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process**

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# Eurasia Center

## Brief Analysis

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# AFTER 2003: IRAQ'S RECONSTRUCTION PROCESS

*Semanur Öncü*

## Abstract

In the post-Cold War era, when the United States was the only superpower, Iraq was one of the countries that first attracted the attention of the United States. In the 1990s, the US-led coalition invaded Iraq to protect Saudi Arabia's and Kuwait security, and Iraq was eventually defeated. After this intervention, the USA imposed sanctions on Iraq and intervened repeatedly militarily. Additionally, the United States provided financial support and organized those opposed to the Ba'ath regime. After the September 11 attacks, the United States first invaded Afghanistan and then focused on Iraq as part of the fight against terrorism. The study mainly deals with the process of state reconstruction in Iraq after the United States and its allies invaded Iraq in 2003 and liquidated all Iraqi state institutions.

**Keywords:** Iraq, US, Reconstruction Process

## Introduction

The establishment of Iraq followed the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the aftermath of World War I. The partitioning of the Middle East through the Sykes-Picot Agreement, ratified between France and Great Britain in 1916, delineated Iraq as a multi-ethnic entity under British Mandate in 1920. Having achieved independence in 1932, Iraq emerged onto the international stage, undergoing a transition to republican governance through a military coup in 1958. Nevertheless, the nation grappled with various challenges, including a societal fabric shaped by tribal affiliations, Sunni-Shiite tensions, and recurrent military interventions. The era initiated by the Baath Party's seizure of power in 1968 subjected Iraq to enduring internal and external vicissitudes.

In the post-Cold War era, when the United States was the only superpower, Iraq was one of the countries that first attracted the attention of the United States. In the 1990s, the US-led coalition invaded Iraq to protect Saudi Arabia's and Kuwait security, and Iraq was eventually defeated. After this intervention, the US imposed sanctions on Iraq and intervened repeatedly militarily. Additionally, the United States provided financial support and organized those opposed to the Ba'ath regime. After the September 11 attacks, the United States first invaded Afghanistan and then focused on Iraq as part of the fight against terrorism.



The deterioration of Iraqi infrastructure predates the US invasion of 2003. The Iran–Iraq War (1980–88) forced the regime to divert most available resources to military-related spending and cut back on new projects. As a result, Iraq emerged from the war a crumbling nation with massive debt. The saturation of global oil markets in the late 1980s drove down prices to levels that made Iraq’s recovery highly improbable.

Instead of dealing with the Iraqi economic crisis creatively, former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein decided to double down on his aggressive behavior and invade Kuwait in August 1990, claiming it as Iraq’s “19th Province”. His miscalculation led to a military confrontation with a coalition of thirty nations led by the United States. The war to liberate Kuwait in 1991 involved severe bombardment that reached all Iraqi infrastructure: power plants, factories, bridges, roads, and many other vital structures. The economic sanctions the United Nations Security Council imposed on Iraq in 1990—the harshest imposed on any nation in history—to force Saddam Hussein’s withdrawal from Kuwait banned Baghdad from importing any materials to rebuild its ruined infrastructure or maintain the deteriorating structures. By 2003, Iraq was a skeleton of a nation.

The US invasion made a bad situation worse. What was not destroyed by the conflict was looted or burned by mobs of unruly crowds. United States officials called this popular frenzy a natural by-product of democratic transition. In the view of some, Iraq was a giant reptile that needed to shed its old undemocratic skin and grow a new, democratic one; in other words, a healthy socio-political metamorphosis needed to occur. For the following eight years, an insurgency exacerbated the rate of infrastructural destruction and halted new construction. More funds were spent on payoffs, security firms, and logistics contractors than were used to rehabilitate the country’s infrastructure. The Iraqi governments that gradually took charge after a brief period of US administration were not any better. Despite 800 billion dollars in revenues since 2003, no serious reconstruction efforts were made anywhere in the country. Aside from what was paid for maintaining a massive public sector and security-related costs, billions of dollars were lost to waste, fraud, and mismanagement under a systematic absence of transparency and accountability.

The study mainly deals with the process of state reconstruction (goals such as ensuring stability in Iraq, rebuilding infrastructure, establishing a democratic government and restoring social services) in Iraq after the United States and its allies invaded Iraq in 2003 and liquidated all Iraqi state institutions.

## **Saddam Hussein Era**

Saddam Hussein was born in Tikrit on April 28, 1937. He joined the Baath Party<sup>1</sup> in his youth and quickly rose to the political scene. In 1956, he attempted a coup, but it failed, and he was forced to flee the country. He returned in 1963 when the Baath Party seized power but was imprisoned when the regime was overthrown. After



escaping from prison, he resumed party activities and became the deputy secretary-general of the Ba'ath in 1966. In 1968, he seized power with al-Bakir. After assuming power, Saddam implemented a policy of fear and intimidation, mercilessly punishing those whom he suspected of disloyalty. He assumed the presidency of Iraq in 1979 and established a repressive regime throughout the nation. These policies had a profound impact on the country's domestic [politics.](#)

During his reign, Saddam Hussein ruled Iraq with an iron fist, and tensions between ethnic and religious groups were prevalent. The ethnic and sectarian structure of Iraq is dominated by Arabs, with Kurds being the second largest ethnic group and Turkmens in third place. The majority of the population is Muslim, with Shiite and Sunni sects being the most prominent. The Baathist regime, during Saddam's era, emphasized Arab nationalism and suppressed the demands of Kurds and Shiites. Despite the agreement with the Kurds to establish the Northern Kurdistan Administration, the Arabization policy and oppression of the Shiite population persisted, leading to internal instability. Saddam's access to Iraq's oil wealth enabled him to strengthen his regime and heavily invest in the military, causing international concern and shifts in [foreign policy.](#)

After Saddam Hussein came to power, Iraq engaged in a years-long war. Despite not recognizing the Algiers Agreement<sup>2</sup> signed with Iran in 1975, Iraq attacked Iran in an attempt to take control of the Shatt al-Arab region. However, this attack did not result in a victory over Iran, and the nine-year Iraq-Iran war weakened both countries. The Iraqi economy suffered greatly, and the war left the country in significant foreign debt. In 1990, Iraq invaded and annexed Kuwait, accusing it of exceeding oil quotas and extracting oil from disputed territories. This action marked the beginning of the end for [Saddam Hussein.](#)

The international community condemned Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and the United Nation (UN) adopted several resolutions. When Iraq failed to withdraw, the UN imposed an economic embargo through Resolution 661. In 1991, after the deadline for Iraq's withdrawal had passed, a coalition led by the US and the UK launched an aerial bombardment, which forced Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. Subsequently, rebellions broke out in Iraq, but Saddam's brutal interventions quashed them. In 2003, the US-led coalition forces overthrew Saddam Hussein and took control of Iraq following the [terrorist attacks in 2001.](#)

## **America's Intervention In Iraq**

US involvement in Iraq began after World War II, when the US replaced Britain in the Middle East. However, in the beginning, the US support for the establishment of Israel and its policies supporting it were met with a backlash by the Middle Eastern countries, including Iraq. This situation prevented US-Iraqi relations from developing to the desired level. Successive military coups in Iraq led to frequent changes in the government, and the ideological approaches of these changes caused Iraq to move closer to the USSR in the 1970s. The US and Britain were

concerned about this rapprochement. However, the Islamic revolution in Iran changed the balance in the Gulf region and brought the US closer to Iraq. Especially during the Iraq-Iran war, the US supported Iraq and contributed to its [armament](#).

US policy toward Iraq was shaped by Iraq's rich oil reserves and the goal of influencing the balance of power in the region. The first intervention began with Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. This invasion ended US support for Iraq, and the US-led coalition intervened in Iraq in accordance with U.N. resolutions. US policy toward Iraq was specifically aimed at overthrowing Saddam Hussein's regime and securing US strategic interests in the region. The intervention in Iraq aimed to increase US influence in the Middle East, dominate oil reserves and shape the balance of power in the region. In addition, US policy in Iraq aimed to democratize Iraq and ensure stability in the region.

The decisions and measures taken during the 2003 US invasion of Iraq are of great importance. The initial justifications for the military intervention included accusations of human rights violations, the use of chemical weapons, alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction, and support for terrorist groups by Saddam Hussein's regime. However, some sources suggest that the invasion was motivated by a desire to control Iraq's oil reserves and pursue expansionist [policies](#).

In the aftermath of the invasion, the [US dismantled the Iraqi state](#), its institutions, and demobilized its army, leading to chaos and a security vacuum. This situation exacerbated sectarian and ethnic divisions in society and led to a shift towards a federal structure. After the invasion, Iraq's oil and financial reserves were confiscated.

The interim authority established by the US initiated the process of creating a new political and constitutional framework. However, the Iraqi people's active participation and their right to self-determination were ignored in this process. In summary, the US occupation of Iraq and the policies implemented afterwards prioritized the strategic interests of the US over the interests of the Iraqi people.

## **An overview of the period after 2003**

The Iraqi interim governments were established between 2003 and 2005. They were formed under American auspices by those who opposed the regime of Saddam Hussein. In 2003, the Coalition Provisional Authority took over full legislative, executive, and judicial powers after the dismantling of the Iraqi state and its institutions by the occupying forces.

After 2003, the political process established in Iraq faced numerous challenges and received significant criticism. The political framework established by the Coalition Provisional Authority failed to adapt to the social and cultural structure of the country, resulting in instability. Specifically, the proportional representation system led to the emergence of a large number of parties and coalitions, making it difficult to form a government. The active involvement of small parties in government



formation, despite the majority being won by large parties, resulted in a lack of true representation of the people. Consequently, coalition governments were often unstable and prone to conflict.

Additionally, the dismantling of military institutions and the creation of a security vacuum led to the emergence of armed groups and increased internal conflicts.

## **Iraqi Economy After 2003**

Since the 2003 invasion, Iraq has been plagued by persistent economic crises that have led to a steep decline. The key problems include widespread corruption, sectarian domination, foreign-backed militias' influence, terrorist threats, election fraud, and tensions between the US and Iran. Governments have spent oil revenues based on increasing oil prices and entered a period of rising unemployment and poverty. The state lost the capacity to invest in infrastructure and development projects. The Iraqi economy collapsed, cities and industrial facilities were damaged, poverty and displacement increased, and the country faced a cycle of [looting and theft](#).

Economically, uncertainties and corruption in the management and distribution of oil revenues pose a threat to the country's stability. The Iraqi economy is heavily reliant on oil revenues. Following the 2003 invasion, the Coalition Provisional Authority regulated these revenues, but spent over 90% of the resources against the will of the Security Council. The privileges granted to foreign oil companies resulted in issues such as financial corruption and embezzlement.

Iraq's economy has struggled with turbulent times and wars for many years. In 2014, economic growth slowed to 0.7% as oil prices plummeted and nearly a third of the country was under occupation. However, in 2016, despite security problems and falling oil prices, oil production increased by 11%, contributing to economic growth of [15.2%](#).

In 2017, Iraq's economy contracted by 3.4%. However, the following year it grew by 4.7% due to higher oil prices. The country's economy has faced challenges due to its socioeconomic fragility, political instability, and declining oil revenues. In 2020, the economy contracted by 15.7% due to the [coronavirus pandemic](#). Some foreign companies operating in Iraq's oil sector evacuated their employees and halted oil production. The reduction of around 200,000 barrels of oil production per day resulted in a significant drop in Iraq's oil revenues. However, the following year recorded a growth of 7.7%. The country's oil GDP contracted by 4% due to the OPEC+ agreement reducing oil production, but economic growth was mainly driven by a 6% expansion in the [non-oil](#) sector.

[In 2022, Iraq earned 111 billion USD from exporting Crude Petroleum](#), ranking it fifth globally in Crude Petroleum exports. During the same period, Crude Petroleum stood as the most shipped product from Iraq. The primary destinations for Iraqi Crude Petroleum exports were India (37.1 billion USD), China (33.8 billion USD), the

United States (87 billion USD), South Korea (7.35 billion USD), and Greece [\(6.12 billion USD\)](#).

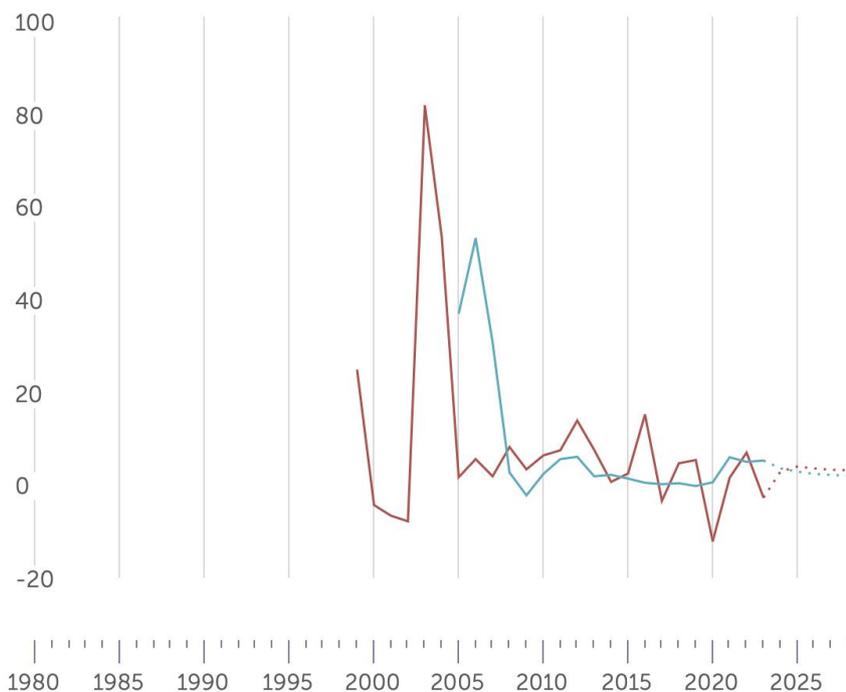
The markets that experienced the most rapid growth in importing Iraqi Crude Petroleum between 2021 and 2022 were India (12 billion USD), China (10.6 billion USD), and the United States [\(4.1 billion USD\)](#).

In 2022, increased oil production due to the lifting of OPEC+ quotas and a recovery in the non-oil sector led to an estimated 9.3% growth for the year. In addition, Iraq's dependence on oil and its role in the global economy are expected to gradually decline as the green transition and demand for fossil [fuels decline](#).

Iraq is ranked 49th out of 196 countries in the world with an estimated national income of approximately 268 billion dollars in 2023. However, Iraq's per capita income is only approximately \$6,181, ranking 104th in the world. The current account balance to GDP ratio is expected to shift from a surplus of 4.4% in 2023 to a deficit of 2.5% in [2024](#).

**Table: Real GDP growth**

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| — Real GDP growth (Annual percent change)                         | 2.9 |
| — Inflation rate, average consumer prices (Annual percent change) | 3.6 |



**Source:** <https://www.imf.org/en/Countries/IRO#countrydata>



## Reshaping Iraq after 2003

In 2003, a political restructuring process began in Iraq under the leadership of Paul Bremer, the US civilian governor in Iraq. The process included Iraqi political and religious leaders, as well as individuals of different sects and nationalities who opposed Saddam Hussein's regime. The temporary Governing Council distributed positions based on the proportion of representation in the elections. However, some critics and analysts have pointed out several problems with this system of proportional [representation](#).

The involvement of numerous parties and individuals in Iraq's political process may result in an unstable government and legislative gridlock. Additionally, the need for large parties and electoral winners to form coalitions with smaller parties can diminish popular representation by granting disproportionate influence to the smaller parties. The proportional representation system can exacerbate political conflict and inflame sectarian and ethnic [tensions](#).

The proportional representation system implemented in post-2003 Iraq has been characterized by increased political conflict and instability due to incompatibilities that can arise between different political visions in multi-party coalitions.

Prior to the US invasion of Iraq, plans were developed for the country's reconstruction. [The Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance for Iraq \(ORHA\)](#) was established in this context. However, significant efforts were required to address Iraq's years of failed processes. After the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime, coalition forces held meetings to establish an interim authority. At the initial meeting held in Nasiriyya, Iraq, the decision was made to establish an interim authority. Later, during a meeting in Baghdad, despite criticism, it was decided to establish the '[Iraq Governing Council](#)' (IGC) or 'Interim Governing Council'. About a month after the US forces entered Baghdad, the 'Coalition Provisional Authority' was established and headed by [Paul Bremer](#), the high civilian representative of the US forces. Upon arriving in Baghdad, Bremer implemented controversial policies, including the dismantling of the Baath Party, resulting in many job losses. Additionally, disbanding the army created a security vacuum and led to increased resistance. Bremer's decisions are widely regarded as a major contributor to the ongoing security problems and chaos in Iraq.

The disbandment of the Iraqi army created a power vacuum in the country, resulting in increased attacks that severely impacted the security situation. To address this issue, political actors temporarily set aside their differences and established a 25-member 'Interim Governing Council' on July 13, 2003. The UN Security Council officially recognized the Interim Governing Council with a resolution on August 14, [2003](#). The Council was established to represent a diverse range of ethnic and religious groups, including Sunni Arabs, Kurds, Shia Arabs, Turkmen, and Assyrians. Its responsibilities included appointing an interim cabinet and diplomats, initiating the process of drafting a new constitution, and



formulating the 2004 budget. On July 30, 2003, a Presidential Council was elected from within the Council, and the ministerial positions were distributed to reflect the ethnic and religious diversity. However, the appointment of American advisors to the Council, which was under the influence of the Coalition Provisional Authority, indicates that authority was ultimately concentrated in the United States. On November 15, 2003, in an attempt to contain the situation as violence escalated, Paul Bremer, the head of the [Coalition Provisional Authority](#), and Jalal Talabani, the leader of the Transitional Governing Council, signed the '[Agreement on the Transfer of Sovereignty](#)'. Reactions against the American forces grew.

Following the overthrow of Saddam's regime, the Iraqi government required a new constitution to legitimize its rule. To this end, the Transitional Administrative Council began drafting the [Transitional Administrative Law \(TAL\)](#) to serve as an interim constitution. However, political disagreements caused these efforts to stall. The Transitional Administrative Law came into effect on June 30, 2004, and is valid until December 2005. One of its significant articles emphasizes the equality of all before the law. It also recognizes Arabic and Kurdish as official languages and grants other ethnic groups the right to receive education in their mother tongue. However, the obstacles encountered during the implementation of this law highlight the persistent problems of statehood over the years. The adoption of a federal system caused serious disagreements, including issues such as recognizing the Kurds' right to an autonomous region and rejecting the demand for an Islamic state. The Interim Administrative Law was signed and came into force on March 8, 2004.

On November 15, 2003, the Coalition Provisional Authority and the Transitional Governing Council signed a [Transfer of Sovereignty Agreement](#). The interim government was formed on June 1 and was welcomed by UN Security Council Resolution 1546 on June 8. This agreement established an interim government that would govern the country until June 30, 2004. It was set to take office on June 30 and govern the country under the Interim Administrative Law. The government's main objectives were to eliminate anarchy, instability, and insecurity, and to promote economic growth and development in the country. However, despite these efforts, ethnic and sectarian conflicts continued to escalate in universities. Assassinations, threats, and kidnappings became commonplace, particularly among university students, resulting in the loss of hundreds of [lives](#).

In 2003, Iraq's interim constitution was amended to allow for secret and direct universal suffrage in elections. However, in 2005, the proportional representation system was replaced with a system that reflects the plurality of sects and nationalities in the country. Due to the system change, a significant number of parties entered the Iraqi parliament, resulting in legislative stagnation. As consensus became more difficult, the formation of the government in Iraq became a frequent crisis after [elections](#).

In Iraq, the occupation authority's dismantling of the army and police led citizens to form armed groups for self-protection. However, insufficient US support for the reorganization resulted in continued violence and chaos in the country. The dissolution of the security establishment by the occupation authority led to the emergence of armed groups that acted like militias. This was a significant factor in the outbreak of sectarian warfare in Iraq from 2006 to 2008. Although the army and police were restructured, civil war could not be prevented due to the combat capabilities of armed [groups](#).

The political system in Iraq after [2003](#) has experienced instability due to both internal and external factors. Political reasons for this instability can be attributed to the lack of consensus among parties and the role of sectarian divisions in candidate selection. Additionally, the decision to close down security institutions after the invasion and the proliferation of armed groups further complicated the security situation in the country. Social reasons for instability include migration, social instability, and unemployment. Iraq's economic development has been negatively affected by corruption, imbalance in the oil sector, and waste of public resources.

External factors have interfered with Iraq's political decision-making processes, fueling internal conflicts. Iranian and Saudi Arabian attempts to use Iraqi political actors in line with their own interests have exacerbated the situation. These interventions have led to increased instability in the country and have had a negative impact on the [political system](#).

The process of constitution-building in Iraq has also been criticized due to certain articles being contradictory and difficult to implement. Specifically, the entrenchment of political quotas and the difficulty of compromise have hindered the functioning of Parliament and caused the private interests of political parties to take precedence over the public interest of the state. Iraq's constitutional structure has not fully met the country's needs and has been insufficient in ensuring political [stability](#).

## **Reconstruction of Iraq after the US Occupation and Its Failure**

The primary goal of the reconstruction process following the US invasion of Iraq was to establish a stable economy and transform the existing political system into a liberal democratic structure. However, the lack of international support was a significant factor contributing to the failure of this process. The absence of broad international support for Iraq's reconstruction was due to UN measures against Iraq, and the lack of international legitimacy made the process challenging. The absence of pre-war preparations by the US and the international community's response to the war against Iraq had a negative impact on the post-war reconstruction process. Consequently, the US's inability to obtain international legitimacy for its invasion of Iraq resulted in the failure of the [reconstruction process](#).



The lack of a clear plan for the post-war phase was one of the main reasons for the anarchic situation after the invasion of Iraq. The US and allied states presented different and incompatible projects for the reconstruction of the country, instead of creating a common plan. Retired General Jay Garner headed the Office of [Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance \(ORHA\)](#), which was created before the war. However, ORHA was understaffed and given a very short time to fulfill its mandate. At the start of operations, the board was sent to Iraq, but failed to succeed due to the disappearance of most ministries and lack of coordination. This led to chaos in the country and the failure of the reconstruction process. In response, the George W. Bush administration replaced ORHA with [The Coalition Provisional Authority \(CPA\)](#), which was headed by Paul Bremer, the country's first civilian administrator.

During the reconstruction process in Iraq, one of the main challenges faced by the US and its allies was the lack of a clear plan for the future of Iraq after the ORHA meetings. The meetings for the establishment of the Iraqi Transitional Authority also failed to produce clear decisions. Conferences in Nasiriyah and Baghdad, attended by 300 people, discussed these issues. However, Washington made a different decision and appointed a senior diplomat to lead the political process in Iraq as soon as possible. On May 6, US President George W. Bush announced that Paul Bremer would be Iraq's civilian administrator. Then, on May 8, Colin Powell announced that the United States and Britain would sponsor a UN resolution declaring themselves as occupiers. During this period, the state's failure was evident as the oil, electricity, and security sectors were severely impacted by the [effects of the war](#).

Due to the US military intervention in Iraq, the country's infrastructure has collapsed completely. Electricity production has dropped to 711 MW per day, and production in many oil fields has stopped, with some fields destroyed by airstrikes. The security situation has also deteriorated, and anarchy has prevailed in the country. These crises were caused by ORHA's inability to successfully manage the country's infrastructure and reconstruction in a short period of time and with [insufficient staff](#).

## **US Withdrawal from Iraq and DAESH Dominance**

While sectarian and inter-sectarian conflicts continued in Iraqi domestic politics, the Iraqi government, under Iranian influence, negotiated for the US to leave the country. During this period, Iranian-backed Shiite militias, particularly Kata'ib Hezbollah, focused on actions against the US presence. Iran characterized the US as an "occupying power" and directed anti-US groups in the [region](#).

The US decision to withdraw from Iraq has created a significant security vacuum in an environment where security forces are not in full control and sectarian conflict continues. Iran and Sunni groups seeking to exploit this vacuum have led to the formation of various armed structures. Although the US withdrawal left Iran with a



border neighbor that was not hostile to it and under its control, the course of events changed in short order.

The decision by the US to withdraw its troops from Iraq was based on a review of the strategic objectives of US policy in the Middle East. The policies of the Bush administration had failed, and the US was unable to achieve its strategic objectives in the region. The occupation of Iraq imposed a significant economic burden on the US, making it difficult to sustain these costs. Furthermore, the presence of the US military in Iraq did not affect the strategic balance or stabilize the region. The United States chose to decrease its military presence in Iraq and implemented a strategy to redefine its policies and priorities in the region.

Under [Nuri Al-Maliki](#) which was marked by the US withdrawal from Iraq in 2011, Sunnis were subjected to a systematic policy of exclusion. While campaigning to erase the Baathist legacy, Maliki refused to formalize the Awakening Councils, US-trained Sunni tribal militias, and pushed them to join [DAESH](#). Sunni groups have joined Daesh by increasing their power, while Iran has created and supported its own affiliated militias.

The rise of DAESH, its spread across Syria and Iraq, and its destruction of historic buildings in the region have attracted the attention of various countries and efforts to eradicate [DAESH](#). Many countries and international organizations, such as Turkey and the US-led international coalition, have joined the fight against DAESH. However, the elimination of DAESH has not been easy. Various ethnic and religious groups in Iraq and Syria have fought against DAESH, but have not been able to completely defeat the organization.

In 2014, the [city of Mosul](#) in Iraq fell victim to a large-scale attack by DAESH, which resulted in the capture of many vital facilities and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. Reasons for the collapse included the actions of the governor, the flight of security forces, and the local population's support for the organization. After taking Mosul, DAESH continued its advance in Iraq, capturing strategic areas such as Baiji and Tikrit. The formation of the Popular Mobilization Forces, in response to calls from various tribal and religious leaders, played a significant role in the fight against DAESH. In addition, changes in the political arena saw the removal of Nuri al-Maliki from office and the appointment of Haider al-Abadi as prime minister. These changes were supported nationally and internationally and provided new momentum in the fight against DAESH. In the process, Iran created a militia called the Hashd al-Shaabi (Popular Mobilization Forces), which played a major role in the fight against Daesh. Different factions within the [Hashd al-Shaabi](#) are loyal to Iran and religious leaders in Iraq and are fighting against [DAESH](#).

Hashd al-Shaabi's fight against DAESH has been successful, and the militia has been integrated into the Iraqi security forces under the leadership of Iraqi Prime Minister al-Abadi. However, the Hashd al-Shaabi's close ties to Iran caused internal strife in Iraq. In this process, the political wing of Hashd al-Shaabi achieved a significant success by participating in the 2018 elections and became influential in

Iraqi politics. However, the infiltration of Iranian militias into state institutions has increased Iran's influence in [Iraq](#).

In an environment of political uncertainty and continuing protests in Iraq, a reconciliation government was formed under the leadership of Mustafa al-Kadhimi, the head of Iraqi intelligence. Among the popular demands, however, the reduction of Iranian influence and accountability for crimes committed by Iranian-affiliated militias figured prominently. In this context, the new Iraqi electoral law, which went into effect on November 9, 2020, was considered an important step in Iraqi politics. However, after the elections, the conflicts in Iraq continued and there were violent clashes, especially between the militias loyal to Muqtada al-Sadr and the pro-Iranian Hashd al-Shaabi [militias](#).

Following these clashes, the patriotism of the Hashd al-Shaabi was questioned and the group lost popular support. Iranian-affiliated groups began to question the legitimacy of the Hashd al-Shaabi, and uncertainties in Iraqi politics increased. On the other hand, DAESH's terrorist activities in the region were legitimized by attacks against Sunni groups, especially by Iranian-backed Shiite structures. This escalated tensions in the region, and there was evidence of increased abuses against the Sunni population by Shiite militias in the fight against DAESH. The Hashd al-Shaabi's attacks on Sunni areas became systematic from 2014, and its integration into the Iraqi Security Forces in 2016 expanded the scope of Shiite [structures](#).

## Conclusion

Following the US occupation in 2003, Iraq underwent a restructuring process that resulted in the disintegration of the regime and institutions. Despite the new constitution's aim to represent all social components, political and legal shortcomings, lack of reforms, and conflicts have led to instability and chaos in the country. The situation has been further worsened by interventions from regional countries, which have weakened Iraq's security and political stability. These factors have weakened national unity, leading to ongoing conflicts and an increased risk of partition.

The interim government established by the US after the occupation did not allow for the formation of a strong central state due to Iraq's ethnic and sectarian structure. The government focused on implementing US policies rather than developing a long-term strategy, perpetuating historical problems during the transition to a federative structure. Iraq's weak parliamentary tradition increased the control of local power centers and hindered the establishment of a strong structure to oversee the constitution. Iraq's institutionalization was prevented by regional power conflicts, and the policies of countries such as the US, Iran, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia have also impacted the situation. Iraq has been adversely affected by regional power struggles, which have diverted its attention from domestic politics. The ethnic and sectarian divisions in the Middle East have further exacerbated these tensions, with the Kurdish question being a significant issue



between Turkey, Iran, and Arab countries. This has made it challenging for Iraq to manage its ethnic and sectarian diversity.

The exclusion of the Sunni community during the creation of Iraq's federal state structure weakened national unity and trust. Despite the US emphasis on equality, the resulting system failed to respect differences, leading to conflicts between the Sunni-Kurdish and Baghdad governments. The dismantling of the army further exacerbated security problems as ethnic and sectarian groups turned into militias. Iraq's failure can be attributed to economic problems and corruption, as well as factors such as foreign interference, the adoption of sectarian quotas, lack of political unity, the role of the US, the problem of representation, and the questioning of federalism.

Summarize, to overcome these challenges, a reconstruction policy that considers social needs is necessary. To achieve a successful nation-state, it is important to build a strong national alliance and promote the principle of tolerance. Therefore, reconstruction policies in Iraq must be revised to address societal needs.

## Notes:

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<sup>1</sup> "The Iraqi Baath regime was characterized by the authoritarian rule of the Baath Party, which was based on Arab nationalism and socialism. The regime tightly controlled political power in Iraq, committed human rights violations, and suppressed all opposition."

<sup>2</sup> "The Algiers Treaty was signed on March 6, 1975, in Algiers, Algeria, with the aim of resolving border disputes and normalizing relations between Iraq and Iran. The treaty included several articles that defined the borders between the two countries and established various technical commissions to determine them."