI.2014:13,6)(ISW.2013). In all, findings suggest that the Da’wa party have been accused of unconstitutionally molding the political and legal structure of government institutions in successful attempts at ensuring Shia dominance in the political landscape. These autocratic tendencies have ultimately and effectively eroded the constitutionally intended ability of parliament to exercise oversight over executive action (ISW.2013). In effect, this has undermined the interests and obstructed the ability for Sunnis in Iraq to become fully represented and absorbed into the political process(BTI.2014:13).

## **5. Discussion: Liberal Democracy Implications**

The findings presented above overall illustrate a deep state of social intolerance. This is reflected by the nature and extent of religious discrimination found between Shia and Sunni Muslims in Iraqi society since 2003.

Contesting theory of democratic political cultures assertion in that tolerance in society is essential for democracy; the following will now hence systematically discuss findings in relation to their implications upon components of liberal democracy.

### **5.1 Implications: Sectarian Violence**

Findings regarding the violent sectarian relation between Sunnis and Shias may be argued to have negative implications upon liberal democracies component calling for the presence of a civic culture.

Findings initially presented suggested that Sunni and Shia Muslims in Iraqi society since 2003 have been deeply divided along sectarian lines. These divisions were initially quantitatively found to be manifested via acts of terror resulting in deaths. Qualitatively, sectarian violence identified was found here to have not only been a product of the Sunni-Shia religious divide but likewise, findings suggested that it has been a factor which has also been responsible for fueling expansion of sectarian extremism and furthering sectarian violence (IRFAD.2014) (Codesman and Kahzai.2013:14,15). Findings likewise suggested that sectarian violence has been additionally perpetuated and deepened between these groups resulting from other factors including population displacement as an indirect effect of the former, and also as a response to conflict at the political level.

What has been observed from this evidence, is not only the manifestation of ongoing religious intolerance as manifested via sectarian violence but likewise and also important, the role which violence in itself and other factors have had in motivating and perpetuating this hostile conflict. What this evidence further and importantly reflects, which likewise has been fueled by the above, is adherence to feelings of revenge and condemnation between Sunnis and Shias, as opposed to compromise and consensus (Councilman.2013). This aspect, reflected by evidence as what seems like a psychological normalization of violence as a response to threats and attacks, has according to IFRAD (2014) and Codesman & Kahzai (2013) had adverse effects upon perpetuating a deterioration of relations between the two Muslim groups (IRFAD.2014) (Codesman and Kahzai.2013:5). In comparing these findings to an understanding of a liberal civic culture, a set of conclusions may be drawn. A civic culture entails; tolerance for diversity and social cohesion, as well as networks of cooperation and social engagement (Rice.1997:100).

To begin with, sectarian violence as a manifestation and likewise a reflection of intolerance, has in itself explicit negative implications upon the first two components of civic culture: A single or handful of sectarian acts of violence may be argued to reflect intolerance and lacking of social cohesion. It is however rather the identification of the widespread extent of sectarian violence in Iraq, which allows for a broader perhaps more significant assumption to be made in relation to impacting these civic culture components. In this regard, quantitative evidence depicting ongoing trends between 2003 and 2013 in deaths resulting from violent attacks pegged with adverse side effects in terms of having been responsible for the

homogenization of communities along sectarian lines, illustrates the widespread extent of, and pervasiveness of sectarian violence in Iraq. Widespread sectarian violence in Iraq in other words, reflects intolerance and lacking of general social cohesion. Intolerance in the form of sectarian violence and in itself, is thus attributed to directly reflect an obstruction of tolerance for diversity and solidarity as otherwise called upon by a liberal civic culture.

Likewise, findings also negatively address civic engagement and cooperation components of civic culture. Sectarianism and violence resemble a form of civic cooperation and engagement that is not in accordance with that called upon by a liberal civic culture: A liberal civic culture, otherwise and ideally calls for networks of cooperation which actively and peacefully engage in society to promote concerns and needs toward the benefit of the broader community (Rice.1997:100). In comparison, sectarian networks of cooperation engaging in violence reflect; neither peaceful engagement nor promotion of the needs of the broader community. What is otherwise reflected here, are networks of cooperation divided along extremist religious lines which have been engaging in hostile actions against the general Shia and Sunni populations toward the promotion of diverging sectarian agendas driven by hatred and condemnation (Councilman.2013)(Ruhayem.2012).

What is additionally and importantly identifiable, is that sectarian violence in itself as well as the indirect effect of displacing populations, and likewise resulting from conflict reflecting discrimination in the political landscape; have further been found as conducive toward the expansion and perpetuation of sectarianism and violence. (Cordesman&Khazai2013)(IRFAD.2014). What this implicitly suggests on a broader level and to a greater or lesser extent, is that acts of intolerance (sectarian violence and discrimination in the political landscape) have served as variables which have been responsible for shaping cooperation and engagement in a manner opposing that called upon by a liberal democratic civic culture. This is reflected by qualitative findings suggesting the adverse effect that acts of discrimination between Sunnis and Shias have had in reinforcing and expanding extremism and motivating feelings of hatred and revenge between Sunnis and Shias and additionally quantitatively, as reflected by periods of intense acts of terror following major attacks including both in 2006 and 2013. Sectarian violence and discrimination at the political level as a manifestation and likewise reflection of intolerance in Iraq, is thus attributed to in the longer run at least in part responsible for having further reinforced and deepened intolerance. The nature or manner in which this intolerance reinforcement has been suggested to have been manifested (via sectarian expansion and violence), is argued to hence on a longer term basis; have negatively impacted the development of a civic culture in terms of adversely effecting to a greater or lesser extent; cooperation and engagement.

In short, these assumptions; imply that sectarian violence, as a manifestation and likewise reflection of intolerance, is resemblant of components of a liberal civic culture in an adverse manner. Further, sectarian violence in itself and other factors, also as manifestations of intolerance effects, have been argued to have negatively reinforced cooperation and engagement and hence to a greater or lesser extent the development of a civic culture away from that called upon by liberal democracy. Intolerance is thus argued to have had to greater or lesser extent, negative implications upon a civic culture as called upon by liberal democracy.

## 5.2 Implications: Obstruction of Peaceful Protest

Although negative effects of intolerance in the form of sectarian violence upon liberal democratic civic culture have been identified, this is not to assume that the former has fully negatively conditioned Iraq's society in a hostility based cooperative manner. Findings have shown, that in fact there has likewise been many instances of protests characterized by organized social structures of cooperation promoting peaceful civic engagement. This is reflected by Sunni non-violent protests which have surfaced in many regions of the country since 2011. This has been in response to discrimination in state employment, and to financial, administrative and legal corruption (UN.2013:3). Unfortunately however, these peaceful Sunni protests have become violently targeted by government and pro-government Shia affiliated gangs. This is perhaps most evidently reflected by Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki verbally and directly condemning on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August 2013, demonstrations of any kind opposing the political process (GICJ.2013). A follow through of these threats has come about, with many instances of government led violent oppression, prominently reflected in April of 2013 with the deadly raiding by security forces of a peaceful Sunni protest camp in the city of Kirkuk (HRW.2013). Likewise, peaceful protestors have also been subject to violent hostility by part of Shia pro government gangs including in Baghdad on the 10<sup>th</sup> of June and 25<sup>th</sup> of February of 2011 where Sunni protesters were sexually assaulted, stabbed, and beaten.(HRW.2013)

Discrimination and intolerance reflected by these actions, has profound implications upon democracy. Liberal democracy crucially calls for freedom of belief, opinion, assembly, and demonstration and likewise, access on equal basis to the political process regardless of race, ethnicity, or religion (Diamond.1999:11). In such a state, citizens are able to protest and organize toward influencing the political process and hold government accountable in a manner free from persecution or legal constraints (Diamond.1999:11).

Legally in Iraq, these aspects are guarded under article fourteen of the countries new constitution (I.C.2005). In practice however, and given the findings above, these important components forming an essential pillar of liberal democracy, have been overtly disregarded and further compromised by actions of government and organized Shia gangs. Verbal and violent hostile actions reflect intolerance toward inclusion of Sunnis in the political process via violent obstruction of freedom of speech and demonstration. Evidence of this comes both in the form of direct verbal hostility whereby the Prime Minister and General of land forces Ali Ghaidan have publicly threatened those opposing the political process (GICJ 2013) and likewise, by an array of incidences involving violent assault upon peaceful Sunni protestors (HRW.2013) (UN.2013). Subsequently and further, adverse physical and psychological effects of these actions are reflected as HRW 2011 describes; by a decrease in those attending peaceful Sunni protests, in fear of attack (HRW.2011).

As touched upon, what these hostile actions in themselves further and directly imply, is not only attitudes toward, but likewise and in effect, an actual "physical" suppression of Sunni liberal freedoms including expression and demonstration and likewise and subsequently, an obstruction in the ability for other interest groups to take part and influence the political process.

In line with the focus of this paper, what is hence more broadly observable here, is that religious intolerance as manifested via verbal and violent hostility targeting peaceful Sunni protestors, implies an obstruction to liberal democracy components related to freedoms of; belief, opinion, assembly, and demonstration and likewise, access on equal basis to the political process. This argument is drawn from the explicit intolerant nature and subsequent

implications upon liberal democracy components, of actions by government and Shia gangs entailing verbal and violent hostility against peaceful Sunni opposition to government.

The effects that this has had in terms of reducing numbers of peaceful protestors in fear of attack, further illustrates in a causal manner, the adverse longer term negative psychological and physical impacts that intolerance in the form of hostility against protestors has had upon deterring peaceful civic engagement. Accordingly, intolerance manifested via oppression as listed above, may thus be argued as attributable to having at least in part enabled a state of obstructed liberal freedoms including expression and demonstration, and access into the political process of citizenry regardless of race, ethnicity or in this case religion.

Insofar, religious intolerance, as reflected by the direct and longer term implications of those actions by part of government and Shia gangs, may thus be argued to be attributed to negatively impacting liberal democracy components calling for freedom of belief, opinion, assembly, and demonstration and likewise, access on equal basis to the political process regardless of race, ethnicity, or religion.

### **5.3 Implications: Inequality in Education and Employment**

#### **5.3.1 Education**

Evidence suggests that religious intolerance has also come to negatively effect education and employment. These two sectors are crucial components of liberal democracy calling for access on equal basis to education and employment(Stanford 2014).

In terms of education, findings illustrate that religious intolerance between Sunnis and Shias has yielded inequality in higher education. This is illustrated by findings reflecting religious discrimination in universities across the country. This has first been made evident by findings relating to the effects of sectarian capture of higher education institutions. These include manipulation of curricula to suit sectarian agendas and likewise, implementation of student admittance policies on the basis of sectarian affiliation (Sawahel.2012)(Mamouri.2014).

The second aspect reflecting religious intolerance in higher education relates to sectarian violence by where thousands of violent acts targeting students and staff in universities has been identified.

Findings further suggested that the combined effects of these two factors above, have resulted in the “physicall” polarization of Universities along sectarian lines: Administrative discrimination has filtered sectarian composition of institutions which additionally, has been reinforced by displacement of students and staff resulting from insecurity produced by ongoing sectarian attacks upon learning centers (Sawahel.2012)(Ajeeli.2014).

These two primary findings have negative implications upon equality in Iraqi higher education. Equality as ALA describes, includes equal access to sources of information that are, “..made available on even terms” (Kurnich.2014). The findings above directly reflect discrimination in education and likewise illustrate the longer term negative impact that discriminating administrative policies and sectarian attacks have had in enabling overall obstructed access to institutions as reflected by the homogenization of universities along sectarian lines (Sawahel.2012)(F.H.2013).

What these observations thus more broadly imply, is that religious intolerance in Iraq has to a greater or lesser extent, resulted in unequal access to higher education. This has been reflected by the intolerant nature and longer term effects of acts of discrimination resulting from sectarian capture and violence, upon negatively altering the once diverse religious composition of Iraqi Universities (Sawahel.2012).

Inequality in higher education in Iraq, may thus be argued as having at least in part been a causal effect of religious intolerance and hence, a variable which has to a greater or lesser extent negatively affected equal inclusion in Iraqi higher education since 2003.

### **5.3.2 Employment**

Findings illustrate that inequality in employment has been produced as a product of religious intolerance as well. This is reflected by implementation of de-Baathification policies in 2003 which entailed systematic firing of Sunni employees from state institutions on the basis of direct or “suspected” connection to Saddams previous Baath party (FH.2014). This Shia government driven policy, effectively terminated employment positions most notably in the military, security forces, and in higher education on the basis of religious affiliation (FH.2014) (USDS.2010:8). Likewise, evidence suggests that this has been accompanied by Shia favoritism in state hiring (I.O.2013)(Sawahel.2012). This in the longer run has resulted in tens of thousands of Sunnis having lost their jobs and still up to at least 2013, have been restricted from attaining state employment as further reflected by the identification of peaceful protests having in part been motivated by the former.(I.O 2013)(UN 2013:3).

As Equality Authority 2014 defines, Equality in employment is to entail equal employment opportunity regardless of an individual’s characteristics or orientations including gender, race, or religion (E.A.2014). De-bathification policies as a manifestation of intolerance oppose this and reflect discrimination toward access to employment on equal basis. Findings illustrate that discrimination in employment and hence inequality, has occurred on the basis of religious affiliation as Shia controlled government since 2003 has not only removed without due process thousands of Sunni state employees, but likewise findings suggest that this has been accompanied by Shia favoritism in hiring (FH.2014) (USDS.2010:8)(Sawahel.2012).

Not only does the manifestation of intolerance via de-bathification policies directly reflect discrimination and obstruction of employment access on even grounds. Likewise the subsequent longer term effects of the former in that thousands of jobs have been lost pegged with Sunni protests having been motivated by this, illustrates the broader impact of these policies as responsible for enabling what may be more broadly regarded as a state of state employment inequality in Iraq since 2003.

Overall, observations in terms of the religiously based nature of employment discrimination identified and subsequent longer term effects; thus leads to the assumption in that intolerance in Iraqi society has acted as a variable which to a greater or lesser extent, may be argued as causally having produced inequality in a portion of Iraq’s employment sector.

## 5.4 Implications: Inequality in the Political Landscape

Findings indicate that religious intolerance at the political level, has manifested itself in a manner which negatively impacts liberal democracy in terms of government structure and functioning. Controversial actions in themselves by part of the executive reflecting religious discrimination, suggest contradiction of various liberal democracy components. The means taken toward and outcomes these actions, likewise have adverse effects upon liberal democracy components.

Liberal democracy components calling for; equal access to the political process regardless of race ethnicity or religion, control of state and its decisions and allocations determined by elected officials, and constrained executive power by other autonomous powers such as parliament (Diamond 1999:11)., have been obstructed as reflected by the discriminating nature of controversial power centralizing moves taken by the executive.

To begin with, findings have suggested that the executive has targeted, replaced, as well as purged without due process, an array of Sunni political members since the governments inception in 2005 (ISW.2013). Three separate impacts upon liberal democracy components may be argued from these actions.

First, the specific targeting and removal of Sunnis from key political positions in itself and directly, suggests to a greater or lesser extent an obstruction in the ability for other groups (in this case Sunnis) to actively form part of, influence, and express interest in the political process. What may be argued to be observable here in other words, is the executive having obstructed equal access to the political process regardless of race, ethnicity or in this case religion.

Secondly and dealing with the process taken in the purging and replacement of Sunnis, is that the former has been found to have been executed without due process as reflected by findings suggesting the bypassing of parliament and Judiciary (BTI.2014:13). What this may be argued to reflect, is unconstrained executive power by where horizontal accountability in the process of removals and new appointments, is reflected to have been disregarded by the executive.

Lastly, the overall outcome effect of the above and as ISW describes, has allowed the executive to exert a degree of influence and control over statal bodies which otherwise and in accordance with the constitution, should be limited (ISW.2013). Again and similarly, this more generally, overall reflects an absence of horizontal accountability by part of the executive resulting in unconstrained executive power in the political process and hence obstruction of a checks and balance system, otherwise crucially called upon by any institutional form of democracy.

Likewise related to having facilitated the purging and replacement of Sunni political figures, are findings suggesting extra constitutional establishment of security bodies sole by the executive. This importantly has been found to have enabled informal chains of command accountable only to the prime minister which further, has been suggested by BTI (2013), and ISW (2014) to have facilitated both the targeting and purging of Sunnis from the political landscape and, general Shia centralization of power (ISW.2013)(BTI.2014:6). Similar negative implications upon liberal democracy components as earlier argued, are similarly observable here.



First, this again implies lacking horizontal accountability and unconstrained executive power as reflected by non-adherence to due process in the creation and establishment of these security bodies. Likewise, this also implies non democratic institutional structure of these bodies, as member composition of the latter has not been determined democratically but rather sole by the executive (BTI.2014:6). Further and accordingly, this more broadly reflects an obstruction in the equal inclusion of other interest groups into the political process and subsequently and again, obstruction of an institutional checks and balances system.

Overall what these findings suggest, are reserved power domains at the political level enabled by the executive which strongly contradicts a liberal democratic conception of government structure and functioning (Diamond.1999:10). Importantly, evidence has suggested that this has been enabled by the executives purging and replacements of Sunni political figures and likewise, by the extra-constitutional establishment of security bodies.

These worrying occurrences at the political level have been found to have been adverse effects stemming from the religious conflict and more specifically resulting from the institutionalization of politics along religious and sectarian lines in Iraq.

In sum, the manifestation of intolerance in Iraq's political landscape as reflected by those controversial executive actions discussed above, directly reflect on obstruction of various liberal democracy components. Subsequent effects of these actions, has likewise been suggested to have had the profound impact of at least in part having shaped characteristics of Iraq's political structure and functioning away from that which is in accordance with that of liberal democratic characteristics.

In sum, religious intolerance may thus be argued to having at least in part acted as a variable obstructing of various liberal democracy components within the political landscape.

## 6. Concluding Theoretical Implications

Arguments made above are closely in line with theory of democratic political culture. As earlier noted, this theory assumes a causal approach to mass and elite attitudes as conditioning behavior in society which is further argued (alongside proper institutions) as determining political performance and structure in a given setting (Diamond.1999:163). It suggests that cultural factors informing the above including tolerance for diversity, function as crucial variables toward the development and sustainability of democracy (Benavides.2011:11).

Although this investigation has abstained from analyzing how lacking tolerance in Iraq may have prevented a process of democratization, It has nevertheless found, via behavioral findings which addressed attitudes between Sunnis and Shias, that intolerance to a greater or lesser extent has causally acted as a variable impacting liberal democracy components negatively. This has been observed in two distinct yet closely related ways:

First, intolerance or intolerant attitudes have been observed by the discriminative characteristics of findings related to behavior between Sunnis and Shias. These Intolerant behavior patterns and actions observed suggesting discrimination, has been discussed as having direct negative implications upon liberal democracy components. In other words, the very direct nature of behavior as both a reflection and manifestation of intolerant attitudes between Sunnis and Shias in Iraq, has been argued to resemble contradiction of various liberal democracy components.

This generally, has been observed; with sectarian violence directly reflecting lacking cohesion and tolerance as well as an adverse form of cooperation and engagement. Secondly, with violence targeting peaceful Sunni protestors as a direct obstruction in freedom of speech and demonstration and likewise access to the political process on equal grounds. Thirdly, with de-bathification policies directly reflecting discrimination in statal employment. Fourthly, with sectarian capture of universities and subsequent restructuring of policies, alongside sectarian violence targeting universities, directly reflecting discrimination toward access to education. And lastly, with the targeting and successful removal/replacement of Sunni political members without due process by the executive, directly reflecting unconstrained executive power and lacking adherence/respect toward access/inclusion of other interest groups in the political process on equal basis.

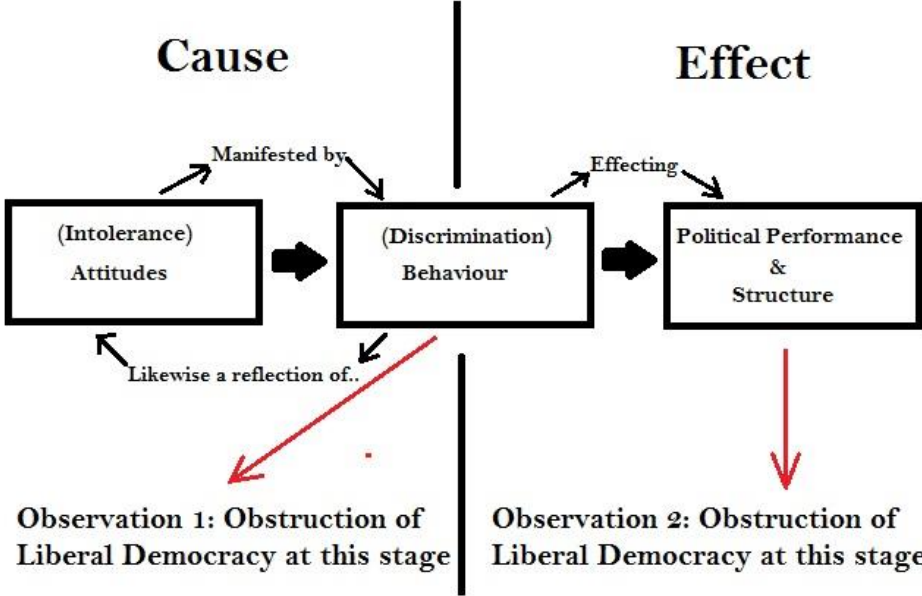
What is observable here, is adverse non liberal democratic behavior. This may be interpreted, as both a reflection and likewise manifestation of intolerance or intolerant attitudes which at this early stage of the cause-effect sequence defended by democratic political culture theory; suggests an “early” contradiction of liberal democracy components.

Secondly, the subsequent longer term effects of those intolerant behavior patterns listed above, have likewise been associated with negatively impacting liberal democracy components. This is suggested in a manner reflecting at least partial obstruction of primarily political structure, away from that called upon by liberal democracy:

Structure here and in accordance with theory of democratic political culture, has at least in part been compromised by intolerance, as discriminative behavior has ultimately been found to have; reinforced sectarian cooperation and violent engagement, deterred the ability to peacefully protest, obstructed equal access to higher education, produced unequal access to state employment, and obstructed both political process inclusion on equal basis, and likewise

general democratic functioning and structure of government. These effects, as a product of acts of discrimination found, strongly oppose liberal democracy requisites and further supports theory of democratic political culture in that tolerance or rather intolerance in the case of this study, has functioned as a variable causally negatively impacting liberal democracy.

The two core theoretical observations made above are further illustrated in the below figure.



The implications of these findings and further in accordance with theory of democratic political culture, point in the way toward contradicting institutional theory: The establishment of a liberal democratic institutional structure in Iraq has alone, not lead to sustained liberal democracy as institutionalism otherwise posits. Upon identifying religious intolerance via acts of discrimination and long term effects, what has overall been found is a causal negative relationship between intolerance and the fulfillment of liberal democracy components or requisites. This is not to argue that liberal democracy has failed resulting from religious intolerance in Iraq however, evidence overall has illustrated a profound impact of the latter upon the former.

## **7. Conclusion**

In contesting Iraq's lacking ability to attain liberal democracy, pegged with literature suggesting cultural impediments as having obstructed the former, this investigation departed with the aim of identifying and understanding the potential negative impact of intolerance in Iraqi society upon an understanding of liberal democracy. This first involved an exploration into Iraq's religious conflict in which a prevalence of discrimination as an indicator of intolerance was identified within social and political landscapes of society. Intolerance within the country's broader religious conflict context identified, was reflected and discussed in the form of sectarian violence, hostility toward Sunni peaceful protest, discrimination in portions of education and employment, and within the political landscape in the form of Sunni targeting and centralization of power by part of a Shia dominant executive. These acts reflecting intolerant attitudes and behavior between Sunnis and Shias, further suggested that the very nature and implications of these actions directly obstruct in various ways, components of liberal democracy. Longer term effects identified of discrimination as a manifestation of intolerance, further suggested that the former has been responsible for enabling facets in different sectors of society which strongly contradict a liberal conception and structure of democracy. These include sectarian cooperation and violent engagement, inequalities in access to education and employment, deterring peaceful protest, obstruction of political process inclusion on equal basis, and likewise obstruction of democratic functioning and structure of government.

What has thus been overall observed, is a negative correlation between intolerance and liberal democracy in Iraq. In accordance with theory of democratic political culture, intolerance in Iraq has in this investigation, been causally attributed with having acted to a greater or lesser extent, as a variable obstructing liberal democracy components. This has been illustrated by the direct negative implications and effects upon liberal democracy components or requisites, resulting from a prevalence of discrimination between Sunnis and Shia Muslims as both a product and likewise a reflection of social intolerance in Iraq.

## **8 Future Recommendations**

Toward future recommendation, and as a proponent of democratic political culture theory, I would like to motivate both researchers and foreign policy advisors alike, to take into serious account the role that cultural factors imbedded in a given populace's attitudes and behaviors, may have toward obstructing a process of democratization. This may be especially valuable in emerging democracy contexts toward among other things; developing and implementing initiatives that assess and promote democratic attitudes and behavior. The potential negative impact of cultural aspects including social intolerance upon processes of democratization, as has been observed in this study, must not be underestimated.

Word count 10,200

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