IRAQ

American Intervention
and Transformation

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Dedication
To
My reverend Mother Yashoda Upadhyay

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Introduction

The American intervention in Iraq was to achieve multiple objectives. The transformation of Iraq was the last thing in the minds of the strategists. The prime objective was to dismantle the weapons of mass destruction and its infrastructure. The transformation of Iraq was the only thing the intervention could achieve. The Post invasion Iraq was never to be a dictatorship. This very movement towards the democratic process not only transformed Iraq for ever but created a kind of tumult in the regional West Asian politics.

"IT is less than four years since the homicidal zealots of Islamic State (IS) stood on the doorstep of Baghdad, their black flag already fluttering over several other Iraqi cities. The jihadists triumphed, albeit temporarily, because disgruntled Sunnis, former Baathists and others who felt alienated by the rule of Nuri al-Maliki, the Shia prime minister, stood aside. The central government lost control over much of the country. The independence-minded Kurds in the north watched while Iraq fell apart—until IS turned on them, too."[1]

Today things look very different. Iraq with the help of USA, has defeated IS and avoided the civil war that many predicted would follow. The number of civilians killed each month in fighting is a fraction of what it was in 2014. The government in Baghdad saw off a premature Kurdish push for independence last year. Oil production is up and the state has money. The power of foreigners, including Iran and America, has diminished as Iraqi politicians have learnt how to play one off against the others. In six weeks Iraq will hold an election, affirming its status as the only Arab democracy east of Tunisia.

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Chosen by destiny Iraq was to play the same significant role post cold war, as Germany had played at the outset of cold war. Both were treated as Arena to test the strength of super powers and determine the direction of world politics.

No one looking at the site of ancient Babylon today would believe that these hot and dreary devastated lands along the Euphrates were once the rich and powerful capital of civilization. Two centuries before Islam the city of Gondeshpur now Khuzestan, acquired the reputation of a safe haven and became a refuse for dissident intellectuals and free thinkers, facing repression in their own cities. The city of Bagdad was renowned for its schools, libraries, musician and poets, physicians, astronomers and dancing girls. At the end of first world war the then super power of the world England wished to make Iraq the '**Garden of Asia**' and promised to associates the people in the working of the governance but instead it imposed Hashemite Faisal. Now the only super power of the time America is also promising democracy and good governance. This time owing to the change in priorities the America has in fact kept its promise and confined its role to an impartial guarantor of transition and the aftermath. The people of Iraq has shown enough maturity to embrace the change in the right earnest.

After 9/11, Iraq became a fateful ground to test various doctrines of international politics. Many new trends emerged. The war on Iraq shows the triumph of neoconservative view in U.S.A., the restructuring of great power relation, the diminishing importance of multilateral institution, the changing nature of war fare, the unfolding battle for the transformation of Middle-East.

For many centuries the world of Islam was in the fore front of human civilization and achievement. There may be difficulties in the establishment of democratic system but the view that democracy is not suitable for Iraq or for that matter Middle East, is entirely prejudiced. Those who talk of imposition of democracy on Iraq or others, rely on the proprietary belief that democracy belongs to West. When India adopted parliamentary form of governance, many in the west predicted the doomsday for India. Our experience and experiment with democracy has proven its critics wrong. Democracy in Iraq is more than a decade old and is navigating towards maturity and stability.

This book is the modified version of my research on "Transition of Iraq from dictatorship to democracy and its implication for Middle-East". At this juncture I express my heartfelt thanks to my supervisor and Guide Prof. Rajani Kant Pandey. This is also a poignant moment for me personally, as I promised my late Mother to write a book soon, which is coming so late in the day. I hope like all my faults and misdeeds during her life time, she would be forgiving me again for this one also.

My book will focus on the causes of American invasion of Iraq, the American determination to make it essentially an American war, irrespective of the attitudes of coalition partners the new Idea of war fare like 'pre-emptive' and 'preventive' war against a new enemy Al-Qaeda representing the terrorism in particular. This was the first time when America's 'home land security' was threatened and the paramount objective was to face this faceless brutal threat. This caused the change in the basis of defense planning from a 'threat based model' to a 'capabilities based' model.

For me the study of Iraq is central to the understanding of changes taking place in Middle East. It is no exaggeration to say that Iraq provides a mine well worth our while to work for the richness of the ore in the form of some original ideas, it yields. First, we learned that when you removed the authoritarian lid the tensions between Iraqi Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis erupted as each faction tested the other's power in a low-grade civil war. But we also learned that alongside that war many Iraqis expressed an equally powerful yearning to live together as citizens. For all of the murderous efforts by Al Qaeda to trigger a full-scale civil war in Iraq, it never happened. Lesson one which we discern and learn is that- While these tribal identities are deeply embedded and can blow up at any time, there are also powerful countertrends in today's more urbanized, connected, Face-booked Middle East. "There is a problem of citizenship in the Arab world," said Michael Young, the Lebanese author of 'The Ghosts of Martyr's Square', "but that is partly because these regimes never allowed their people to be citizens."

Lesson two from our analysis of Iraq: What was crucial in keeping the low grade civil war in Iraq from exploding, what was crucial in their writing of their own constitution for how to live together,

and what was crucial in helping Iraqis manage fair elections was that they had a credible neutral arbiter throughout this transition: it was the US. America played that role at a staggering cost, and not always perfectly, but played play it in all these countries, so that they can lay the foundations of both democracy and liberty. The final thing Iraq teaches us is that external arbiters may be necessary, but are not sufficient. The US left Iraq but never abandoned. US came back when most needed. The emergence of ISIS was not only an existential threat for Iraq but also for World at large. The government of Iraq has enough maturity to deal with this menace. They have also kept the wheel of democracy greased

Only Iraqis can sustain their democracy after that. The same will be true for all the other Arab peoples hoping to make this transition to self-rule. Thomas L. Freedman has rightly said 'Peoples of Arab world need to grow their own arbiters: their Arab Nelson Mandelas'. That is, Shiite, Sunni and tribal leaders who stand up and say to each other what Mandela's character said about South African Racial Regime 'We have to surprise them with restraint and generosity'.

The spark that was lit in Tunisia by young and untrained revolutionaries had spread the brushfire to four countries after consuming Egypt's long time president Hosni Mubarak. The chosen tools of revolutionary youths came from social media like Facebook and Twitter. The power of social media shook the world for the first time. Their playbook a Gandhian primer on non-violent protest. The Tunisian and Egyptian youth who made history in bringing down an entrenched autocrat through non-violent demonstr-ations lasting less than a month did not turn to al-Qaida affiliates for training. For the first-time Arab nationalism is all about building and reforming their own societies, not blaming foreign powers for their ills. "The People Demand the Fall of the Regime!" Secularism their civic-mindedness (distributing food, providing medical care and cleaning the Square) and their call for social justice and equity have created a totally new challenge for the ruling monarchs, military establishment and business elites. Unable to fathom the younger generation that has grown up in an interconnected world watching satellite television about the democratizing world with a sense of humiliation, the rulers look for dark foreign conspiracy. While activists quietly exchange tips on how

to evade government surveillance or function in a teargas cloud, rulers fulminate against shadowy enemies. The swiftness of the Arab uprising had taken every body by surprise. But getting from here to there requires crossing a minefield of tribal, sectarian and governance issues. The best way to understand the potential and pitfalls of this transition is to think about Iraq. Iraq experience offers hugely important lessons for how to manage the transition to democratic governance of a multi sectarian Arab state when the iron lid is removed. We have seen how Egyptian politics was fumbling between civil and military, between secularism and communalism of Brotherhood.

Peace has been said to be indivisible, so is freedom, so is prosperity and so also is disaster in this one world that can no longer be split in to isolated fragments, prophetically opined Pt. Nehru. We can just add that the peace, prosperity, and freedom of the Region (West Asia) are inextricably linked with the rest of the world, lest it become a disaster, the world community should assume its responsibility. It is a fateful moment for the region. Let us hope that the people of the Iraq and the Region will prove brave and wise enough to grasp this great opportunity and accept the challenge of future.

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