MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY

AN ANALYSIS ON CONSTRAINTS AND PROSPECTS TO RESOLVING THE IRAQ CONFLICT: 2003-2014

By

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work contained in this dissertation is entirely a product of my original work. All citations and references have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the Degree of Master of Science in International Affairs Programme, in the Faculty of Social Sciences, Gweru, Zimbabwe

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Cathrine Matemba **Dr Sadiki Maeresera**

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Date **Date**

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandparents whose unwavering support has always been a pillar of strength in my life.

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ABSTRACT

The study is grounded under the premise that the 2003 to 2014 Iraq conflict is a combination of intricate myriad internal and external factors that present a challenge to resolving the conflict. The Iraq conflict is characterized by a web of interconnected and complex events that present a formidable ostensible challenge to its resolution. In light of these challenges, questions have been posed on whether; the conflict is a result of internal problems or external factors? If so, what role have these factors played in the escalation of the Iraq conflict? What then is the role of state and non-state actors in the context of the challenges encountered in resolving the conflict? What should the international community do to encourage and facilitate dialogue? It is in this attempt to explain the challenges and likelihood of resolving the 2003-2014 Iraq crisis that serves as the basis for this study.

In trying to address the key questions which have formed the basis of the research, the study employs qualitative approaches in collecting and analyzing data. In this regard, data were collected and analyzed from primary and secondary sources as well as interviews and questionnaires. The findings would not only be evaluated within the core objective of critically analyzing the constraints and prospects to resolving the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict but rather extend to critically evaluate the respective roles of state and non-state actors in the context of challenges encountered in resolving the conflict. Lastly the study seeks to recommend scholarly and policy suggestions in on the prospects of finding a sustainable solution to the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict.

Using Lederach's theory on conflict transformation as a theoretical tool for analysis, the study noted that there is need to go beyond the immediate issues surrounding the Iraq conflict by bringing the overall meaning of the conflict into sharper focus. In light of that, the study recognizes that the various dynamics constituting the conflict have got various underpinnings which have thus contributed to the escalation of the Iraq conflict.

The study generally established that the Iraq conflict is a myriad multidimensional crisis characterized by a plethora of actors operating in different arenas at the national, regional and international level. The presence of a multiplicity of actors presents formidable challenges to the resolution of the conflict as these actors have expressed divergent parallel interests which tend to conflict with each other as well as undermine efforts of resolving the conflict. Moreover state

and non-state actors have been motivated primarily by their national interests to intervene in the Iraq conflict. Seemingly, these national interests have tended to conflict with one another thereby making it difficult to come up with concerted efforts to resolve the Iraq crisis.

Having noted that the major findings of the study revolve around internal and external issues, the study came up with a number of recommendations. The recommendations shall be proffered in at a domestic, regional and international level.

- Firstly the need for a reformation of political, economic , social and security structures within Iraq
- Secondly, the need for regional concerted effort to end the war in Syria
- Finally the need for a more vigorous approach by the UN and Arab League in mediating towards a peaceful resolution to the Iraq conflict

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

#	Hash tag
AD	Anno Domini
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
Col	Colonel
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council of States
ICC	International Criminal Court
IS/ISIS/ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISF	Internal Security Forces
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
MNC	Multinational Corporation
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OPEC	Organization of the Oil Exporting Countries
TI	Transparency International
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations

UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US/USA	United States of America
WW1	World War 1

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and outline of research problem

The 21st century been marked by a significant rise in intrastate conflicts, and as Slaughter (2011) points out, among the majority of the world's nearly 200 states, conflicts are much more likely to take place within states than between them (p.32).In like manner, former UN official Andrew Mack found after a major study of conflicts between 1945 and 2008, wars in the post-Cold War world have mostly been fought within rather than between states (Slaughter, 2011, p.32).In this regard, several intrastate conflicts have been witnessed in Syria, Central African Republic, Ukraine, Burundi, Burkina Faso ,Eastern DRC, Mali, Libya and Iraq amongst many countries.

The predominance of these conflicts has given rise to academic debate over the prospects and constraints to resolving conflicts. In analyzing the prospects and constraints, several issues have been raised as constituting the greatest constraints to resolving conflicts. Amongst some of these include the recurrence of conflict which results in what Sambanis &Collier have referred to as the "conflict trap'' as they suggest that it is an empirical regularity that the risk of war recurrence in post-war societies is higher than the risk of the onset of a new war in countries with no prior war history (p.5).With this in mind, Sudan ,South Sudan and Iraq have been amongst some of the countries which have relapsed into war(Council on Foreign Relations,2013,p.1).

Moreover, the consequent withdrawal of major powers results in a security vacuum that results in the difficulties of resolving conflicts (National Research Council, 2000, p.388).In light of this, Cordesman &Khazai (2011) argue that Iraq is a nation intensely divided along sectarian lines and ethnic lines and whose internal divisions have become steadily deeper and further violent since US and its allies left at the end of 2011(p.xi). On the other hand other scholars have argued that the intricate nature of conflict presents an ostensible challenge to resolving conflicts, in this regard, Cordesman &Khazai (2014) argue that Iraq is a nation in crisis burdened by a long history of war, internal power struggles and failed governance, and suffers badly from the legacy of mistakes the US made during and after its invasion in 2003(p.x).Importantly, Iraq is also a victim of the re-emergence of extremist movements like Al Qaeda as well as the vicious forces unleashed by the Syrian civil war(Cordesman &Khazai, 2014,p.x).

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Seemingly, Chatham House (2013) puts forward the claim that Iraq is not exempt from the demographic, political and economic drivers that underlay the Arab Spring which include a bulging youth population with limited job prospects (p.xiv). Consequently, it will become harder for the political elite to blame the legacy of dictatorship and sanctions and war for the country's problems (Chatham House, 2013, p. xiv).

Clearly, the Iraq conflict is characterized by a wide array of issues which thus present actual challenges to the resolution of the conflict. What are the constraints and prospects to resolving the 2003-2014 Iraq crisis? Is the conflict a result of internal problems or external factors? If so, what role have these factors played in the escalation of the Iraq conflict? What then is the role of state and non state actors in the context of the challenges encountered in resolving the conflict? What should the international community do to encourage and facilitate dialogue? It is in this attempt to explain the challenges and likelihood of resolving the 2003-2014 Iraq crisis that serves as the basis for this study. The research aims to analyze the central features which constitute the heart of the Iraq conflict with a view of determining the constraints and prospects to resolving the 2003-2014 Iraq crisis.

1.2 Research Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study is that the 2003 to 2014 Iraq conflict is a combination of intricate myriad internal and external factors that present a challenge to resolving the conflict.

1.3 Preliminary Literature Review

The research provides an analysis on the prospects and constraints to resolving the 2003-2014 Iraq crisis. The research is grounded and premised under the notion that the Iraq conflict is a combination of intricate myriad internal and external factors that present a challenge to resolving the conflict. The research provides a critical analysis of the Iraq crisis by employing various relevant literature which aids in providing a comprehensible insight to the conflict. Of importance, the study recognizes the various works of Cordesman &Khazai (2014) who provide an in-depth analysis of the conflict. The authors provide that Iraq is a nation in crisis bordering on a civil war, burdened by a long history of war and internal power struggles (Cordesman &Khazai, 2014, p.x). In their analysis the authors highlight the intrinsic dimension of the crisis in

Iraq through a historical approach and various qualitative methods to depict the conflict in an essentially comprehensive manner. This purpose of this study is to provide an insight on the major debilitating issues that provide major stumbling blocks to the resolution of the Iraq conflict.

Chatham House (2013) provides a variety of perspectives on the state of Iraq, a decade later after the US led invasion in 2003 and sets some possible scenarios for the future. It begins by providing an overview of the political changes that have been instituted since the invasion providing more focus and emphasis on conflict, political violence and historical legacies (Chatham House, 2013, p.xi).The report also generates an awareness on the domestic and foreign policy of Iraq. The research derives valuable information from this institution as it brings a variety of important issues into perspective. Equally important is that the research contextualizes the Iraq conflict from the 2003 US-led invasion tracing the unfolding of events into 2014.This is fundamental in understanding the crisis that has engulfed Iraq as the 2003 US-led invasion marked a turning point in the political landscape of Iraq.

Benitez &Toledo(2013) argue that Iraq must first find a way to emerge from its past and overcome falling into the memory trap otherwise it will find itself once again falling into the downward spiral of authoritarianism and civil war(p.3). In other words, Benitez and Toledo affirm that Iraq's history is quite entrenched to the extent that its capability of undermining prospects of peace and stability in Iraq cannot be overlooked. In light of this, Benitez and Toledo focus on the chronological history of Iraq since nation-state formation through the present day. This approach is quite significant in providing a background analysis to the Iraq conflict as it goes without saying that the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict is part of a wider problem that goes beyond the immediate situation. Therefore this historical narrative provided by the authors is crucial in elucidating on the conflict in Iraq though this study does not give much coverage to the events prior 2003.

In essence, the literature that has been provided is part of the wider growing literature available on the Iraq crisis. The study builds upon this literature though giving greater emphasis on the events from 2003-2014 with particular focus on the prospects and constraints to resolving the

2003-2014 Iraq crisis. The research provides a scope on the Iraq conflict through engaging qualitative methods that are pragmatic and essential for the conceptualization and analysis of the conflict in Iraq.

1.4Research Justification

Although, widespread literature is available on the Iraq conflict, most of it lacks a comprehensive and detailed analysis with regards to the underlying issues which lie at the heart of the conflict. In other words there is a tendency of narrating events as they happen rather than clearly exploring and scrutinizing the main issues which constitute the prospects and constraints to resolving the Iraq conflict. The study will undertake an in-depth analysis through the application of relevant theory in order to bring out the underlying issues which are at the heart of the conflict in Iraq.

Equally important is that very few African scholars have provided literature on conflicts in the Middle East specifically on the Iraq conflict with many scholars largely focusing on the African continent. It is my hope that this study will break new ground in that dimension and contribute to the growing literature on the Iraq conflict.

1.5 Research Objectives

The major objectives of this research are as follows:

a) To critically analyse the constraints and prospects of resolving the 2003 to 2014 Iraq conflict.

b) To critically evaluate the respective roles of state and non-state actors in the conflict in the context of the challenges encountered to resolving the conflict.

c) To recommend scholarly and policy suggestions in on the prospects of finding a sustainable solution to the 2003 to 2014 Iraq conflict.

1.6 Research problems: key questions

Some of the research questions that the study shall seek to address include the following;
a)What are the constraints and prospects of resolving the 2003 to 2014 Iraq conflict?

b) What respective roles do state and non-state actors play in the context of challenges encountered in resolving the conflict?

c) What scholarly and policy suggestions that can be proffered in on the prospects of finding a sustainable solution to the conflict?

1.7 Theoretical framework

Whilst many theories on conflict transformation were considered for the purpose of this study, most of them were found unsuitable. Amongst some of the theorists who contributed to conflict transformation is Galtung. Conflicts he suggests, form from contradictions in the structure of society and become manifest in attitudes and behaviour (Miall, 2004, p.4). In fact, once formed, conflicts undergo a variety of transformational processes: articulation or disarticulation, conscientisation or de-conscientisation, complexification or simplification, polarization or depolarization, escalation or de-escalation (Miall, 2004, p.4). Equally important, the incompatibility which arises between parties may be eliminated by transcending the contradiction, by compromise, by deepening or widening the conflict structure, and by associating or dissociating the actors (Miall, 2004, p.4).

Galtung's theory on conflict transformation was found unsuitable for this study namely because the Iraq conflict cannot be analyzed in the stages that he provides. Put differently, events characterizing the Iraq conflict have been unprecedented and cannot be said to have undergone all the variety of transformational stages which he propounds in his theory. Additionally, the theory comes short as the Iraq conflict is marred by numerous complexities which cannot be eliminated merely by compromise or disassociation /association with actors. Each of the crises embedded in the conflict requires a totally unique approach from the other and this in turn makes the conflict difficult to resolve.

Similarly, Curle's theory on conflict transformation traces how asymmetric relationships can be transformed, through a shift from unbalanced to balanced relationships achieved through a process of conscientisation, confrontation, negotiation and development(Miall ,2004,p.4).Seemingly, the theory advocates for a non-violent campaign as it can transform conflict by detaching the props for sustaining it (Miall, 2004, p.4).Curle's theory falls short in providing an apt analysis on the Iraq conflict, as the conflict is not only entrenched in unequal relationships, rather is characterized by complex issues such as the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq, the spillover of the Syrian civil war and the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq. Consequently the involvement of external players makes the conflict intricate and complicated rendering Curle's theory on conflict transformation unsuitable.

Another conflict transformation theory which was considered for the study yet found inappropriate is Rupesinghe's theory on conflict transformation. Rupesinghe's theory argues for a comprehensive, diverse approach to conflict transformation that embraces multitrack interventions (Miall, 2004, p.5). In light of this he proposes building peace constituencies at grassroots level and across parties at civil society level (where it exists), and also creating peace alliances with any groups able to bring about change, such as business groups, the media and the military (Miall, 2004, p, 5).In essence, he views conflict transformation as a broad approach involving a variety of actors with the aim of bringing about change. Rupesinghe's theory comes close to being suitable to the conflict in Iraq as indeed there are a variety of stakeholders involved in the conflict yet it falls short in that he does not recognize that each of the parties involved in the conflict have got divergent interests. Moreover, the Iraq conflict is further complicated by the involvement of actors from domestic, regional and international level who all have conflicting and varying interest. The Iraq conflict is more complicated and intrinsic in nature.

Based on the unsuitability and shortfalls of the aforementioned theories, Lederach's theory on conflict transformation was thus adopted for the use of this study. Lederach's theory on conflict transformation argues that conflict transformation is more than a set of specific techniques rather, it is about a way of looking and seeing, providing a set of lenses which draw our awareness to certain aspects of conflict, and help bring the overall meaning of the conflict into sharper focus

(Lederach &Maiese, 2004, p.7). In simple terms, the theory seeks to go past the immediate causes of conflict through analyzing the deeper and contextual influences that have shaped the conflict. In this regard the study adopted the hypothesis that the 2003 to 2014 Iraq conflict is a combination of intricate myriad internal and external factors that present a challenge to resolving the conflict. Therefore, Lederach's conflict transformation provides an apt framework for analyzing the Iraq conflict.

1.8 Research methodology and design

The study made use of qualitative research approaches. In this regard, qualitative research involves any research that uses data that do not indicate ordinal values (Nkwi, Nyamongo, &Ryan (2001) cited in Sage publications).Put differently, qualitative research involves collecting and/or working with text, images, or sounds. This is different from quantitative research which involves working which is numerical.

1.9 Data collection

Data were generated through primary and secondary sources

1.9.1 Primary Sources

Primary sources are records of original ideas and consist of information that has not been analyzed, commented on or interpreted (Westminster College, p.1).For the purpose of this research, interviews and questionnaires were used to collect primary data.

1.9.2 Secondary sources

Secondary sources offer commentary, analysis, or interpretation of primary sources and are written many years after an event, by people not directly involved in the event, who often have an expertise in the field (Westminster College, p.1). This research makes use of scholarly journals, unpublished theses, internet, books as well as seminar papers.

1.9.3 Questionnaires

Questionnaires proved to be an effective tool in collecting a greater amount of data over a broad range of topics .In this regard, researcher made use of well-structured questionnaires in obtaining

data on the Iraq conflict. The researcher designed open ended questionnaires as a way of allowing the respondent to express an opinion without being influenced by the researcher (Reja et al 2003, p.161).The questionnaires were administered through email to a select group of 20 academics within the political science international relations field and security related academic institutions. Questionnaires were favourable in that they guaranteed respondents a greater sense of anonymity.

1.9.4 Interviews

The researcher made use of semi structured qualitative interviews in collecting data. This type of interview allows the interviewer to be guided by a number of predetermined questions or topics. It has the advantage of allowing freedom to digress and permitting the interviewers to probe far beyond the answers to their prepared and standardized questions (Berg, 2001, p.70).

The research made use of non-probability sampling methods and in this regard employed purposive sampling.Accordingly,Teddlie &Yu (2007) provide that purposive sampling techniques may be defined as selecting units i.e. individuals, groups of individuals, institutions based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study's questions(p.77).With this in mind, the subjects were selected from the target population of politicians and policy practitioners, political and security analysts, academic and conflict resolution specialists. The research also applied convenience sampling with a total number of 14 people being interviewed from Zimbabwe in the cities of Gweru and Harare.

1.10 Data analysis

The data that was collected were analyzed through the process of content analysis. By definition, content analysis involves the systematic analysis of textual information (Haliperin&Heath, 2012, p.318).In like manner, Krippendorff (2003) defines content analysis as a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use (p.18).Equally important is that content analysis is an unobtrusive method of data collection hence can reduce bias as information is analyzed in the absence of the authors. Another advantage of content analysis is that it can enable researchers to gain access to subjects that may be difficult to reach

or impossible to reach through direct personal contact as well as that, they can study larger populations and more documents than would be possible through interviews or direct observation(Haliperin&Heath ,2012,p.319).

Analysis is a process of making sense and attaching meaning to the data gathered as data is analyzed to identify themes or relationships between variables with the researcher drawing conclusions by linking the data back to the research question. Qualitative content analysis relies on quotations and narrative as their primary modes of presentation (Haliperin&Heath, 2012, p.326).In this regard, interviews, questionnaires; primary and secondary sources were subjected to analysis as the researcher analyzed them for latent content as well as identified similar themes and relationships between these various sources.

Table 1: Data matrix table

Research objective	Institutions	Data Collection method	Data analysis mode
Objective 1; To critically analyze the constraints and prospects to resolving the 2003 -2014 Iraq crisis	1.Academics at various state universities in Zimbabwe 2.Political and security analysts in Zimbabwe 3.Conflict resolution specialists in Zimbabwe	Personal interviews (unstructured) Open ended questionnaires	Transcription of the interviews and questionnaires Coding of similar themes so as to identify patterns of interaction
Objective 2: To critically evaluate the respective roles of state and non state actors in the conflict,	1.Academics at various state universities in Zimbabwe 2.Political and	Personal interviews (unstructured) Open ended questionnaires	Transcription of the interviews and questionnaires Coding of similar

in the context of challenges encountered towards the resolution of the conflict	security analysts in Zimbabwe 3.Conflict resolution specialists in Zimbabwe		themes so as to identify patterns of interaction
Objective 3: To recommend scholarly and policy suggestions in on the prospects of finding a sustainable solution to the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict	1.Academics at various state universities in Zimbabwe 2.Political and security analysts in Zimbabwe 3.Conflict resolution specialists in Zimbabwe	Personal interviews (unstructured) Open ended questionnaires	Transcription of the interviews and questionnaires Coding of similar themes so as to identify patterns of interaction

Source: Compiled by author, 2015

Content analysis can either be quantitative or qualitative. In this regard, Zhang &Wildemuth (2009) differentiates the two by providing that qualitative content analysis pays attention to unique themes that illustrate the range of the meanings of the phenomenon whereas quantitative content analysis gives special attention to the statistical significance of the occurrence of particular texts or concepts (p.1).For the sake of this study, the research made use of qualitative content analysis.

Figure 1: Content analysis framework
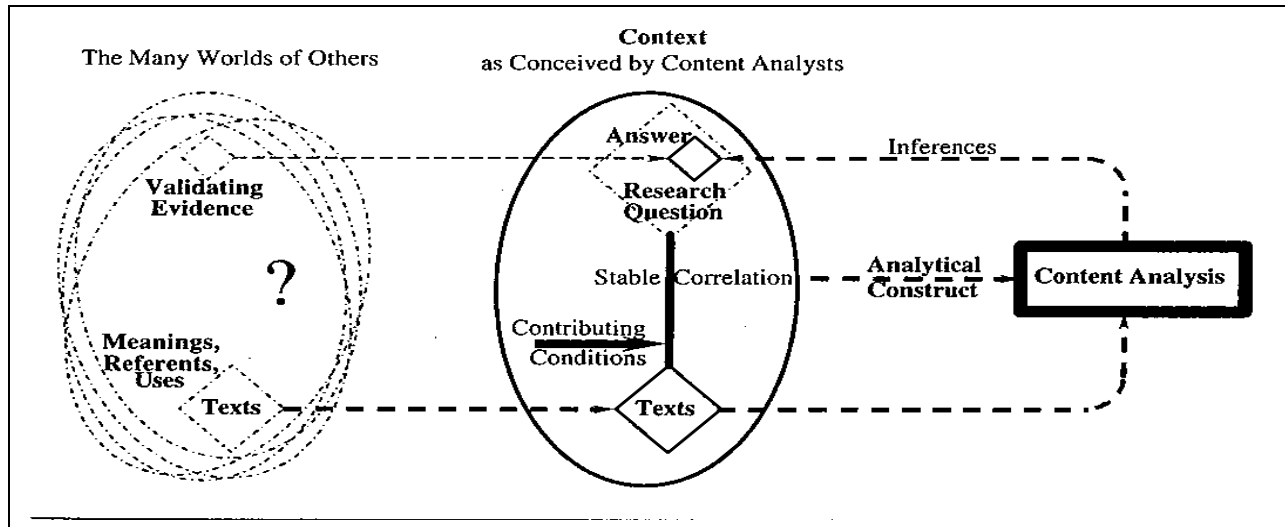
In content analysis, it is paramount to state which data was analyzed, how it is defined and from which population it is drawn. In this case the data was analyzed qualitatively from primary and secondary sources. The target population in this research were politicians and policy practitioners, political and security analysts, academic and conflict resolution specialists from Zimbabwe. In this case, the context was not available and the data collected reflected solely the views and perceptions of the subjects.

Using Krippendoff's framework on content analysis, the research conceptualizes content analysis through the body of text, the research question that the study seek to address, context, analytical construct, inferences and validation of evidence(Krippendorff,2003,p.29-30).

Krippendorff (2003) states that most content analysis start with data that are not intended to be analyzed to answer specific research questions as they are texts which are meant to be read, interpreted and understood by people other than analysts (Krippendorff, 2003, p.31).In this research, the study initially made use of texts from newspapers and journals from which the researcher drew information which was later incorporated into the study. The texts were useful in that they simplified the conflict in Iraq and provided a comprehensive and detailed analysis of the crisis.

Content analysis starts with research questions as a way of conducting inquiries. In this regard, the study developed 3 main research questions and these formed the basis of the study. The 3 main questions guiding the research were: What are the constraints and prospects to resolving the Iraq crisis? What respective roles do state and non-state actors play in the context of challenges encountered in resolving the 2003- 2014 Iraq conflict? What scholarly and policy suggestions can be proffered in on finding a sustainable solution to the resolution of the Iraq conflict? In light of this, Krippendorff (2003) argues that formulating research questions so that answers could be validated in principle protects content analysis from getting lost in mere abstractions or self – serving categorizations as the pursuit of answers to research questions grounds contents analysis empirically (p.32).

The context of the researcher's choice within which to make sense of the body of text is also crucial in content analysis. In like manner, Krippendorff, (2003) argues that a context is the conceptual environment of a text and the situation in which it plays a role (p.33). In this regard, the researcher analyzed the data in the context of the delimitation of the study. This research limited itself from the period 2003, which witnessed the US-led invasion of Iraq to the period 2014.

Content analysis is grounded in stating of the aim and intentions of inferences. This research was premised under the operational hypothesis that the 2003 to 2014 Iraq conflict is a combination of intricate myriad internal and external factors that present a challenge to resolving the conflict. In like manner, the research established that these internal and external challenges are interdependent and interrelated such that they mutually reinforce one another and consequently impede the resolution of the Iraq conflict.

Content analysis places emphasis on validity and reliability. Seemingly, qualitative content analysis assumes that the results of the study are valid and reliable to the degree that they are plausible to others (Haliperin&Heath, 2012, p.328).In other words, the researcher has to clearly explain how they came up with their analysis in a comprehensible manner to the reader. Holiday (2007:7) cited in Halperin and Heath (2012) affirms that all research needs to be accompanied by accounts of how it was really done and reveal how the analyst negotiated complex procedures to deal with the messy reality of scenarios under study (p.328).In this regard, the research was guided by the hypothesis of the study which formed the basis of the study. The researcher was

also aided by the theoretical and conceptual framework in coming up with conclusions and inferences of the study. Additionally, the researcher coded similar themes while analyzing data generated from primary sources, secondary sources, interviews and questionnaires to come up with inferences.

In essence, content analysis formed the basis for data analysis of the research. Both primary and secondary sources were analyzed within the content analysis framework and provided an apt understanding of the data generated during the research.

1.11 Limitations

One of the limitations of this research is the reliability of the information on Iraq. Some of the secondary sources dealing with the Iraq conflict have inherent uncertainties whereas most of the primary sources that have relevant information are internal documents which are still classified. The researcher managed to overcome this limitation by employing various methods of data collection and in this regard made use of interviews and questionnaires to compliment the information generated from secondary sources.

The general discussion on the Iraq crisis is too broad and hence some issues were not given adequate coverage thus the study was limited to the time frame of 2003 to 2014.

1.12 Delimitations

The research objectives of the study focus on the constraints and prospects to resolving the Iraq crisis. The research covers the period from 2003 to 2014 but also events that took place before the US- led invasion of Iraq.

1.13 Overview of the study

The research is complete in 6 chapters

Chapter one is the introduction to the study and includes the background and outline of the research problem, research hypothesis, preliminary literature review, research justification, research objectives, research problems, theoretical framework, research methodology and design and clarification of concepts used in the study.

Chapter two contains the literature review and theoretical framework. The literature reviewed under this study includes articles from Chatham House, Cordesman&Khazai, Doha Brookings Centre, and Carnegie Middle East Centre amongst other works. In selecting an appropriate theory for the study, many theories on conflict transformation were considered but however the research employed Lederach's theory on conflict transformation.

The primary objective of chapter three is to provide a critical overview of the 2003 to 2014 Iraq conflict. The chapter provides an in-depth comprehensive analysis to the conflict in order to generate more insight and awareness on the nature of the conflict that has gripped Iraq.

Chapter four gives a critical analysis to the prospects and constraints to resolving the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict. The chapter provides an apt understanding to issues which constitute the major challenges to resolving the conflict whilst evaluating these in line with the prospects of resolving the conflict.

Chapter five provides a qualitative presentation of the research findings. The research findings are provided in the context of the research objectives which are; to critically analyze the constraints and prospects of resolving the 2003 to 2014 Iraq conflict as well as to critically evaluate the respective roles of state and non-state actors in the conflict in the context of the challenges encountered to resolving the conflict.

Chapter six sets out to provide concluding remarks after which recommendations to the Iraq conflict are suggested as an imperative measure to addressing the third and final research objective whose aim is to recommend scholarly and policy suggestions in on the prospects of finding a sustainable solution to the 2003 to 2014 Iraq conflict.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

In an effort to answer the most difficult question regarding the constraints and prospects to resolving the 2003-2014 Iraq crisis, there has been the development and growth of a wide range of literature. The literature selected for this study is diverse and aims to answer the crucial research questions of the study. In analyzing the prospects and constraints to resolving the 2003-2014 Iraq crisis as well as the role of state and non-state actors in the context of challenges encountered in resolving the Iraq crisis, excellent articles have been selected from Chatham House, Cordesman and Khazai, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and Doha Brookings Centre amongst other works. For this reason, the chapter is divided into three sections.

The first section will begin by reviewing literature from distinguished, prominent and renowned scholars and institutions with regard to the general prospects and constraints to resolving conflicts in general.

The second section will review literature in the context of the main causal factors to the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict and in the context of international state and non-state actors.

The third section will examine the theoretical and conceptual framework adopted for the study. In light of this, the study shall make use of Lederach's theory on conflict transformation.

2.2 Constraints and prospects to resolving conflicts in general

The National Research Council (2000) argues that, one of the constraints to resolving conflicts arises from the disengagement by the major powers and the consequent security vacuum that follows (p.388). Consequently, this security vacuum is further exploited by various militias and insurgency groups which thrive in unstable regimes. Accordingly, the growing insecurity in Libya was as a result of NATO's disengagement in the country which further resulted in the polarization of the country. Moreover, Sawani (2014) asserts that the US and NATO's new disengagement is a testimony of how foreign intervention can undermine a truly genuine

peoples' uprising(p.1).He further asserts that western intervention was driven by the desire to remove Gaddafi without paying adequate attention to the prospect of arming Libya's tribes and radical Islamists, and how that would lead to an armed struggle(Sawami ,2014,p.1).In like manner, Eckman (2014) argues that in terms of the Middle East, President Obama's major goal has been US withdrawal and disengagement from this region as evidenced by its operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and in his negotiations with Iran (p.1).In essence, the disengagement by the major powers breeds a fragile political environment which is susceptible to insecurity thereby proving to be a constraint to the resolution of conflicts.

In addition to the above argument, Mayer (2005) argues that the intricate nature of conflict presents a major constraint to the resolution of conflicts (p.1). This is because most conflicts can be complex and diverse in nature such that resolving them proves to be a significant challenge. Owing to this, Mehta (2008) proposes that the challenges that countries in crises and post-conflict situations face are complex, multifaceted and vary according to a number of factors such as historical root cause of conflict and the different political, social and geographical contexts (p.8). Similarly, the complexity of the system of conflicts in the tri-border area of Chad, CAR and the Darfur has proven difficult to resolve as they are a continuation of earlier crises whose causes go far back into the past (Berg, 2008, p.76).Consequently, the strategies employed to address these challenges and effectively support a country on a path of recovery, development and durable peace are therefore diverse as what works in one country does not necessarily work in another. Hence there is a need for the development of tools that help separate the many complex interactions that make up a conflict and those which help understand the roots of conflict (Mayer p.1).In essence, the convoluted nature of conflicts makes them difficult to resolve as they often require multifaceted approaches which vary from conflict to conflict.

Moreover, the recurrence of conflict has proven to be problematic in light to conflict resolution endeavours. In this regard, Walter (2010) asserts that most civil wars have a surprisingly high recidivism rate as evidenced by that of the 103 countries that experienced some form of civil war between 1945-2009, only 44 avoided a subsequent return to civil war(p.1).This confirms what Collier & Sambanis (2002) have called the "conflict trap'' as they suggest that it is an empirical regularity that the risk of war recurrence in post-war societies is higher than the risk of the onset of a new war in countries with no prior war history (p.5).With this in mind, the Council on

Foreign Relations (2013)argues that most conflicts over the past decade occurred in relapsed countries with Iraq, Sudan ,South Sudan, and Afghanistan serving as sombre reminders of how complex the task of post conflict peace-building and state-building can be, particularly in cases of ongoing insurgency and entrenched political division(p.1).Therefore this pattern of conflict recurrence thwarts efforts of conflict resolution.

Additionally, Walter (2010) affirms that civil wars that are fought between competing identity groups are believed to be particularly intractable (p.5). With this in mind, the author argues that cultural identities are often based on common descent, experience, language, and beliefs hence this generates a trend of stronger and more enduring conflicts as compared to most civic and associational identities (Walter,2010,p.5).Seemingly, the recurring conflict in the Balkans, as well as the repeated violence between groups such as the Hutus and Tutsis, Turks and Armenians, Jew and Arabs are often identified as examples of this (Walter 2010, p.5-6). However, Annan & Danso (2013) cited in Annan (2014) contend the view that, ethnicity by itself is not violent and the concept has been manipulated in societies polarized into two imbalanced divides with one faction feeling marginalized(p.8).Accordingly, conflicts are perpetuated by self interests and thus these self interest games that are manifest in Africa and indeed elsewhere as conflicts dovetail into intractable issues (Agu &Okeke 2013 p.283).Generally speaking, whilst cultural and identity factors may seem to pose challenges to conflict resolution, it is worth cautioning that these factors may be manipulated to serve as a smoke screen for other eminent factors.

Furthermore, the limited involvement of women also contributes to the challenges impeding lasting resolution of conflicts(Annan,2014,p.11).This is because women can have a significant influence over conflict resolution and as Iwilade(2011) argues, women by virtue of their unique pre -conflict experience tend to have crucial insights into the character of disempowerment and exclusion and are therefore much more inclined to bring compromise and tolerance to the negotiating table(p.22-23).Unfortunately, they are significantly and constantly marginalized and left in the sidelines when it comes to conflict resolution thereby weighing down the probability of resolving the conflict. Evidently, as Melanne Verveer, cited in USIP (2011) points out, thirty-one of the world's thirty-nine conflicts relapsed back into violent wars after peace agreements

because women were excluded from the peace process (p.3).By and large, the limited involvement of women in conflict management processes poses as a constraint to the resolution of conflicts.

Additionally, the lack of political will within governments to create transparent and accountable governance institutions, address human rights issues and implement signed peace agreements and resolutions is also a challenge hindering the resolution of violent conflicts (Annan, 2014, p.11).Consequently, in West Africa, the 2010 post electoral violence in Côte d'Ivoire, witnessed Laurent Gbagbo's defiance to the ECOWAS communiqué from the Abuja Summit on 24 December 2010, calling for him to step down, hindered the early resolution of the conflict, further fuelling the crisis as his loyalists continued to fight (Annan, 2014, p.11).Under those circumstances, the lack of political will amongst governments hinders meaningful efforts aimed at resolving conflicts.

Generally speaking, the above factors have shown that conflict resolution is a mammoth task as the process is severely incapacitated by a wide array of factors which include the lack of political will amongst governments, the recurrence of conflicts, the limited involvement of women, the disengagement of major powers, the intricate nature of conflicts as well as identity conflicts. It is important to now look at the constraints and prospects to resolving the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict.

2.3 Constraints and prospects to resolving the Iraq crisis: Main causal factors to the Iraq conflict

2.3.1 Leadership failure

The ICG (2014) purports that Nouri Al Maliki exacerbated the Iraq conflict through his fundamentally flawed policies which he pursued (p.5). Such policies include the war on terror, manipulation of state resources ,securitization of politics as well as the increased alienation of the Sunnis(p.5).Furthermore Maliki tried to centralize power, neutralize Iraq's budding political institutions, politicize the judiciary and the armed forces in pursuit of his own political ends yet however in the process, he   marginalized and alienated his opponents and the majority of Iraqis(ICG ,2014,p15).In that respect, Cordesman and Khazai (2014) further allude to the point that ISIS/ISIL did not suddenly materialize in Iraq in December 2013,for years, the group

exploited growing Sunni and Shi'ite sectarian divisions and steady drift towards civil war(p.1).Hence the point that the ICG (2014) and Cordesman & Khazai(2014) are trying to put across is that, Maliki's policies in Iraq proved to be detrimental as they plunged the nation into deeper chaos by creating divisions as well as breeding resentment which flared up in the form of terrorism. However, Haddard (2014) is quick to caution that, in as much as Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has overseen the entrenchment and exacerbation of the conflict in Iraq, he is not necessarily responsible for the creation, of the very worst aspects of post-2003Iraq (p.15).Therefore in as much as Maliki played a role in precipitating the Iraq conflict, there are other factors which further exacerbated the conflict in Iraq. The study will demonstrate that Nouri Al Maliki was indeed a prominent catalyst for the 2003- 2014 Iraq conflict despite other literature ruling out that fact.

2.3.2 Kurdish question

Rand Corporation (2011) asserts that, General Raymond Odierno, the then-commander of Multi-National Force–Iraq assessed Arab-Kurdish tensions "as the greatest single driver of instability in Iraq" (p.1).In light of this, the Kurdish question is brought out as major threat to peace and stability of Iraq. However it is worth noting, that before the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, the 'Kurdish Question' did not exist, yet, with the carving out of new states from the territories of the Ottoman Empire, the 'Kurdish Question' was aired for the first time (Stansfield 2006, p.1).The thrust was upon whether the Kurds should be granted an independent state, or whether it would be more beneficial from the perspective of the imperial powers to incorporate them into other states dominated by other people. Correspondingly, Romano (2012) emphasizes that Kurds wish to safeguard the considerable gains and extensive autonomy they currently enjoy yet the goals pursued by consensus in Iraqi Kurdistan remain unfulfilled as Kirkuk and other disputed territories still lie outside the de jure control of the KRG (p.1345).Moreover, a hydrocarbons law that would conclusively settle the division of power between Kurdistan and Baghdad over oil resources remains elusive; and the status of the Kurdish peshmerga[1] security forces is still ambiguous(Romano, 2012,p.1345).

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[1] The term peshmerga translates as "those who face death" and are Kurdish fighters in Northern Iraq.See:www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-2873897

Villelas, (2014) alleges that the complex relationship between Erbil and Baghdad oscillates from conflict to pragmatic cooperation, making it difficult to solve the chronic tensions, but preventing the outbreak of greater conflicts (p.6). However this view is challenged by NOREF (2012) which puts forward the claim that in practice, negotiations with Baghdad on autonomy status have tended to alternate with periods of armed struggle (p.4). Furthermore, the alliance between Kurdish leadership and regional and international adversaries of the Iraqi regime in the Iran- Iraq war, the Persian Gulf War and the US-led invasion of 2003 fuelled Baghdad's image of Kurds as traitors and fifth columnists (NOREF, 2012, p.4).In like manner, Katzman of Congressional Research Service (2010) avows that the major territorial, financial, and political issues between the Kurds and the central government do not appear close to resolution (p.i). Ultimately, it can be argued that the Kurdish question is one of the major stumbling blocks to the resolution of the Iraq conflict. Therefore this study shall focus on the Kurdish issue as being one of the major constraints to resolving the 2003-2014 Iraq crisis.

2.3.3 Endemic corruption and Bad governance

Cordesman and Khazai (2014) purport that, corruption has been a key feature of Iraq politics and governance since it was created after WW1 (p.132).In this regard, Gunter (2010) argues that corruption in Iraq is so great and pervasive that, during the height of insurgent violence, corruption was considered to be a greater threat to the future of Iraq than the insurgency (p.1). With knowledge of this, corruption coupled together with bad governance have further worsened the political and security crisis in Iraq as Cordesman and Khazai (2014) contend the notion that terrorism and insurgency in Iraq did not emerge as a one sided vacuum, rather failures in governance have significantly contributed to these features(p.119). By the same token, Chatham House (2013) points out that corruption is one of the complex challenges that Iraq will continue to face in the coming years. For the purpose of this research, corruption and bad governance shall be analyzed together as a major factor which poses a dire threat to the resolution of the Iraq crisis.

2.3.4 The US- led invasion of Iraq

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (2007) asserts that, the invasion and occupation of Iraq constituted the greatest nation-building challenge the United States has faced since World War II as it intended to reshape the Iraq society along the lines of a liberal market-based democracy yet failed to achieve its intended purpose (p.7). In that respect, the invasion has been premised under the just war theory which argues that, democracies are justified in wedging wars against non democracies as a means of instituting democracy. Yet, Skinner (2008) affirms that one may be inclined to assume that if the invasion of Iraq was a measure to prevent war, then it was one fuelled by the potential of conflict between a democracy and an autocracy (p.81).

Scheeringa (2010) champions the groupthink phenomenon that has been linked with bad decision making in foreign policy making (p.3). In light of this, Jabar of Carnegie Endowment for international Peace (2007) contends that the invasion of Iraq was carried out with sparse planning and a flawed understanding of Iraq's political and cultural intricacies, as wars and sanctions had exacerbated inherent stresses and tensions (p.3).Overally, it can be argued that the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 was characterized by fundamentally intrinsic mistakes and miscalculations that resultantly led to political instability and fragmentation in Iraq.

Cordesman& Khazai (2014), state that, the 2003 US- led invasion of Iraq led to Iran gaining massive leeway and power in Iraq as the US coalition failed to carry out nation building thus sowed deep divisions between Sunni and Shiites and between Arab and Kurds (p.7). As a matter of fact, this feature was thus manipulated by Iran to safeguard its own national interests as Cordesman& Khazai (2014) further argue that, Iran used this opportunity to ally with the Shiite faction against the Sunnis as well as provided weapons, money, training and other forms of assistance to bolster Shiite and non Shiite allies in Iraq to ensure that Iraq remained too weak to pose a challenge to Iranian security and interests (p.7).

Moreover, Oliker & Rand Corporation (2007) cited in Benitez and Toledo (2014) mention that the popular regional view of the U.S. fighting a "war on Islam" triggered a wave of foreign fighters to go to Iraq to fight U.S. forces (p.15).Similarly Smith (2015) of the House of Commons Library notes that ISIS has its roots in the Sunni rebellion against the US-led

occupation after the 2003 invasion(p.1).Thus, the study shall argue that, the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq provided inroads for the growth of the extremist group ,the Islamic State as well as led to the escalation of the conflict.

2.3.5 Sectarianism and Ethnicity

Carnegie Middle East Centre [Carnegie-MEC] (2014) asserts that, rivalry between the Shia majority and the Sunni minority in Iraq has been at the centre of political conflict in the state since then President Saddam Hussein fell in 2003(p.3).Seemingly, Blanchard (2009) notes that the differences between the Sunni and Shiite Islamic sects are rooted in disagreements over the succession to the Prophet Muhammad, who died in 632 AD, and over the nature of leadership in the Muslim community (p.1).

However, Visser (2007) contends that Iraqis tend to steer away from blanket accusations against sectarianism preferring instead to externalize the atrocities and are adamant of sectarianism as a destructive force (p.815). From this analysis, the author tends to put across the view that there is denial of the existence of sectarianism within Iraq as the focus is largely hinged on laying the blame on external forces for the grievances and atrocities experienced in Iraq.

Whilst the arguments presented above present sectarianism as major constraint to resolving the Iraq conflict, Chatham House (2013) argues that the struggle for power is not conducted along neat Shia versus Sunni or Islamist versus secular dividing lines as issues of identity, rights and interests have often found sectarian expression in a period of upheaval and transition (p.xii). In like manner, Brookings Doha Centre(2014), states that, while an unstated assumption in the sectarianism argument is that these conflicts are primordial and thus beyond political solutions, they are not, as Sunni and Shia Muslims have lived in harmony for many more years of Islamic history than they have fought (Brookings Doha Centre, 2014, p.5). Significantly, conflict axes in the recent past of the Middle East did not develop along Sunni-Shia lines, as the Arab cold war was not sectarian, but ideological (Brookings Doha Centre, 2014, p.5).Therefore although the sectarian aspect of the crisis has overwhelmed perceptions regarding the impasse, it is a symptom of broader illness relating to the fact that the post 2003 order was built on inherent weak foundations (Chatham House 2013, p.17).Thus it can be argued that in as much as

sectarianism has undermined the ability to resolve the Iraq conflict, it has to be noted that there are many deep rooted causes to the conflict and sectarianism has emerged as a result of these. In the context of this study, sectarianism will be discussed as constituting a debilitating factor to the resolution of the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict.

2.3.6 Rise of the Islamic state

Katzman (2014) argues that the Islamic State constitutes the most violent component of the Sunni rebellion that has become a major threat to Iraqi stability in 2014(p.8).This is because it holds a radical interpretation of Islam as a political philosophy and seeks to impose that worldview by force on Muslims and non-Muslims alike(Clarion Project ,2014,p.2).In that regard, the Clarion Project (2014) points out that the ideology of the Islamic State is that of Salafist-jihadist, which places emphasis on decisions being based on a hardliner interpretation of sharia which is brutally enforced in the areas controlled by the Islamic State(p.11).In respect to this , Antoun (2001,) defines fundamentalism as a religiously based cognitive and affective orientation to the world characterized by protest against change and the ideological orientation of modernism(p.1).Additionally, Rabie (2007) purports that Islamic fundamentalism has moved from being a mere socio cultural movement seeking to reform Islamic societies in general, to being a radical movement using violence to achieve its social and political objectives(p.2).This definition provides an apt understanding of the Islamic state which has adopted violence as one of its mechanisms in pushing forward its agenda and mandate.

Jabbour (2005) alleges that Islamic Fundamentalism is a strange phenomenon that needs to be interpreted as he likens Islam, to a Picasso, describing it as "strange phenomenon" to most western minds while Islamic fundamentalism is even more difficult to understand (p.81). However, Rabie (2007) contends that fundamentalism and its slogans have nothing new or original to offer as it brings no new revelations and offers no new ideas or concrete solution rather, it tends to distort reality beyond recognition, lacking the proper tools to diagnose reality and develop a viable program to transform it (p.23).With knowledge of this, Islamic fundamentalism is brought out as a misguided concept. This thesis will focus on Islamic fundamentalism as the driving force behind the Islamic State.

2.3.7 Deep structural demographic and financial pressures

Cordesman and Khazai (2013), purport that the challenges in Iraq politics interact with a wide array of structural factors that many politicians undermine, yet Iraq is a nation plunged under deep structural demographic and financial pressures(p.4).Similarly, Chatham House (2013) contends the view that, whilst Iraq may have embarked on a political transition in 2003 it is by no means exempt from the demographic, political and economic drivers that underlay the Arab uprising protests elsewhere(p.80).With this in mind ,Iraq faces more than ethnic and sectarian problems as the ongoing massive demographic population growth poses an ostensible challenge to the nation as the population was about 6.8million in 1960 yet rose significantly to 31.9million in 2013 (Cordesman &Khazai, 2014,p.13).In light of this, when the Malthusian theory is applied within the context of the population growth in Iraq, it can be argued that population growth poses a grave danger in Iraq as it is likely to exacerbate and heighten the tension in Iraq.[2]This thesis will argue that the massive demographic pressures are an imminent threat to the stability of Iraq and thus pose a major constraint to the resolution of the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict.

2.3.8 Iraq conflict in the context of national and international state and non state actors: Plurality of actors in the Iraq conflict all with vested interests

Chatham House (2013) points out that, Iraq politics continues to be heavily influenced by the agendas of competing regional powers, especially Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey (p.xiv).In like manner, the government of Iraq has blamed the instability of the nation as well as jihadists movements as being a product of regional conspiracies(Chatham House, 2013,p.6).Moreover, Katzman of the CRS (2015) points out that, relations between Iraq's government and the Sunni Arab Gulf states have been strained in the post-Saddam Hussein period partly due to the government of Iraq having been dominated by Shiite factions politically close to Iran and viewed as excluding Sunnis(p.20). Therefore, the relationship between Iraq and the regional

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[2] Thomas Malthus argues that population grows at a geometric rate whilst food production increases at an arithmetic rate.The consequence of these two principles is that eventually, population will exceed the capacity of agriculture to support the new population numbers. He therefore argues that further growth will be limited by positive and preventative checks. Famine and war constituting positive checks whilst postponement of marriage constituting preventative checks. For the sake of this study the main focus would be on positive checks with particular reference to the escalation of war as a means of checking the population growth. See :*geo-revision.net/IB%20**Population**%20overview.ppt*

powers is brought out as being characterized by tension with regional powers exerting a destabilizing influence over Iraq politics.

Furthermore, the International Crisis Group [ICG] (2005) argues that, Iran's interest is to have a central Iraqi government that, while strong enough to keep the country together, will be too weak to represent a threat and can be trusted to remain on friendly terms (p.10). Similarly, Turkey's strong relations with Iraqi Kurdistan emphasized by the ongoing development of a bilateral oil pipeline from Iraqi Kurdistan into Turkey against the wishes of the Baghdad government have severely strained relations with Baghdad as the development of the pipeline allows the KRG to export energy directly to Turkey without the revenues going through the central government's exchequer (Chatham House 2013, p.39). Moreover, Chaziza (2014) affirms that ten years after the U.S invasion and occupation of Iraq ended; more and more policy makers assert that Washington liberated the Iraqi people at heavy human and economic cost to itself, while China ended up the chief economic beneficiary (p.1). The point that the various authors are trying to make is that national interests have been the motivating principle for the various interactions of these states with Iraq. In this regard, the thesis will argue that, national interests have been the prime motivation for state and non states' actions within the Iraq conflict.

2.4 Theoretical and conceptual framework

While many theories were considered for this study as an appropriate analytical tool, the study employed the conflict transformation theory. In light of this, Miall (2004)argues that, conflict transformation theorists argue that contemporary conflicts require more than the reframing of positions and the identification of win-win outcomes rather they look into the structure of parties and relationships and go beyond the conflict itself(p.4).In this regard, conflict transformation is defined as the "process of engaging with and transforming the relationships, interests, discourses and, if necessary, the very constitution of society that supports the continuation of violent conflict"(Miall,2004,p.4).In like manner, conflict transformation also entails engaging a wide range of stakeholders within the society or region affected, and outsiders with relevant human and material resources(Miall ,2004,p.4). Accordingly, it recognizes that conflicts are transformed gradually, through specific steps by means of which a variety of actors may play important roles (Miall, 2004, p.4).From the above provided definition, conflict transformation can be understood

as a gradual process which aims at changing the relationships and perspectives within society through analyzing the embedded conflictual issues by engaging a wide range of stakeholders as a means of achieving peace.

Conflict transformation theory has a significant number of proponents who include Galtung, Lederach, Curle, Azar, Rupesinghe and Vayrynen. However, for the purpose of this study, John Paul Lederach's theory on conflict transformation shall be employed in relation to the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict.

2.4.1 Lederach's Theory on Conflict Transformation

Lederach (1995) cited in Miall (2004) contends the notion that conflict transformation must actively envision, include, respect, and promote the human and cultural resources from within a given setting (p.4). Similarly Lederach & Maiese (2004) argue that conflict transformation is more than a set of specific techniques rather, it is about a way of looking and seeing, providing a set of lenses which draw our awareness to certain aspects of conflict, and help bring the overall meaning of the conflict into sharper focus (p.7). In that context, three lenses are identified as being instrumental for making sense of the conflict. The first type of lens helps in seeing the immediate situation whilst the second lens are meant to observe past the immediate problems and view the deeper relationship patterns that form the context of the conflict and finally the third set of lens help to visualize a framework that holds these jointly and establishes a platform to address the content, the context, and the arrangement of the relationship (Lederach & Maiese 2004, p7-8).In simple terms the conflict transformation theory seeks to go past the immediate causes of conflict through analyzing the deeper and contextual influences that have shaped the conflict. Such an approach will ensure that a sustainable solution to the conflict is reached upon.

2.4.2 Dimensions of transformation

Steps Centre (2013) affirms that John Paul Lederach (1995) conceptualizes transformation in four dimensions that form part of an integral system and these being the individual/personal, interpersonal/relational, cultural and structural dimensions (p.9). The analysis of the process of conflict transformation seeks to capture the changes that have taken place in each one of these dimensions and their impact over the conflict as a whole (Steps Centre, 2013, p.9).Beyond

Intractability (2003) states that the personal dimension refers to changes effected in and desired for the individual and these include the cognitive, emotional, perceptual, and spiritual aspects of human experience over the course of conflict. The relational dimension portrays the changes affected in and desired for the face-to-face relationships including emotions, power, and interdependence, and the communicative and interactive aspects of conflict (Beyond Intractability, 2003).The structural dimension highlights the underlying causes of conflict, and stresses the ways in which social structures, organizations, and institutions are built, sustained, and changed by conflict (Beyond Intractability, 2003).The cultural dimension refers to the ways that conflict changes the patterns of group life as well as the ways that culture affects the development of processes to handle and respond to conflict (Beyond Intractability, 2003).In essence ,Lederach theory on conflict transformation is conceptualized in four dimensions which form a fundamental basis deemed necessary in understanding conflict transformation.

2.4.3 Conflict transformation map

Lederach's theory on conflict transformation developed a conflict transformation map which is complete in three stages. These stages include the presenting situation, horizon of preferred future and the development of change processes (Lederach& Maiese, 2004, p.8).

Figure 2: The big picture of conflict transformation

The Big Picture of Conflict Transformation

Inquiry 1: Presenting Situation — Issue, Patterns, History

Inquiry 2: Horizon of Future — Solutions, Relationships, Systems

Personal, Relational, EPISODE EPICENTER, Cultural, Structural

Inquiry 3: Development of Change Processes
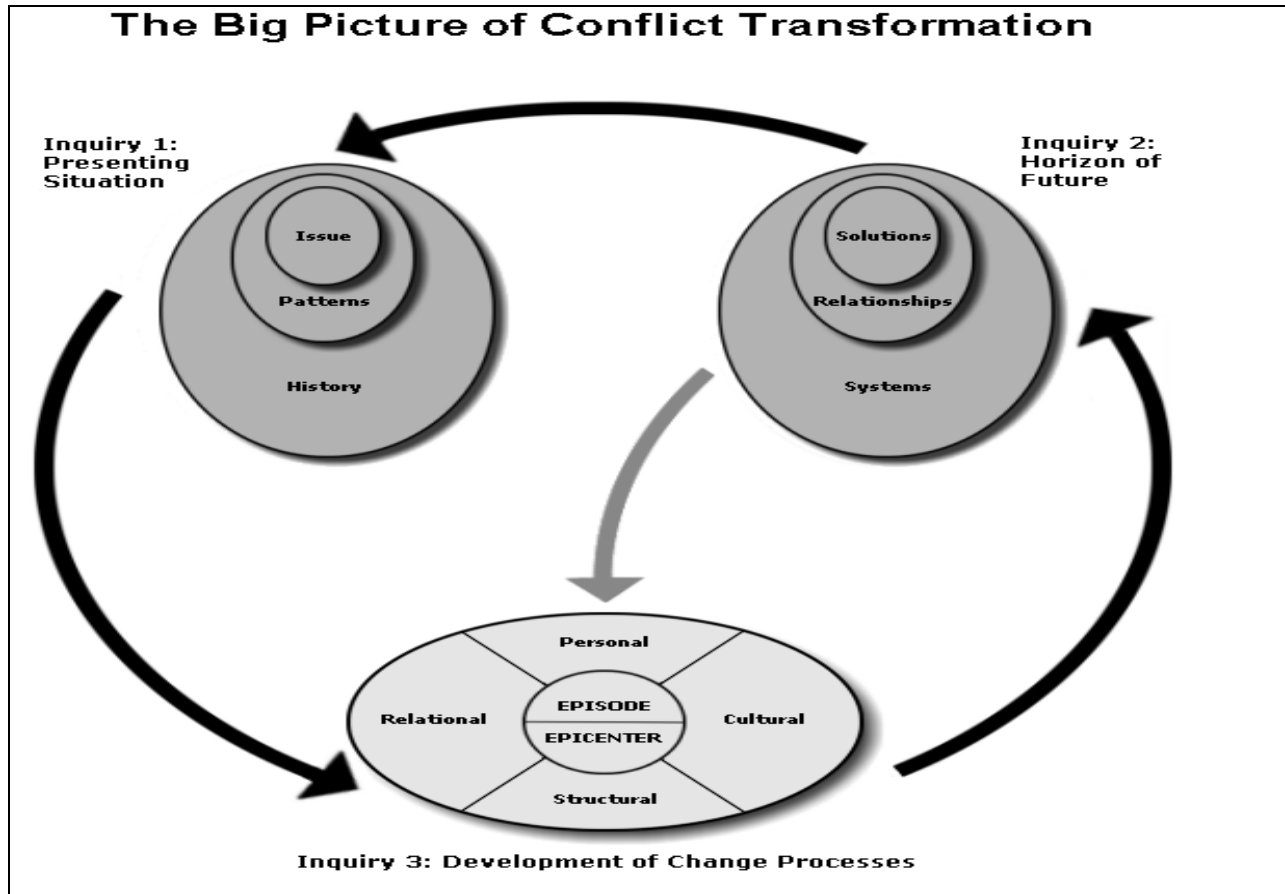
Source: adapted from Maiese, M. and Lederach, J. P. (2004) 'Transformation', in H. Burgess and G. Burgess (eds) *Beyond Intractability*, Colorado: University of Colorado Conflict Research Consortium

The presenting situation describes the conflict episode which provides an opportunity to analyze the content of the dispute as well as the patterns of relationship within the context of the dispute (Lederach &Miase, 2004, p.8). Of significance, is to note that, whilst conflict transformation views the presenting issues as an expression of the larger system of relationship pattern, it moves beyond the "episodic" expression of the conflict by focusing on the relational and historical patterns in which the conflict is rooted (Lederach &Maiese, 2004, p.8.). In other words, conflict transformation links the present with the past and establishes how events of the past may have contributed to the dispute at hand. However, Lederach & Maiese (2004) caution that any likelihood for change lies in the capacity to differentiate, comprehend, and redress what has transpired, thereby constructing new structures for future interactions (p.8).Given these

points, the presenting situation seeks to explore the underlying issues of a conflict and in so doing provides a comprehensive understanding to the conflict.

The horizon of the future, considers what we would ideally like to see in place through pointing towards possibilities of what could be constructed and built thereby representing a social energy that informs orientation (Lederach & Maiese, 2004, p.8). That is to say, it appeals directly to individuals asking them about the ideal situation they envision thereby informing the change process.

Additionally, Lederach &Maiese (2004) purport that, the development of change processes is a broader component which requires an analysis on response to conflict as the development of change processes relates to interconnected needs, relationships, and patterns(p.8).Seemingly, the change processes should address both the immediate problems and the broader relational and structural patterns, thus reflecting on multiple levels and types of change(Lederach & Maiese, 2004, p.8).In that regard, change processes must not only encourage transitory resolutions , but rather promote sustainable lasting solutions.

2.4.4 Platforms for transformation

Lederach &Miaese (2004) contend the notion that transformational change processes must be both linear and circular (p.9). Linear denotes things moving from one point to the next in a straight line and is associated with a rational-logical understanding of events in terms of cause and effect specifically requiring an analysis of change in broad patterns (Lederach &Maiese 2004, p.9).That is to say, the linear pattern applies reason and analytical skills in understanding the trend of a conflict.

Circular understanding suggests that change processes are connected through relationships which operate as a feedback loop as well as being unidirectional (Lederach &Maiese 2004, p.9).

Moreover, Lederach & Maiese (2004) define a transformational platform as the building of an on-going and adaptive base at the epicentre of conflict from which it is possible to generate

processes that create solutions to short-term needs and provide a capacity to work on strategic long-term constructive change in systemic relational context(p.9).For this reason, paramount to transformation is building a base that generates processes that provide adaptive responses to the immediate and future iterations of conflict episodes, and address the deeper and longer-term relational and systemic patterns that produce violent, destructive expressions of conflict(Lederach &Maiese,2004,p.9).Put differently, the transformational platform seeks to ensure an appropriate response in the likelihood of any future recurrences of conflict through providing instant needs whilst enabling the development of lasting solutions to address the vicious effect of conflict.

2.5 Iraq conflict in the context of Lederach's conflict transformation theory

Using Lederach's theory on conflict transformation, the immediate issues bordering the Iraq conflict are sectarianism, the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq, corruption and bad governance, leadership failure, the Kurdish issue, ISIL insurgency in Iraq, demographic and financial pressures as well as the flawed constitution. According to the theory there is need to go beyond these immediate issues by bringing the overall meaning of the conflict into sharper focus. In light of that, the study recognizes that the outlined issues have got various underpinning which have thus contributed to the escalation of the Iraq conflict. Therefore the study will unravel the major issues behind the immediate causes to the Iraq conflict.

With this in mind,Benitez and Toledo (2013) assert the view that in order to appreciate many of the challenges facing governance, democracy and security in modern Iraq it is imperative to understand its history, religious and cultural factors (p.6).With knowledge of this, it should be noted that during the Ottoman Empire's rule of Iraq, it was divided into three provinces: Mosul, Baghdad and Basra with Mosul being seen as a key for ruling over the Kurds, who had inhabited the region long before they converted to Sunni Islam(Benitez&Toledo,2013,p.6). On the other hand, Baghdad had in fact been the seat of the Sunni Abbasid Caliphate whilst Basra had been an important religious site for Shia Muslims (Benitez &Toledo, 2013, p.6). Resultantly, the demarcation of these towns and provinces in Iraq set to polarize the different sects and ethnic groups in Iraq thereby sowing divisions amongst them which have carried on into modern day Iraq.

Moreover, Benitez &Toledo (2013) purport that; the modern state of Iraq traces itself to the responses of the international community from outside actors. The state itself was imposed from outside and not created from within, in the aftermath of WWI (p.6).From this statement, it is worth noting that external actors were responsible for shaping and moulding the state of Iraq. In that respect, it can be argued that the problems bedevilling Iraq are not necessarily limited and confined to its internal dimensions and parameters, rather, they are also as a result of external influences.

Noteworthy is that, from the beginning of the country's formation oil was a key issue in the important policy decisions made by internal and external actors. As Goldschmidt &Davidson (2010) cited in Benitez and Toledo (2013) point out, the British and Iraqi negotiators haggled over the remains of the Turkish Petroleum Company and which shares of equity Iraq would receive in turn (p.7).So from the onset of the creation of Iraq, the desire for oil was a contentious issue amongst internal and external actors. It is this quest for oil that propelled the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 which consequently ignited and fuelled the insurgency in Iraq. In like manner, the control for hydrocarbons in Iraq has been a major thorny issue and bone of contention between the Iraq central government and the KRG.

More so, Benitez&Toledo, (2013) affirm that, the insurgency threat of ISIL emanated from the influx of foreign fighters active within the militias fighting the Coalition troops and these consequently led to the creation of Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), which has had lasting implications for Iraq's security (p.14). In other words, AQI first emerged in Iraq as part of the militias fighting against the Coalition forces in 2003only later to evolve and become ISIL, which has significantly been challenging the legitimacy of the Baghdad government through unleashing a reign of terror in Iraq.

Additionally, Chatham House (2013) notes that, the development of incentives for violence in Iraq began well before 2003, as violence has been a key element of Iraq politics both externally and internally (p.2).Thus the insurgency and violent attacks which are a key feature of the Iraq conflict have evolved over time thereby exacerbating the crisis in Iraq. Seemingly, it can also be argued that, the trends of violence which emanated from the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq as

well as from the aftermath of the withdrawal of the coalition force, have significantly contributed to the growing culture and patterns of violence in Iraq.

Moreover, from 1991-2003 Iraq was at the centre of the most flawed and wide ranging regime for international sanctions which were responsible for hundreds and thousands of deaths. Apparently, the black-market economy that developed during this period, and the notorious corruption around the oil-for-food programme, fostered violent criminal networks that survived and often grew stronger after the overthrow of the regime, whilst hundreds of billions of dollars have been spent on rebuilding the country in the aftermath of the 2003 invasion and the preceding two decades of war and sanctions (Chatham House, 2013, p.2&xii). It is due to these debilitating factors that Iraq has failed to adequately address the massive demographic social and financial pressures that are gripping Iraq and have heightened the 2003-2014 conflict.

Furthermore, Gunter (2010) argues that corruption has a long history in Iraq or Mesopotamia[3] with some historians believing that the first instances of both corruption and bureaucracy originated in the ancient cities of Mesopotamia (p3). In that respect, Saddam Hussein's regime was considered one of the most corrupt in the world as the oil for food programme in Iraq highlighted the depth and scale of this corruption (Gunter, 2010, p.3). In light of this, the pervasive corruption that has been at the centre of the conflict in Iraq has got historical underpinnings.

In addition, the despotic and tyrannical legacy of Saddam Hussein's Baath regime incited and fuelled sectarian tensions and animosity in Iraq .With this in mind, Toledo and Benitez (2013) point out that, the outright oppression of the Shias and Kurds reinforced scores of ethnic, familial, sectarian, and social cleavages that continue to characterize Iraq politics(p.10). Consequently, with the end of Sunni-dominated Iraqi politics under the Ba'ath Party, this led to the rise of Shia political dominance and their aspiration to use their demographic advantage to maximize their control over the government and, concurrently, to diminish Sunni supremacy

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[3]Mesopotamia is derived from the Greek, meaning 'between two rivers'. It was an ancient region in the eastern Mediterranean bounded in the northeast by the Zagros Mountains and in the southeast by the Arabian Plateau, corresponding to today's Iraq, but also parts of modern-day Iran, Syria and Turkey.See: http://www.ancient.eu/Mesopotamia/

(Toledo &Benitez 2013, p.14).In like manner, the rule of Nouri al Maliki was characterized by Shia domination and repression and marginalization of Sunnis and Kurds and this incited sectarianism which has been at the height of the conflict in Iraq. In essence, sectarianism is not a new phenomenon in Iraq; rather it was prevalent during the reign of Saddam Hussein.

In the final analysis, Lederach's theory on conflict transformation provides an apt understanding to the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict. The theory goes beyond the immediate issues of the conflict and extends to the underlying issues of the conflict. In so doing, the theory not only provides a comprehensive understanding to the Iraq conflict, rather it helps point towards the direction in which to find sustainable solutions to the conflict.

2.6 Conclusion

The aim of the chapter was to review various literature which have been written and provided in the context of analyzing the prospects and constraints to resolving the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict. The first section focused on reviewing literature on the prospects and constraints to resolving conflicts in general. Consequently, it was observed that the disengagement by major powers in areas of conflict has left a security vacuum thereby creating inroads for anarchy and mayhem to prevail. Also, the occurrence of conflicts increases the likelihood of recurrence and this creates a vicious cycle which makes it hard to put an end to conflict. Furthermore, the nature of conflict presents genuine challenges to conflict resolution. The limited involvement of women and identity issues were also noted as constituting major barriers towards the resolution of conflicts. Finally, it was discovered that the lack of political will by governments frustrates any meaningful efforts to resolving conflicts.

The second section of the chapter reviewed literature in the context of prospects and constraints to resolving the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict. It was noted that extensive literature pertaining to the Iraq conflict is available yet it mainly generalizes the conflict, hence as a result, this study seeks to fulfil the purpose of elucidating and demystifying the key and pivotal issues surrounding the Iraq conflict whilst clarifying and bringing out the various constraints and prospects to resolving the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict.

The final section provided an analysis of the theoretical framework with regard to the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict. The study made use of Lederach's theory on conflict transformation in an effort to illuminate on the prospects and constraints to resolving the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict. The section began by defining conflict transformation as well as briefly discussing the various proponents to the theory. Finally, the section discussed Lederach's theory on conflict transformation in detail before relating it to the Iraq conflict. The next chapter will provide a critical overview to the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict.

CHAPTER THREE

A CRITICAL OVERVIEW OF THE 2003-2014 IRAQ CONFLICT

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide a general overview of the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict. This will be done in order to provide an insight and clear in depth analysis on the Iraq conflict. In an effort to provide a critical overview of the conflict, the chapter is divided into three main sections.

The first section examines the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq as the starting point of the conflict. As noted by CSIS (2005) the rising insurgency in Iraq since March 2003 has become a "war after the war" (p.1).For this reason the section will explore how the US-led invasion of Iraq unleashed a cycle of events that have had a detrimental impact upon the stability of Iraq and thus contributing to the exacerbation of the Iraq conflict.

The second section will discuss the internal dimension of the Iraq conflict. With this in mind, sectarianism, tension between the KRG and Bagdad, the incompetent leadership of Nouri Al Maliki, the rise of ISIL and the politics of oil in Iraq will be explored in detail as they constitute the internal dynamics of the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict.

The last section will analyze the role of state and non state actors in the context of the challenges encountered towards the resolution of the Iraq conflict. It will be argued in this section that, the role of state and non state actors in the Iraq conflict is largely motivated and driven by the pursuit of national interests.

3.2 The US- led invasion of Iraq

The 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq contributed significantly to the conflict in Iraq. Firstly, the invasion took place without the blessings of Iraqis[4] and this resulted in the staging of anti-Coalition attacks which plunged the nation into deeper anarchy. As Hinnebusch (2007) argues, the blatant flaw of the Iraq war was the misconstrued belief that the invasion would be welcomed as a liberation and a pro-US democracy initiative yet however this proved otherwise as the

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[4] The author is indebted to Mr. Arthur Chikerema who provided this valuable information during an interview with the author in Gweru, on 5 February 2015.

majority of Iraqis were nationalistic and harboured deep distrust of the US and UK, owing to the colonial experience, the decades of sanctions imposed on the country and the US's unwavering support of Israel (p.18).Consequently, this mistrust in the Coalition forces resulted in the launching of anti-US attacks, with an escalation of these attacks being rampant between the months of October and November 2003 as an average of 15-20 US soldiers were killed per day (Cordesman, 2005, p.43). Hence by the Fall of 2004, the post invasion violence had some elements of a low-level civil war, and by June 2005, it threatened to escalate into a far more serious civil conflict (Cordesman, 2005, p.9).In this regard, the US-led invasion of Iraq was regarded with deep suspicion by the majority of Iraqis and this bred anti-Coalition sentiments which later manifested into an anti-occupation insurgency.

Additionally, through the disbanding of the former regime's security forces, the coalition forces created a security vacuum which was manipulated by various militias operating in Iraq (Chatham House 2013, p.1).This is because the armed forces that invaded Iraq failed to realistically plan and execute the next phases of war, namely conflict termination, stability operations, and nation building (Cordesman, 2005, p.3). Therefore it is worth noting that the post-invasion violence reflected not only an anti-occupation insurgency, but a wider competition for power in the territory of a state that had lost its monopoly over the use of force (Chatham House, 2013, p.1).In other words the US-led invasion of Iraq dismantled the security apparatus in Iraq[5] thereupon resulting in power struggles by various militia operating in Iraq to assert dominion over the country and consequently contributed to the further fragmentation of Iraq.

Moreover, the invasion of Iraq created inroads for radical Islamic groups to operate and flourish. As Kaelin, (2014) points out, one of George W. Bush's most lethal legacies was the introduction of al Qaeda into Iraq as the US led invasion not only provided the justification for the formation of AQI, rather it impelled the influx of foreign fighters and enabled a anarchic environment for lucrative criminal activities to flourish (p.1). Furthermore, the Islamist extremist threat also deliberately tried to divide Iraq's Sunni Arabs from its Arab Shiites, Kurds, and other Iraqi minorities thereby inciting sectarianism (Cordesman 2005, p.9). In this regard, the US-led

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[5] Interview with Brigadier General Waqar, Harare, 26 February, 2015.

invasion of Iraq created a leeway for the entrance of AQI, which later metamorphosed into ISIL, whose operations have had a debilitating impact upon the stability of Iraq.

Furthermore, the invasion accentuated sectarian tensions within Iraq, and as Hinnebusch (2007) purports, the destruction of the secular Baathist centre left a vacuum in which sectarian/ethnic leadership took over with the US playing the different sects against one another (p. 19).Similarly, Minority Rights Group International (2014), purports that the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 prompted the brutal sectarian violence which escalated into a civil war between the years 2006–2007 that led to the fragmentation of the country (p.2).This is because Saddam Hussein had been able to hold the state of Iraq together in spite of its sectarian cleavages, yet the US in effect deconstructed this state without having or even planning for a viable replacement for it(Hinnebusch,2007,p.17).In essence, the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq heightened sectarianism tensions in a society that was precarious and unstable, and in so doing contributed to the escalation of the conflict.

Thus, it can be observed that the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq intensified the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict as the invasion led to the introduction of AQI, through inciting sectarianism as well as through the instigation of violence and insurgent attacks in the country. It is therefore important at this time to briefly discuss the role of sectarianism in the Iraq conflict.

3.3 Internal Dimension of the Conflict:
3.3.1The role of sectarianism in the Iraq conflict
Sectarianism has been a major contending issue within the Iraq conflict and has thus served to prolong the crisis further. Carnegie MEC (2014) point out that rivalry between the Shia majority and the Sunni minority in Iraq has been at the heart of political conflict in the state since the then President Saddam Hussein fell in 2003(p.3).Additionally, with the 2011 U.S. military withdrawal from Iraq, sectarian and ethnic divisions have widened, fueling a major challenge to Iraq's stability and to Iraq's non-Muslim minority communities (CRS, 2014,p.i).It would appear that sectarianism became more pronounced with the US- led invasion of Iraq thereby taking a toll on the country's political cohesion.

It is relatively important to note that the Sunni-Shia divide in Iraq emanates from multiple geopolitical, social, and cultural developments. Of significance is the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979 which introduced a new system of government based on Shia theology and altered the balance of power in the region through the creation of an ideological umbrella for disenfranchised Shia communities (Carnegie MEC, 2014, p.4).This creation of the Republic of Iran not only helped empower the Shia community in Iraq but rather infused a sense of a distinctive identity. Additionally, a Shia-Sunni divide also took a turn with the coming into power of Saddam Hussein's Baath Party in Iraq which had a general inclination of advancing Sunni dominance over the Shiites. However, following the demise of Sunni-dominated Iraqi politics under the Ba'ath Party, this led to the rise of Shia political dominance (Benitez &Toledo, 2014, p.14).Hence Sunni Shia tensions are not a new phenomenon, rather the origins of hostilities date back in time and have had a tendency of taking various twists and turns with one group asserting supremacy over the other.

Worth noting is that, the differences between the Sunni and Shiite Islamic sects are rooted in disagreements over the succession to the Prophet Muhammad, who died in 632 AD, and over the nature of leadership in the Muslim community (Blanchard ,2009,p.1).In fact, Blanchard (2009) argues that, the historic debate was centred on whether to grant leadership to a competent, virtuous individual who would pursue the customs of the Prophet or to pass on leadership wholly through the Prophet's bloodline(p.1).Consequently, those who supported Ali's ascendancy became later known as "Shi'a," a word derived from the term "*shi'at* Ali," meaning supporters or helpers of Ali, whilst on the other hand ,those who opposed political succession based on bloodline to the Prophet constituted the majority of Muslims, and came to be known as "Sunni,", a word originating from *sunna* meaning followers of the prophets customs(Blanchard ,2009,p.1).With attention to this information, it can be noted that the differences between the Sunni and Shia are quite historical yet constitute a major factor to the Iraq crisis.

Worth noting is that, sectarianism in Iraq has taken the form of Sunni -Shia divides with Iraq's Sunni Arabs siding with radical Sunni Islamist insurgents as a means to end Shiite political domination and perceived discrimination by the government of Prime Minister Nouri al- Maliki (CRS, 2014, p.i).In this regard sectarianism was reinforced by Nouri Al Maliki's constant

marginalization and seclusion of the Sunnis who became disgruntled and decided to ally with ISIL. However, in as much as this alliance has advanced the Sunni cause, it has undoubtedly served to pose dire repercussions on Iraq's security and stability.

Of significance is to note that sectarian dynamics have accentuated and accelerated the conflict in Iraq. In this regard, Carnegie MEC (2014) argues that, sectarian tensions have hindered state-building processes and weakened the country (p.1). Moreover, sectarianism has taken the form of violence as the ICG (2006) purports that, a rise in sectarian violence has characterized the Iraq conflict as April 2005 witnessed an alarming descent into sectarian discourse and violence which was centred on the principal divide between Sunnis and Shiites (p.1). Furthermore, the bomb attacks on a sacred Shiite shrine in Samarra on 22 February 2006 and subsequent reprisals against Sunni mosques and killings of Sunni Arabs were one of the bloodiest indication that Iraq was staggering on the threshold of indiscriminate disaster (ICG, 2006, p.1).One explanation of Shiite brutality towards the Sunnis has been provided by Benitez &Toledo (2014) who make the claim that Shiites have aspired to use their demographic advantage[6] in order to maximize their control over the government and, simultaneously, to diminish Sunni dominance through the use of violent attacks (p.14). In this regard, sectarian tensions have escalated the trends of violence in Iraq and resultantly contributed to the fragmentation of the country.

Note worthy is that, sectarianism was largely a social and cultural endemic but relatively benign and only became potent when it was politicized by actors who sought to take advantage of religious and ethnic identities for political gains (ICG, 2006, p.6).Similarly, Carnegie MEC (2014) puts forward the claim that sectarianism has become an instrument used by political entrepreneurs looking to create constituencies and rally popular support (p.1). In other words, sectarianism has been exploited by the political elite to suit their mandates and accrue widespread support for themselves. This has inevitably aggravated the precarious situation of Iraq as sectarianism has polarized the nation and proved to be a major hurdle towards the resolution of the conflict.

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[6] The Muslim population of Iraq is approximately 60-70 percent Arab Shi'a, 20-30 percent Arab Sunni and 10 percent Kurdish. Iraqi Kurds are mostly Sunni. See: *en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_Iraq*

Chatham House (2013) proposes that although the sectarian aspect of the current crisis has all but overwhelmed perceptions regarding the impasse, it is a symptom of a broader illness relating to the fact that the entire post-2003 political order was built on a weak and inherently divisive foundation (p.17). In this regard, it would seem as though sectarianism serves to expose the fault lines that are entrenched within the governing structures of Iraq. In light of this, Iraq is portrayed as a fragmented country engulfed by a plethora of challenges and issues which, if not fully addressed could potentially result in the collapse of the country.

From the above, it can be noted that, sectarianism has had a destabilizing effect upon the peace and security of Iraq. Importantly, sectarianism has not only resulted in the weakening of the nation, but rather, it has been manipulated and politicized by prominent political elites to amass support and popularity. The next section will explore the role played by Nouri Al Maliki in the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict.

3.3.2 Unpopular leadership of Nouri Al Maliki

The failure by the Iraq society to produce its own strong man, a charismatic leader with a common national vision to sufficiently unite the nation of Iraq[7], has undoubtedly plunged Iraq into turmoil. Similarly, Carnegie MEC (2014) affirms that, the Iraq conflict has been distinguished by a systemic polarization initiated by the rising authoritarianism of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki who employed various means to consolidate his power, as he marginalized the arms of government and enlarged his political patronage at the expense of his adversaries (p.3).

Furthermore the discriminatory policies of Al- Maliki have strengthened the perception of communal victimhood within the Sunni community as Carnegie MEC (2014) purports that, the government instituted measures to target Sunni leaders additionally accusing them of terrorism and subjecting them to mass arrests whilst sparing the Shia community of these gruesome practices (p.9).Evidence of this has been provided by Kaelin (2014) who points out that a day after the United States withdrew its last combat troops the Iraq government pre arranged the arrest of the Sunni vice president, accusing him of running a death squad which had assassinated police officers and government officials(p.5).Thus the actions of Maliki rendered him an

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[7] Questionnaire, Anonymous Respondent, 12 February 2015.

unpopular divisive leader incapable of uniting Iraq. Having noted the above factors, it is quite accurate to state that Nouri Al Maliki's tenure in power as Prime Minister resulted in the escalation of hostilities between the Sunni and Shia communities and this heightened the conflict in Iraq.

The marginalization of the Sunni group by Maliki resulted in the escalation of the Iraq conflict as Kaelin (2014), points out that, the beginning of 2013 saw rising Sunni discontent at political marginalization and political targeting, which resulted in violent protests and a clash with security forces(p.5).A rise in sectarian tensions prompted the Sunni tribal leader to turn to ISIL militants as a means to secure their own political interests(Kaelin,2014,p.5).In the same manner, Cordesman (2014) argues that ISIL did not suddenly materialize in Iraq in 2013,rather, the group exploited and took advantage of Nouri Al-Maliki's actions of building his own power structure around a Shi'ite dominated state which alienated Sunnis and exacerbated tensions(p.1).Therefore, Nouri Al Maliki's constant marginalization of Sunni's not only stirred up reprisal attacks but rather went an extra mile of introducing ISIL in Iraq.

Broadly speaking, Nouri Al Maliki has neither outlined a unifying vision for Iraq, nor governed in the interest of all its citizens rather he has stirred up discord through sectarian policies and authoritarian rule. Thus his divisive and incompetent governance failed dismally to bring internal peace and stability to Iraq. It is therefore fundamental to briefly explore the insurgent threat posed by ISIL as another dimension constituting the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict.

3.3.3 Insurgent threat from ISIL

The insurgent threat posed by ISIL has intensified the Iraq conflict. In light of this statement, Chatham House(2013) asserts that, Islamist extremist groups remain a leading feature, representing political and sectarian demands in an unstable and aggressive political environment (p.1).Additionally, GIGA focus (2014) argues that the advance of ISIL has intensified the fragmentation of Iraq and could accelerate the dissolution of the state (p.1).In this manner, ISIL has come to be regarded as one of the leading destabilizing factors to the peace and security of Iraq through its gruesome activities and this has heightened the Iraq conflict.

Most noteworthy is the fact that ISIL did not suddenly materialize in Iraq in 2014. Rather, the group has grown from what used to be Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), a Sunni insurgent group which fought against US and Iraqi government forces and carried out attacks against Shiite targets after the downfall of Saddam Hussein (House of Commons Library, 2014, p.2).To put it differently, the demise of Saddam Hussein in 2003 led to the emanation of Al Qaeda in Iraq.[8]In fact Clingendael (2014) puts forward the claim that IS pre-eminence has deep roots in the several insurgencies and cycles of sectarian violence between 2003 and 2014, triggered by the US-led invasion (p.12). It would therefore seem accurate to assert the view that, the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq created inroads for the establishment of ISIL as the group resurfaced in Iraq as an aftermath of the post invasion violence.

Moreover, ISIL has proved dexterous in allying with the marginalized groups of Iraq society. It should be noted that the group has not only been affiliated to the marginalized Sunni population but rather, has forged alliances with supporters of the Baath Party which was banned under the Coalition Provisional Authority under Paul Bremer (ICG, 2006, p.8).Bearing in mind that, the failure by the US to incorporate these former army generals into its security forces gave ISIL the opportunity to engage them into their operations. [9]For this reason, the Iraq army is fighting an experienced group and this has proven to be a mammoth task.[10]Additionally the group appointed these former Baathist Iraqi Army generals as governors of Mosul and Tikrit soon after the capture of these cities. Seemingly, it would appear as though ISIL has largely appealed to the discontented and aggrieved sections of Iraq society in order to gain a foothold over the country as well as amass popular support thereby influencing its dynamics far beyond what its capacity would otherwise permit.

Additionally, ISIS has a strict policy of implementing Sharia law as this forms the core of its governance. Doha Brookings Centre (2014) notes that this includes imposing fixed Islamic

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[8] In an interview with Col Dr John Max Chinyanganya in Harare, on 11 February 2015, he reiterated the same point as provided by House of Commons 2014, stating that the demise of Saddam Hussein as a result of the 2003 USA led invasion of Iraq created inroads for the growth of Al Qaeda in Iraq. He also stated that prior to the invasion, Al Qaeda was not operational in Iraq.

[9] The author acknowledges the contribution made by Dr Heather Chingono, who reminded the author of this valuable point during an interview with the author in Harare, on 18 February 2015.

[10] Interview with Dr Heather Chingono, Harare, 18 February, 2015.

punishments for serious crimes, enforcing attendance of the five daily prayers, banning drugs and alcohol, controlling personal appearance, forbidding gambling, non-Islamic music, and gender mixing; and ordering the destruction of religious shrines, among other rules(p.26).In fact Sharia law is a major component of Islamic fundamentalism which denotes a religiously based cognitive and affective orientation to the world characterized by protest against change and the ideological orientation of modernism(Antoun,2001 cited in Emerson&Hartman,2006,p.130).

Moreover, ISIL has been able to export its ideology as evidenced by its ability of recruiting foreign fighters and this makes it quite distinct from other Islamic extremist groups. In light of this, Doha Brookings Center, (2014) points out that there are likely to be at least 15,000 foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq from at least 90 different countries (p.34).This drafting of foreign fighters has not only portrayed ISIL's ideology as an appealing and popular one, but rather serves to show that it is an international group with a renowned support base. This resultantly makes it difficult to defeat the group and accordingly presents a real challenge to resolving the Iraq conflict.

Furthermore, Worsdell (2014) asserts the claim that, since early June 2014, ISIL, has achieved rapid military successes across northern and western Iraq as part of its campaign to establish an Islamic caliphate spanning the Middle East, from Iraq through to Syria, Jordan, Israel, Palestine and Lebanon(p.2).In fact, ISIL has launched attacks into Iraqi cities, including Mosul, and parts of the provinces Anbar, Nineveh, Diyala, Kirkuk, Salahuddin, Tikrit Tal Afar and Fallujah(UMAA Advocacy,2014,p.12).In fact, as the group advanced, they destroyed security facilities and symbols of the Iraqi state and plundered weapons depots containing modern US weaponry, tanks (Giga focus 2014,p.4). Subsequently, ISIL has been at the heart of the Iraq crisis facilitating mayhem and instability in Iraq.

In connection with the above information, ICG (2014) affirms that, the fall of Mosul and other towns in western Iraq has a relatively simple explanation, the insurgents pushed against a house of cards, a state structure weakened by accumulated Sunni grievances, suppressed by what is experienced locally as an "occupation" army of Shiites influenced by Iran next door (p.1). In actual fact, after the parliamentary elections in April 2014 no governing majority could be

established because Sunni Arab, Kurdish, and some Shiite politicians were adamant in granting Maliki a third term and It was in this power vacuum that ISIL staged attacks in the country (GIGA Focus 2014, p.4).In that respect, it can be argued that the precarious security situation prevailing in Iraq at that time made it easier for ISIL to advance its attacks in the country and in so doing, managed to take control of various cities in Iraq.

Additionally, BBC NEWS (2014) puts forward the claim that ISIL has become synonymous with viciousness, beheadings, crucifixions, stoning, massacres, burying victims alive and religious and ethnic cleansing. Actually, in August 2014, ISIL fighters abducted multiple Yezidi men, women and children and forced them to convert to Islam under the threat of death (Amnesty International, 2014, p.4). They were further subjected to torture and maltreatment as most women and girls suffered rape and other forms of sexual violence (Amnesty International 2014, p.4).Moreover, ISIL broadcasted the beheadings of the American Journalist Steven Sotloff and David Haines a British aid worker, operating from Syria, thus portraying the level and extent of its brutality. Taking into account these gruesome activities of ISIL, it would appear that ISIL is a very brutal terrorist group largely driven by the desire to unleash an unprecedented reign of terror in Iraq thus heightening the conflict.

Over and above that, Cordesman (2014) makes the claim that, ISIL's mutation and resurfacing in Iraq was made possible though Maliki's actions of alienating Iraq's Sunnis as this served to provide a leeway for the group to capitalize on broad Sunni support as well as the support of other armed Sunni factions (p.5). In other words ISIL exploited the sectarian divisions through taking advantage of Sunni grievances which were further enhanced by the Prime Minister's sectarian tendencies, as this allowed the group to gain more ground in Iraq. Similarly, Cordesman (2014) argues that Arab Sunni vs. Shiite/Arab vs. Kurd tensions in Iraq have not only helped polarize Iraq since 2011 but rather have given ISIL popular Sunni support(p.4).In fact, ISIL's centre of gravity is in the Sunni-majority areas of Iraq, particularly the Anbar province (House of Commons library, 2014, p.2).Bearing in mind that Iraq is a country gripped with sectarianism, ISIL has been able to make the best of this situation by exploiting these differences thereby accelerating the conflict in Iraq.

Equally important, Eisenstadt(2014) contends the notion that, the rise of IS was greatly made possible by Syria's civil war, which allowed it to set up a base of operations in eastern Syria and to transform itself into a lightly armed, mobile force with thousands of skilled fighters (p.1). The civil war enabled ISIL to shift resources back to Iraq and operate openly in the western part of the country, launching a suicide bombing campaign and taking control of key towns (Eisenstadt, 2014, p.1).So, put differently, the civil war in Syria provided a safe haven for the launching of attacks in Iraq through the establishment of headquarters necessary for ISIL's operations.

In addition, Clingendael (2014) argues that, IS represents only the face of a much deeper political and security crisis in Iraq as the crisis emanates from the poor quality of governance, the exclusionary operation of power and the intrusiveness of foreign interference over the past decade (p.4).For this reason, it would appear that ISIL represents a fraction of Iraq's problems and thus serves to show the level of disarray and disintegration that has permeated the country.

In essence, ISIL has led to the escalation of the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict as it has wrecked havoc in Iraq through its ongoing campaign of trying to establish a caliphate. The study will proceed to analyze the role of the tensions between the KRG and the central government in heightening Iraq conflict.

3.3.4 Tensions between Bagdad and the KRG

NOREF (2012) asserts that the Kurds account for between 15 and 20% of the Iraqi population, and are concentrated in the north of the country (p.4) .One of the major grievances of the Kurds is that whilst they constitute the largest ethnic group in the world, they are stateless(O'Leary,2002,p.1). It is important to note that the term "Kurdistan" is widely used in Iraq to refer to the Kurdish area of northern Iraq and in Iran to refer to the Kurdish area of northwest Iran consisting of the Arbil, Dohuk and Sulaimaniya provinces and adjacent areas (O'Leary, 2002, p.1).Kurds are an ethnic group, not a distinct religious sect within Islam with the majority of Kurds being Sunni Muslim whilst there are also Shi'a and Yezidi Kurds, as well as Christians who identify themselves as Kurds(O'Leary 2002,p.17).With attention to this information, the Kurds are portrayed as a significant ethnic group yet they have not been given much attention throughout the world as they have remained stateless since their inception.

Note worthy is that, tensions between the KRG and the Iraq Central government have proven to be a destabilizing factor in the context of the conflict in Iraq.[11]With this in mind, the ICG (2011) purports that this conflict, has left a devastating imprint on the country's history and is likely to cause political paralysis or, worse, propel Iraq's disintegration(p.i). In that respect, Chatham House (2013) argues that the dispute between the KRG and Baghdad reached dangerous levels since 2008, with conflict between the Iraqi Security Forces and the Kurdistan Region *peshmerga* nearly breaking out in the disputed territories (p.25).For this reason, the tension between the KRG and the Central government of Iraq poses as major threat to the stability of the country and if unsettled has the potential to lead to the dissolution of Iraq.

A number of factors have been provided as constituting the main sources of tension between the KRG and the central government of Iraq. Of relative importance is to note that, the dispute between the KRG and the central government has mainly been centred on the disputed territories of Ninewa, Salah Al Din, Diyala and Tameem (Cordesman &Khazai 2014, p.140). Significantly, the central government has not integrated the peshmerga into the internal security forces or made good on commitments to pay them (Cordesman &Khazai, 2014, p.142). Owing to that, this has increased the notion that the central government has been perpetuating the legacy of Saddam Hussein whose government was renowned for reneging on its commitments. Equally important, tensions between the KRG and Baghdad have continued to flare up over the hydrocarbons law in terms of contacts and management, as the Kurds have continued to develop their own energy sector and seek independent pipelines and routes through Turkey, (Cordesman &Khazai, 2014, p.142).In view of this, the conflict between the KRG and the central government revolves around multiple issues that need to be addressed in order for the country to achieve peace and security.

Particularly troublesome has been the KRG's decision to grant contracts for oil exploration to international companies despite the tentative legal status of their area (Cordesman&Khazai, 2014, p.142). Correspondingly, the Kurds have continued to expand their own energy sector and search for independent pipelines and routes through Turkey, taking advantage of the rising violence in the south and the desire of some oil companies to find more safe operating areas than the south of Iraq (Cordesman &Khazai, 2014, p.142). Notably, Kirkuk a multi-ethnic city with

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[11] Interview with Dr Joseph Kurebwa, 17 February, 2015.

large oil reserves stands out as one of the most potentially explosive locations (NOREF, 2012, p.5-6).Generally speaking, the dispute over the control and distribution of oil reserves has been a largely contentious issue between the KRG and the central government and this serves to show that Iraq is gripped with a plethora of issues that need to be addressed in an effort to resolve its conflict.

Noteworthy is that, the tensions between the KRG and the central government are not limited to the issue of hydrocarbons, disputed territory and control of security forces rather, a long history of tension and warfare with the Iraqi central government has been at the forefront of the conflict. In this regard, NOREF (2012) contends the view that the harsh treatment under the Baath regime, corruption, political stalemate ,inability to deliver basic services and security as well as the incapability of exerting effective authority over the country have been provided as justification for the continual tensions between the KRG and Bagdad(p.5).Considering the aforementioned factors, the dispute between the KRG and central government is entrenched in deep injustices suffered during the Baath regime and for this reason, there needs to be a comprehensive approach in dealing with this dispute as it has the potential of engulfing the country and pushing it on the brink of collapse and dissolution.

Exacerbating the plight of the Kurds is that, regional powers have been reluctant to embrace the desires for the quest of Kurdish independence in fear of having their Kurdish population echo the sentiments for autonomy. Accordingly, Cordesman &Khazai (2014) argue that Iran, Syria, and Turkey, do not want to see Kurdish independence and therefore strive to limit Iraqi Kurdish influence (p.141).What this literally means is that the failure by the Iraqi government to endorse the Kurds desire for independence has ultimately been supported by regional powers thereby casting a shadow over the resolution of this dispute. Hence this has further perpetuated and prolonged the Iraq conflict.

On the whole, the dispute between the KRG and the central government has proven to be a debilitating challenge on the stability of Iraq. This is because the relationship between the KRG and the central government is premised on mistrust and deep suspicion rendering it potentially

explosive. Thus it is important at this time to briefly examine the role of oil in the context of the 2003-2014 conflict.

3.3.5 Politics of oil in Iraq

Constituting a prominent feature in the Iraq conflict is the politics centred on the oil resource. In this regard, Dr. Joseph Kurebwa an Academic with the University of Zimbabwe argues that, at the root of the Iraq crisis is oil, a critical resource which has triggered so much contention.[12]For this reason, the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 was largely motivated by the quest for oil and as pointed out by Hinnebusch (2007) ,US oil vulnerability was on the rise due to its rising import dependence in an ever-tighter oil market and hence Iraq proved as a solution to these potential problems as it had the world's second largest oil reserves and very low production costs (p.12).Owing to this, the US launched Operation Iraq freedom in 2003 in a bid to secure the vast oil resources of Iraq and in doing so plunged Iraq into deep turmoil.

Moreover, the dispute between the central government of Iraq and the KRG lies in the control of oil reserves. To demonstrate this,Rogg &Rimscha(2007) contend the view that, Kirkuk has been at the heart of the conflict between the Kurds and the central government (p.837).Largely because Kirkuk is a multi-ethnic city with large oil reserves often considered as the "Kurdish Jerusalem (NOREF 2012, p.4).Accordingly, Cordesman &Khazai (2014) point out that, the dispute between the KRG and Bagdad over the control of Iraq's petroleum and its right to export it eventually led to a crisis in early January 2014 when the KRG opened a pipeline through Turkey to Ceyan(p.15).Therefore in the absence of equal distribution of resources in a mutually beneficial way this has resulted in the Iraq crisis.[13]

By the same token, hegemonic supply of oil to world markets has been a contentious issue between Iraq and its regional allies. In fact , Eisenstadt, Knights& Ali (2011) purport that Iraq's re-emergence as a major oil exporter at Iran's expense, will almost certainly heighten tensions between the two oil-exporting nations (p.xi).Correspondingly, as Iraq has overtaken Iran to become OPEC's second-biggest producer, the issue of the country's re-entry into the quota

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[12] Interview, Harare, 17 February 2015.
[13] Interview with Dr Joseph Kurebwa, Harare, 17 February, 2015.

system has already contributed to a growing sense of rivalry with Saudi Arabia (Chatham House, 2013, p.45).In that respect, Iraq growing dominance over the supply of oil to global markets is likely to cause a rift in its relationship and interactions with its allies, thereby plunging Iraq into further turbulence.

3.4 Role of State and non -State actors in the Iraq Conflict

The Iraq conflict has been dominated by a wide array of state and non state actors. However, it is paramount to take note that state actors and non state actors do not resolve conflicts for the sake of resolving them; rather they only put in their efforts in resolving conflicts which affect their immediate interests.[14] This in itself creates stumbling blocks towards efforts aimed at resolving the conflict.

3.4.1 Non - State actors

Miller (1994) cited in Ataman (2003), asserts that, the growth of so many kinds of non-state actors challenges and even weakens the "state-centric" concept of international politics and replaces it with a "transnational" system in which relationships are more complex as these organizations have changed the international environment(p.42).Consequently new theories of international relations such as the "complex interdependence" of Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (1989) were formed in order to explain new developments(Ataman,2003,p.42). In this regard, the research identifies non state actors as playing a leading role in the Iraq conflict but also acknowledges the role of states in the involvement of Iraq conflict. The non state actors which will be examined include ExxonMobil and the Arab League.

3.4.1.1ExxonMobil

ExxonMobil is a non state actor that plays a leading role in ensuring that the conflict in Iraq is sustained. Apparently, ExxonMobil is an American MNC of oil and gas that has vested interests within Iraq.[15]Equally important is that, ExxonMobil's interest in the Iraq oil fields dates back in time, as Green Peace (2003) notes that, Exxon and Mobil had significant stakes in the Iraq

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[14] Interview with Mr Torque Mude, 23 January 2015.
[15] Read more on ExxonMobil @corporate.*exxonmobil*.com/en/company/about-us

Petroleum Company before the industry was nationalized in 1972(p.7).The CEO of Mobil before the merger with Exxon stated in 1998 that:

"*They were part of the consortium that discovered the Kirkuk field in Northern Iraq. It's part of the reason why frankly, we still have a love affair with Iraq. We may not like the guy who runs the store, but the merchandise in the store sure is attractive*" (Green Peace, 2003, p.7).

However, this interest in the oil fields of Iraq has had a detrimental impact upon the security of the nation as this has exacerbated tensions between the KRG and the central government of Iraq and therefore plunged the nation in further turmoil. In like manner, Cordesman and Khazai of the CSIS (2014) state that , the KRG signed a deal in October 2011 allowing ExxonMobil to explore several tracts of land of the 3 territories both claimed by the Kurdistan and Baghdad(p.343). However, this move infuriated Baghdad and placed ExxonMobil at the heart of the conflict, potentially accelerating the centrifugal forces that are tearing at the Iraq society (Cordesman and Khazai CSIS, 2014, p.343).By the same token, Cordesman &Khazai (2014) argue that international companies such as ExxonMobil explore and exploit the regions hydrocarbon wealth leaving Baghdad outside of the territory (p.344). Similarly, Dr Joseph Kurebwa a lecturer in the Department of Political Administrative Studies Department at the University of Zimbabwe argues that, major international oil companies have exploited the crisis in Iraq to their own advantage as a precarious environment would be beneficial to them enabling them to evade taxes as well as ensure that they are not subject to any restricted amount of oil which they may wish to exploit.[16] Hence the presence of ExxonMobil in Iraq has had the detrimental impact of worsening the Iraq conflict as it has stirred up tension between the central government of Baghdad and the KRG.

3.4.1.2 Arab League

The CFR (2005) notes that, the Iraq War that began in 2003 badly split the Arab League as the states failed to ascertain a unified position on the invasion. In that regard, states of the Arabian Gulf—Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain, supported or at least refused to publicly object to the US-led military deployments ahead of the war(p.1). In fact, several Arab League

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[16] Interview, Harare, 17 February 2015.

member states including Syria and the Palestinian Authority were deeply opposed to the invasion (CFR, 2005, p.1). Apparently, the Arab League has always faced the danger of fading into irrelevance due to lack of coordination among member states (PMUNC, 2014, p.4).As a matter of fact, in the face of the Iraq conflict, the Arab League has failed to come up with a defined position towards the conflict and this has questioned its capability as a regional body in terms of safeguarding peace and security within its member states. Correspondingly, an anonymous respondent to a questionnaire stated that, the Arab League has failed to play a meaningful constructive role in resolving the Iraq crisis because of the conflicting national interests between and amongst its member states, the religious divide between Sunni and Shiite dominated states and the ideological antagonisms between secular and religious Islamic States as well as republics and absolute monarchs.[17]All in all, the Arab League has been gripped with deep divisions which have resultantly cascaded into the failure by the League to play a meaningful role in resolving the Iraq crisis.

3.4.2 State actors

Lake (2007) affirms that, the state is central to the study of international relations and is likely to remain so into the foreseeable future (p.1). In fact, states are a common unit of analysis in theories of international relations as many analysts focus on states and their interactions to explain observed patterns of world politics(Lake,2007,p.1).Conversely, the state is fundamental to neorealism, neoliberal institutionalism ,constructivist and English school theories(Lake,2007,p.1).In light of this, the research identifies several states namely, the US, the UK and other European countries as well as Arab states such as Iran, Turkey, and the GCC countries as being key players in the Iraq conflict. These states play different key roles in the context of challenges encountered in resolving the Iraq crisis and it is thus paramount to examine them.

3.4.2.1 The Gulf Cooperation Council of States (GCC)[18]

It is crucial to note that, Iraq experiences different relations with each of the six GCC countries and this inevitably means that their reaction to the conflict varies. Concurrently, the relationship

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[17] Questionnaire, Anonymous Respondent, 12 February 2015.
[18] The GCC is a political and economic alliance of six Middle Eastern Countries which are Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Bahrain and Oman.See:www.britannica.com/topic/Gulf Coope...

between Iraq and the countries of the GCC has historically been characterized by distrust and hostility, with an escalation of tension in the wake of the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait in August 1990 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003.Actually,Katzman of the CRS (2015) points out that "relations between Iraq's government and the Sunni Arab Gulf states have been strained in the post-Saddam Hussein period, in part because Iraq's government has been dominated by Shiite factions politically close to Iran and seen as excluding Sunnis(p.20). Equally important, the Iraqi government has a troubled relationship with Saudi Arabia, evidenced by the fact there is still no Saudi ambassador in Baghdad 10 years after the regime change (Chatham House, 2013, p.35). Increasingly important, Iraq faces increasing tensions with Qatar, which it sees as supporting aggressive forces in Syria (Chatham House, 2013, p.35). Surprisingly, relations with Kuwait have improved as both countries have sought to resolve outstanding issues dating back to the Iraqi invasion in 1990 and to develop business ties (Chatham House, 2013, p.35).Significantly, the UAE has also made investments in Iraq, yet ,initial attempts to develop trade with Bahrain have been derailed since 2011 by the country's political crisis, in which Iraqi Shia factions have taken an interest, but although they have struck postures over it, they have not become overtly involved(Chatham House, 2013,p.35). Finally, there is little interaction with Oman, which has adopted a regional non-alignment policy as it maintains relations with Iran and the United States and occasionally acts as a mediator (Chatham House 2013, p.35).What Chatham House (2013) and the CRS (2015) aim to put across is that whilst relations with some countries may appear cordiale, Iraq still faces strong incessant hostility from other GCC countries and this presents yet another challenge to resolving the Iraq conflict.

Notable is that, the GCC countries' response to the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq was a mixture of sentiments as they welcomed the invasion at the beginning since it would remove their enemy, Saddam Hussein yet realized it had created a power vacuum that was filled by Iran, their traditional rival (Opinions on the Mediterranean, 2013, p.1). In that respect, 1,500 and 3,000 Saudi militants joined the Sunni insurgency and constituted a significant proportion of the total number of foreign fighters in Iraq during the post invasion conflict (Chatham House, 2013, p.45). With this in mind, in Kuwait, members of two organizations of radical militants, the Peninsula Lions and the Mujahideen of Kuwait also channeled fighters to the insurgency and mounted a number of attacks on US forces in the country (Chatham House, 2013, p.45). In like manner,

other groups and individuals within Saudi Arabia and the smaller Gulf states were further suspected of providing large amounts of funding to various insurgent and terrorist organizations operating inside Iraq. Correspondingly, the Sunni regimes in the Gulf repeatedly expressed varying levels of alarm at the empowerment of Iraq's Shia Muslims, which they feared could stoke unrest or greater political demands from their own Shia communities (Chatham House, 2013, p.45).In respect of this, Saudi policy has thus focused on preventing the disintegration of Iraq or the complete disempowerment of its Sunni communities, by supporting Sunni Islamist movements within Iraq (Chatham House, 2013, p.45).In essence, the GCC countries played a pivotal role in the post invasion sectarian violence that took place in the aftermath of the invasion and thereby contributed to the instability of Iraq.

As Iraq has overtaken Iran to become OPEC's second-biggest producer, the issue of the country's re-entry into the quota system has already contributed to a growing sense of rivalry with Saudi Arabia(Chatham House ,2013,p.45).In light of this, Mr Wenceslaus Mudyanadzo, a lecturer at the Midlands State University in the Department of Politics and Public Management puts forward the claim that, the Gulf states are sponsoring the Islamic State to ensure that they destabilize Iraq's economy thereby curtailing the oil production within Iraq. This in turn ensures that they assert hegemony over the oil production industry within the world market.[19]As a matter of fact, the Independent Newspaper (2015) reported that Saudi Arabia helped ISIS take over Mosul and the Northern parts of Iraq through facilitating funding to the jihadist terrorist group. By the same token, the destabilization which Iraq faced in 2011 was in fact, the revolt of the Sunni in Syria and the takeover of that revolt by jihadists, who were often sponsored by donors in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and UAE (The Independent Newspaper, 2015). Equally important is that, Iraq has been producing around 3.5 million barrels of oil per day; if that were lost because of fighting, much of it would probably be replaced by Saudi Arabia's almost 3 million bpd of spare capacity, raising its revenues substantially (Reuters 2014).In any event, the GCC countries have been responsible for financing ISIS which has ravaged the country and placed it on the brink of collapse, consequently escalating the conflict in Iraq.

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[19] Interview, Gweru, 9 February 2015.

Whilst the above statements have pointed out that the GCC countries have played an apparent role in the escalation of the Iraq conflict, additional literature has indicated that the GCC states have pledged alliance to support the US-led grand coalition to defeat and degrade ISIL. In that respect, the GCC countries have been supporting the coalition through the provision of hosting bases for the US military operations against IS, with Saudi Arabia offering to train fighters from Syria who oppose the Islamic state. In like manner, the US military Emirati fighters have conducted more missions against IS since the war began than any member of the multinational coalition, often striking targets that are just as difficult and dangerous as those attacked by the Americans (Foreign Policy, 2014).On the whole, it can be argued that the main reason for their allegiance to the coalition emanates from the desire to safeguard their national security interests as the threat of ISIL has proven to go beyond borders.

3.4.2.2 Iran

Iran's role in the escalation of the Iraq conflict is quite visible and apparent as Iran has tried to influence Iraqi politics by working with Shiite and Kurdish parties to create a weak federal state dominated by Shiites and amenable to Iranian influence(The Washington Institute for Near East Policy (2011,p.ix).This has been made possible through encouraging its closest allies—the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), the Badr Organization (ISCI's former militia), the Islamic Dawa Party, and more recently the Sadrists—to participate in politics and help shape Iraq's nascent institutions (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy (2011,p.ix).As shown above ,Iran is mainly interested in the creation of a fragile Iraq Shiite state from which it can exert control and influence, as a measure of asserting dominance in the Middle East.

Furthermore, Iran is also suspected of supporting militant operations to undermine stability and stoke sectarian tensions in Iraq, as the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (2011) puts forward the claim that, in the autumn of 2007, Iran was suspected of having commissioned attacks on Shiite targets in the hope that al-Qaeda would be blamed, thereby reigniting flagging sectarian violence(p.11).In that bid , the Iranian-backed special groups are believed to have been behind the bombing of a Baghdad market on November 23, 2007.Similarly,Mahdi Army militants claimed that Iranian agents paid members of their militia to conduct atrocities against other Shiites as part of this effort and had also armed, trained, and funded Shiite militias(The

Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2011,p.11).Seemingly ,the Washington Institute for Near East Policy 2011) points puts forward the claim that Iran may have also used its Shiite militant proxies to stoke sectarian tensions and to foment political violence, only to then step in diplomatically to resolve these conflicts, thereby ensuring for itself a role as mediator in Iraq (p.8).The reason behind it all being that, manageable instability in Iraq gives Iran greater opportunity to exert its influence as Tehran thrives in unstable contexts which allow its leadership to make better use of available means to increase its influence(Esfandiary &Tabatabai of Chatham House2015,p.5).In essence, Iran has played a very pivotal role in destabilizing Iraq in an effort to weaken the country so as to create an opportunity to intervene in the country in order to enhance its prestige and assume superiority within the region.

Whilst the above factors may seem to present Iran in a regressive manner with regard to the Iraq conflict, evidence of Iran playing a fundamental role in the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq has been provided. In this regard, Esfandiary &Tabatabai of Chatham House(2015) note that, following weeks of ISIS victories in September 2014, Tehran was openly credited with enabling small but notable victories against ISIS(p.10) .Apparently, in early September, Kurdish and Shiʿi forces were able to push ISIS back from Amerli and Suleiman Beg in Northern Iraq with Iranian help. As a matter of fact, Iran actually offered military assistance, training and advice as well as facilitated cooperation and communication between the different groups operating in the area by setting up joint operations centres with the Iraqi military(Esfandiary &Tabatabai of Chatham House, 2015, p.10). Given these points Iran has been active in the fight against ISIL in a bid to enhance its own image and popularity as a regional superpower in the Middle East.

Iran's actions and policies towards Iraq have been calculated in terms of its national interests. The ICG (2005) argues that Iran's interest is to have a central Iraqi government that, while strong enough to keep the country together, will be too weak to represent a threat and can be trusted to remain on friendly terms (p.10). In fact, a strong Iraq, even with a relatively sympathetic Shia-led government, would pose a variety of challenges to Iran, notably to its claim to be the spiritual centre of the Shia Islamic world, a role traditionally played by the Iraqi city of Najaf (Chatham House, 2013, p.30). Similarly, a successful, stable and prosperous Shia-led democracy in Iraq could also represent a political and theological challenge to Iran's model of government

(Chatham House, 2013, p.30). Equally important is that, Iran having been the victim of Iraqi aggression under Saddam Hussein, prefers to have a Shiite-dominated government in Baghdad, premising its belief in that, since democracies don't fight democracies there is also the belief that Shiites don't fight Shiites" (ICG, 2005, p.10). Importantly, Iraq is home to a majority Shiʿi population, which represents a real constituency for Tehran, and consequently Iran relies on this group to maintain and spread its influence deeming that any fragmentation of Iraq would threaten to awaken desires for independence among other minority communities (Esfandiary &Tabatabai of Chatham House, 2015, p.14). By and large Iran's relationship with Iraq is mainly centred on its national interests.

3.4.2.3 Turkey

Turkey role in the Iraq conflict cannot be overlooked as its policy towards Iraq reflects that of safeguarding its national interests. In light of this, Carnegie-MEC (2013) puts forward the claim that, Turkey opposed the U.S.-led invasion in 2003 as it apprehended that the fall of the Saddam regime would lead to the disintegration of Iraq and the rise of Kurdish ambitions in Northern Iraq for independence (p.18). Thus, worried that Kurdish autonomy in Iraq could promote demands for secession among Turkey's own restless Kurdish population, Ankara scrambled to build good relations with the new authorities in Baghdad after Saddam's fall in order to help re-build central Iraqi authority to curb Kurdish ambitions (Salem of the Carnegie Middle East Centre, 2013, p.18).In any event, Turkey's involvement in Iraq has been driven by its desire to safeguard its national interests.

Noteworthy is that, Iraq's relations with Turkey have deteriorated since 2011, due to a shift in Turkey's own foreign policy orientation ,from 'zero problems with the neighbours' towards a more proactive support of Sunni Islamist movements(Carnegie-MEC, 2014,p.18-19). This support towards the Sunni Islamist movements has severely fractured Iraq leading to the intensification of the conflict as these Sunni Islamic movements have been at the height of the polarization of Iraq and the resultant anarchy. Apparently, Turkey's involvement in Syria in particular has prompted Iraqi government officials to accuse it of a 'neo-Ottoman' policy, raising their misgiving that it is trying to set up a *de facto* protectorate in Iraqi Kurdistan or even has

desires on Mosul (Chatham House, 2013, p.39). Similarly ,Turkey's strong relations with Iraqi Kurdistan emphasized by the ongoing development of a bilateral oil pipeline from Iraqi Kurdistan into Turkey against the wishes of the Baghdad government have severely strained relations with Baghdad as the development of the pipeline allows the KRG to export energy directly to Turkey without the revenues going through the central government's exchequer (Chatham House 2013, p.39).This consequently translates into further infighting between the Iraq central government and the KRG thus fuelling the conflict. On the whole it can be argued that Turkey's role in the Iraq conflict has further exacerbated the crisis due to its desires of pursuing its national interests.

3.4.2.4 Europe and Iraq

Salem of the Carnegie-MEC (2013) asserts the view that, Europe was divided over the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq as the UK joined by Spain and Italy backed the US-led invasion, whilst, France and Germany led the camp opposing the invasion(p.28). Similarly, the UK, Spain, and Italy participated with troops and some post-war aid, but the EU as a body remained initially disengaged (Salem of the Carnegie -MEC 2013, p.28). By and large, the backing of the US coalition by Britain, Spain, Italy and France intensified the conflict in Iraq, as the 2003 invasion of Iraq crippled the security architecture of Iraq thus curtailing the resolution of the conflict.

While some European countries openly supported Operation Iraqi Freedom, it is imperative to note that the EU has taken great strides to re-engage with the government of Iraq as it provided funding for the first post-war elections in 2004 as well as maintained steady funding and technical support for subsequent referenda and elections (Salem of the Carnegie –MEC, 2013, p.28). In like manner, Maliki and the EU signed a MoU on Energy Cooperation in 2010 and in 2012, signed a more comprehensive Partnership and Cooperation Agreement that provides a framework for cooperation in many areas (Salem of the Carnegie–MEC, 2013, p.28). These emerging economic ties have resulted in European countries expressing growing concern over the unstable internal tensions gripping Iraq such that they have deeply condemned the violence and actively advocated for a resolution of the Iraq conflict (Salem of Carnegie Middle East Centre, 2013, p.29).Generally speaking, the EU has taken great strides in re-engaging relations

with Iraq as a means of securing a geo-strategic ally in the Middle East, pivotal for EU foreign policy.

Additionally, European countries which include Britain, Australia Belgium, France, Denmark, Canada, and Germany have contributed to the global coalition to degrade and defeat ISIL which was formed by the US to take up the fight against the Islamic State. In this regard, these countries have launched and targeted airstrikes against IS in Iraq and sent in some ground troops to help train the Iraq army. By the same token, a number of European countries have also passed a series of regulations that make it difficult for their nationals to go abroad and join the Islamic State. Such measure includes cancelling passports and imprisoning people suspected of going to join the Islamic State (BBC NEWS, 2015).

3.4.2.5 China

Salem of Carnegie-MEC (2013) purports that, if the Iraq War was at least partially fought for oil, then the winner would have to be declared China as Beijing currently imports about 315 thousand barrels of Iraqi crude per day, and has become increasingly important to Beijing as Chinese oil imports (p.28). In this view Chaziza (2014) affirms that ten years after the U.S invasion and occupation of Iraq ended, more and more policy makers assert that Washington liberated the Iraqi people at heavy human and economic cost to itself, while China ended up the chief economic beneficiary (p.1). However, in as much as China has established economic ties with Iraq, the Chinese loyalty to non-interference has meant a general evasion of involvement that might draw it too deeply into conflict or force it to come into competition with other great powers(Nextgen, 2014). Yet the crisis ignited by the jihadist militant group the I.S has presented an unprecedented test to Chinese foreign-policy and there have been growing calls for China to play a greater role in ensuring regional stability given its involvement in the region(Nextgen 2014).This has prompted the Chinese to state that they will help Iraq as its capacity allows it to, reflecting its reluctance to meddle in the political affairs of Iraq(Nextgen ,2014).Therefore, China's role in the Iraq conflict has been downplayed by its national interests as it seeks to keep a distance from the internal political situation of Iraq whilst enjoying the benefits of its oil resource.

3.5 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to provide a critical overview of the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict. This was done by exploring the various leading aspects of the conflict. It was noted that the starting point of the Iraq conflict was the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq and for this reason this constituted the first section of the chapter. It was shown that the US-led invasion of Iraq triggered an unprecedented chain of events which destabilized the country.

The second section outlined the internal dimensions to the Iraq conflict. It noted that the tensions between the KRG and the Iraq central government continue to thwart efforts of achieving peace and security in Iraq. Moreover, it was pointed out that the rise of ISIL has also proved to be a major setback to the stability of Iraq due to its vigorous efforts of carving out a caliphate. Additionally, the section noted that Iraq is a country gripped by sectarianism mainly in the form of Sunni-Shia divide which has had the impact of further polarizing the nation. Additionally, the section explored the role of Nouri al Maliki in the Iraq conflict. It was noted that the former prime minister undeniably failed to unite Iraq as he pursed sectarian policies which marginalized the Sunnis. Finally, politics on oil was also discussed as constituting another internal aspect of the Iraq conflict. In this regard, it was stated that oil has proven to be the bone of contention between the KRG and the Central government as well being the source of tension between Iraq and its regional allies as being the prime motivation behind the US-led invasion of Iraq.

The final section provided an outlook of 2003-2014 Iraq conflict in the context of the role played by state and non state actors in the Iraq conflict. It was noted that national interests of state and non state actors were key in shaping the role of state and non state actors in the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict, thereupon escalating the conflict in Iraq. The prime focus of the next chapter will be to analyze the constraints and prospects to resolving the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONSTRAINTS AND PROSPECTS TO RESOLVING THE IRAQ CRISIS

4.1 Introduction

The chapter focuses on the various constraints and prospects that are likely to inhibit the resolution of the Iraq conflict. The chapter is premised under the auspices that the 2003 to 2014 Iraq conflict is a combination of intricate myriad internal and external factors that present a challenge to resolving the conflict. Therefore against this background, the chapter seeks to delve into these various internal and external factors that constitute the prospects and constraints to resolving the Iraq crisis. Noteworthy is that, for one to be able to fully comprehend the constraints and prospects to resolving the Iraq crisis, one has to bear in mind the various causes of the conflict. The question one has to constantly refer to is what has triggered the Iraq conflict. [20] Moreover the research has adopted the approach of analyzing the prospects and constraints of the 2003-2014 Iraq from 3 dimensions which are; the internal dimension, regional dimension as well as international dimension.[21] An overall analysis of these dimensions enables one to have a comprehensive and lucid understanding of the Iraq conflict.

4.2 Internal dimension to the Iraq Conflict:

4.2.1 Insurgent threat of ISIL

Another eminent hurdle to resolving the 2003 -2014 Iraq crisis is the rise of the radicalized Islamic group known as the Islamic state of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or ISIS or simply the Islamic state (IS).Universal Muslim Association of America 2014 [UMAA Advocacy]) purports that

> Throughout the history of the organization now known as ISIL (or ISIS), the group has used many different names. When it was formed in 2004, it was known as Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, "The Organization of Monotheism and Jihad" (JTJ).Later that year,

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[20] The author appreciates the contribution made by Mr T. Chibanda   a lecturer in the Department of Development Studies at the Midlands State University, who pointed out that there is need for a close analysis of the causes of the Iraq conflict during an interview with the author in Gweru, 4 February 2015.

[21] The author is grateful to Mr Wenceslaus Mudyanadzo a lecturer at MSU in the Department of Politics and Public Management for sharing this view point during a discussion with the author in Gweru, 9 February 2015.

when the leadership of the organization pledged a loyalty pact to Osama Bin Laden, the group changed its name to Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn, "The Organization of Jihad's Base in the Country of the Two Rivers" (TQJBR), and was often referred to as "Al-Qaeda in Iraq" (AQI). AQI was not a name the group ever chose for itself, but it has been the one that was most used to describe the organization, considering its multiple name changes. In early 2006, after a series of alliances, the name changed again to the Mujahideen Shura Council. Later that year, after a merger with a few major militant groups in Iraq, the group changed its name again to Hilf al-Mutayibeen, "Oath of the Scented Ones". Just one day later, the group underwent another name change and became Dawlat al-'Iraq al-Islamiyya, "Islamic State of Iraq" (ISI), bringing it closer to its current iteration. After engaging in militant activities in Syria, in early 2013 ISI lengthened its name and became, The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (alternatively translated as Islamic State in Iraq and Syria or Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham) Other names for ISIL include al-   Dawla, the State, or Dawla al Islamiya, the Islamic State. Critics of the organization use an Arabic acronym "Daesh," a term that the group considers derogatory (UMAA Advocacy, 2014, p.25).

Dr. Heather Chingono, an Academic with the University of Zimbabwe in the Department of Political and Administrative Studies, points out that the presence of a terrorist group is a major obstacle to the resolution of the Iraq crisis. The Islamic State is slightly different from other terrorist groups as it is more organized, more advanced and has an organogram and hence operates more like a government.[22]The organizational capacity of this group makes it more difficult to defeat as it is well structured and its plans are well thought out. The Clarion Project (2014) affirms this view point stating that, Baghdadi has appointed a cadre of advisers, ministers and military commanders to run the caliphate (p.17). The Islamic State is run by sophisticated hierarchy of commanders, each with specific areas of responsibility (The Clarion Project, 2014, p.17). Furthermore, he is also advised by a cabinet staffed with ministers, each with a clearly distinguished role, a salary and delegated powers, the treasury, transport, security and prisoners all have their own ministry and there is also a minister in charge of looking after the needs of foreign jihad fighters (The Clarion Project, 2014, p.17). Seemingly, a specialized 'war office'

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[22] Interview, Harare, 18 February 2015.

manages the logistics and technicalities of war (The Clarion Project, 2014, p.17). Therefore by virtue of being an organized terrorist group this means that there is planning and coordination of activities thereby making it difficult to trace or defeat this group. This further complicates any efforts aimed towards the resolution of the Iraq crisis.

The CRS (2014)argues that, ISIL is not only a terrorist group rather it is a political and military organization that holds a radical interpretation of Islam as a political philosophy and seeks to impose that worldview by force on Muslims and non-Muslims alike(p.2) Furthermore, the ideology of the Islamic State is that of Salafist-jihadism, which places emphasis on decisions being based on a hardliner interpretation of sharia[23] which is brutally enforced in the areas controlled by the Islamic State(The Clarion Project, 2014,p.11). Salafist thought is based on the idea of returning to the supposedly pure form of Islam practiced by the successors to the founder of Islam, Mohammed, and the earliest Muslims (The Clarion Project, 2014, p.11). In other words the Islamic State doctrine portrays the organization as one that is driven by Islamic fundamentalism. In this regard, Almond et al. (2003) defines fundamentalism as "a discernible pattern of religious militancy by which self-styled 'true believers' attempt to arrest the erosion of religious identity, fortify the borders of the religious community, and create viable alternatives to secular institutions and behaviors"(p.17). Similarly, their doctrine allows them to proclaim as *takfir* (heretics) Muslims who deviate from their strictly defined interpretation of Islam and the penalty for heresy is death (The Clarion Project, 2014, p.11).In essence, ISIL is a terrorist group which is determined to propagate its radical extremist Islamist views across all cultures.

Moreover, ISIL is renowned for releasing extremely horrific and appalling videos that expose its conduct of mass and individual killings, such as those of American journalists James Foley and Stephen Sotloff and British aid worker David Haines(The Clarion Project, 2014, p.17).This tactic is replicated in their online strategy, tweeting out messages across several different platforms to ensure maximum visibility and utilizing social media effectively, such as the use of the #AllEyesOnISIS(The Clarion Project, 2014,p.17). These gruesome activities performed by ISIL accurately portray the group as being driven by fundamentalism .In like manner, Rabie (2007)

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[23] Sharia is the law of Islam and is cast from the actions and words of Muhammad and the Quran.See:www.billionbibles.org/sharia/sharia…

asserts that, Islamic fundamentalism has moved from being a mere socio cultural movement seeking to reform Islamic societies in general, to being a radical movement using violence to achieve its social and political objectives. Therefore this aptly fits the description of activities conducted by ISIL, as its reputation for brutality is well founded, and shows no hesitation to immediately killing anyone who disagrees with it.

Samuel P.Huntington's Clash of civilizations can be correctly placed in light of the activities of the Islamic State[24]. In his book, Huntington purports that most conflicts shall occur along fault lines of different civilizations (Walt Stephen, 1997). His analysis helps in understanding the confrontation between the Islamic state and other sects within Iraq. The Clarion Project (2014) establishes that all the Christians, descendants of the indigenous Assyrian population that has inhabited Iraq for at least 3,000 years, were driven from Mosul with and were given three options either pay the *jizya*,a special tax for Christians ($470), convert to Islam, or die(p.23). In the same manner, the Islamic State has also targeted Shiites, Alawites and other 'deviant' sects of Islam and Sunnis whom are deemed not to follow Islam correctly. Equally important is that, the Yazidis, an ancient minority indigenous to northern Iraq, were slaughtered by the advancing fighters of the Islamic state and tens of thousands were driven from their homes whilst some were trapped on Mount Sinjar with no food or water and all sides of the mountain were sealed off (The Clarion Project, 2014, p.24).Thus the clash of civilizations theory is well placed within the context of the actions of ISIL.

Furthermore the Islamic State makes use of foreign fighters with estimates of about 80% of Western fighters in Syria having joined the group, fighters being drawn from the UK, France, Germany and other European countries, as well as the US, the Arab world and the Caucasus (UMAA Advocacy, 2014, p.28). This use of foreign fighters complicates the resolution of the conflict as this means that the group has exported its doctrine and ideology throughout the world thus making it difficult to contain the spread of radical Islamism.

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[24] Interview with Major A. Mutambudzi, Harare, 13 February 2015.

4.2.2 Long standing dispute between the KRG and Baghdad and Kurdish-Arabic Tensions

The longstanding dispute between the KRG and the government of Iraq as well as Kurdish – Arabic tensions poses a barrier to conflict resolution in Iraq. In like manner, Rand Corporation (2011) states that, General Raymond Odierno, then-commander of Multi-National Force–Iraq assessed Arab-Kurdish tensions "as the greatest single driver of instability in Iraq (p.1). It is worth noting that these sources of Arab –Kurd tension emanate from boundaries of the KRG, census and status of Kirkuk, hydrocarbons and security structures (Rand Corporation, 2011, p.2). Though Article 58 of Iraq's Transitional Administrative Law defined the KRG as consisting of Dohuk, Erbil, and Sulimaniya governorates and the parts of Kirkuk, Diyala, and Ninewa governorates controlled by the Kurdish parties as of March 19, 2003, the Kurdish leaders sent *peshmerga* across the Green Line to take control of additional territory inhabited by large numbers of Kurds purporting that historically it had been Kurdish territory (Rand Corporation, 2011, p.3). Hence the legitimacy of the Kurds' de facto control over these disputed areas has not been accepted by Baghdad, and the extent of the territory that is to be included in the Kurdistan region of Iraq is yet to be settled (Rand Corporation, 2014, p.3-4).Therefore, the issue of contested territory between the Arabs and the Kurds has severed relations thereby compromising the security of Iraq and creating instability which has derailed any significant efforts to resolve Iraq's fundamental political challenges.

Additionally, the dispute between the KRG and the government of Baghdad is centred on the hydrocarbons. Seemingly, Cordesman and Kazai of the CSIS (2014) purport that disputes between the KRG and central government over territory and oil resources is exacerbated by the absence of an existing hydrocarbon law and this dispute has become a critical issue that divides the country (p.340). It should also be noted that the dispute over Northern Iraq's hydrocarbons has two primary components. Firstly, the KRG's boundaries have not been settled and therefore it is unclear whether the region's oil and gas fields fall under the jurisdiction of the KRG or the central government and secondly, Baghdad and Erbil have not reached an agreement on how the oil and gas fields should be managed or how the resulting revenues should be shared (Rand Corporation 2011, p.5). Therefore, neither side is likely to benefit from the area's oil wealth until these questions are settled and what's more, no major international oil company is willing to invest in Kirkuk's oil fields until it can be assured it is negotiating with the legally accepted

sovereign entity that understands the statutory, regulatory, and management framework which govern its investments (Rand Corporation, 2011, p.5). Hence the inability to reach an agreement over the issue of hydrocarbons has further estranged relations between the KRG and the Central government thus curtailing and hampering the likelihood of resolving the Iraq conflict.

It is worth noting that, the existence of parallel Kurdish and Iraqi security institutions has heightened the tensions between Arabs and Kurds. In light of this,Rand Corporation (2011) puts forward the claim that, the KRG and the two Kurdish parties i.e. the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) maintain their own military, police, and intelligence forces, whose roles in the disputed territories are controversial (p.6). In as much as each of the two major Kurdish parties have its own intelligence service and internal security force (collectively referred to as *asayesh*), Arab and Turkmen residents of disputed areas have bitterly objected to the presence of these Kurdish entities, asserting that their presence is merely a forerunner to a Kurdish land grab and claiming that the forces have abused Arab and Turkmen residents through capricious arrests and harassment (Rand Corporation, 2011, p.6). Similarly, the presence of *peshmerga* in disputed areas outside the Green Line has nearly led to violence between the *peshmerga* and the Iraqi Army (Rand Corporation, 2011,p.6).Evidently, in an unprecedented incident which occurred during an August 2008 Iraqi Army operation targeting insurgents in the vicinity of the town of Khanaqin a place outside the green line, the Rand Corporation (2011)purports that ISF commanders ordered *peshmerga* troops to withdraw, a demand they refused to comply to and this nearly led to a confrontation which was however averted by the KRG President Massoud Barzani and Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki after personally reaching an agreement to withdraw both forces from the city and leave security issues to local police(,p.6-7).Equally important, Cordesman and Kazai (2014) of the CSIS point out that "…the Iraqi Federal Government has resisted KRG efforts to have *peshmerga* forces funded out of the central government funds and this has had the resultant impact of deteriorating relations between the two opposing sides (p.266). Therefore, the dispute over security institutions between the KRG and Baghdad has impacted negatively upon the peace and stability of Iraq thereby, further escalating the Iraq conflict.

4.2.3 Sectarianism (Irreconcilable Differences between the Sunnis and Shiites)

Carnegie Middle East Centre [Carnegie-MEC] (2014) asserts that rivalry between the Shia majority and the Sunni minority in Iraq has been at the centre of political conflict in the state since then President Saddam Hussein fell in 2003(p.3).Seemingly, the historical irreconcilable differences between the Iraq Sunni and Shiite population segments are one of the main constraints to resolving the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict.[25]In the same manner, sectarian tensions have hindered state-building processes by destabilizing the country, and have become an instrument used by political entrepreneurs and the political elite looking to create constituencies and rally popular support (Carnegie-MEC, 2014, p.3). In essence, sectarianism is presented as an issue that is deep rooted and has been adopted as a political gimmick resultantly polarizing the country even further.

While the Iraq conflict seems to be a reflection on difference between the Shia ,Sunnis and Kurds, it is worth noting the Shia community is not a monolithic force, as groups within the community compete with one another for power(Carnegie-MEC ,2014,p.6).This is evidenced by the use of sectarianism and communal fears to create new constituencies within Shia parties such as the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq and Dawa returning from exile, after suffering from a limited support base in Iraq(Carnegie–MEC,2014,p.6).Resultantly, intra-sectarian tension within the Shia community has further complicated the Iraq conflict.

Noteworthy is that, while an unstated assumption in the sectarianism argument is that these conflicts are primordial and thus beyond political solutions, they are not, as Sunni and Shia Muslims have lived in harmony for many more years of Islamic history than they have fought (Brookings Doha Centre, 2014, p.5). Significantly, conflict axes in the recent past of the Middle East did not develop along Sunni-Shia lines, [26]as the Arab cold war was not sectarian, but ideological. Therefore, the particularities of current politics, not "centuries-long hatreds," have sparked this latest round of Sunni-Shia tensions (Brookings Doha Centre, 2014, p.5).The political change in Iraq in 2003 was the most serious challenge to the once familiar political and social landscapes of the Arab world as Iraq's new political elite further ensured the centrality of

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[25] Questionnaire, Anonymous Respondent, 12 February 2015.
[26] This view point was drawn from the author's interview with Brigadier General Waqar of the National Defense College in Harare, 26 February 2015.

sectarian identity in post-2003 Iraq (USIP, 2013, p.2.). Moreover, many of the most prominent post-2003 political actors were, throughout their careers, more akin to ethnic and sectarian lobbyists rather than national politicians and so rather than acting as politicians who happen to be Shia, many if not most of the post-2003 Shia political elite retained their role as sectional sectarian advocates for whom Shia identity and Shia interests were intrinsic to their political outlook (USIP, 2013, p.2).Therefore the argument that is being put across by USIP (2013) and Brookings Doha Centre (2014) is that, it will be quite misleading to affirm that sectarianism was long entrenched within the Middle East as this feature became eminent as a result of contemporary politics which have incorporated it in the state of affairs.

4.2.4 Political Leadership Fraught with Egregious Inadequacies

The major constraint to resolving the Iraq crisis lies in the absence of a cross cutting centre of power, through an individual or political party that has broad support of the Iraqis that can master support to form a government.[27]Therefore Iraq lacks a charismatic and accepted leader who can unify the people, bring peace, heal the wounds of the past and reconcile distressed communities.[28]This statement is quite accurate and serves as a detailed description of the former Prime Minister of Iraq who first came into power in 2006 and was forced to step down in 2014.Under the leadership of Nouri Al Maliki, the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict was propagated and further perpetuated as he pursued sectarian policies as well as upheld ineffective institutions. In this regard, POMEPS 2014 affirms that:

> Nouri Al Maliki lost Sunni Iraq through his sectarian and authoritarian policies. His
> repeated refusal over long years to strike an urgently needed political accord with the
> Sunni minority, his construction of corrupt, ineffective and sectarian state institutions,
> and his heavy-handed military repression in those areas are the key factors in the long-
> developing disintegration of Iraq.Maliki's heavy-handed security response to the
> escalating insurgency across Anbar, including the bombardment of Fallujah, has
> predictably driven more and more Sunnis into their ranks.Maliki's purges of the Sunni

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[27] Interview with Dr Joseph Kurebwa in Harare on 17 February 2015.Dr Joseph Kurebwa is a lecturer in the Department of Political and Administrative Studies at the University of Zimbabwe.
[28] Interview with Mr Mazambane, a lecturer at MSU in Gweru in the Department of Historical Studies, 4 February 2014.

leadership discredited or removed Sunni leaders willing to play the inside game, and pushed some of them toward supporting insurgency. His exclusionary policies, attempts to monopolize power and rough security practices radicalized a Sunni community that might have been brought into the system following the civil war (POMEPS, 2014,P.12).

Therefore it can be noted that, under the leadership of Nouri Al Maliki, Iraq was plunged into further turmoil and chaos as the Sunnis were driven into an insurgency that has taken a toll on the country. Seemingly, Cordesman and Khazai of the CSIS (2014) purport that "Prime Minister Maliki's government turned to harsher tactics against opposition groups and perceived terrorists, at times collectively punishing entire Sunni communities and causing greater casualties"(p.11). Consequently, increased government brutality further engendered greater insurgent activity as it shattered public trust and the possibility of reconciliation (CSIS, 2014, P.11).As Cordesman of the CSIS (2014)further point out, ISIS/ISIL did not suddenly materialize in Iraq in December 2013,for years, the group exploited growing Sunni and Shi'ite sectarian divisions and steady drift towards civil war(p.1). Apparently, Nouri Al-Maliki's actions of building his own power structure around a Shi'ite dominated state with close ties to Iran alienated Sunnis and exacerbated tensions (CSIS, 2014, p.1). Therefore the attitude of the Prime Minister towards the Sunni community alienated them to the extent that they gained sympathy from ISIS and began collaborating attacks with the group in Iraq.

Generally speaking, Maliki has neither outlined a unifying vision for Iraq, nor governed in the interest of all its citizens, instead he has invited discord through sectarian discourse and policies and authoritarian rule, while allowing oil companies to operate and trade to flourish (ICG, 2014, p.4). Indeed ,his divisive and inept governance has done little to bring internal peace or hold the country together (ICG, 2014, p.4).Thus , Maliki's inept and disappointing tenure in office served as a alley for the growth of terrorism in Iraq and further aggravated Sunni Shia differences in Iraq thereby diminishing the prospects of resolving the conflict.

4.2.5 Pervasive Corruption and Bad Governance

The functionalism school of thought explains how social order contributes to the stability of the whole society. According to Rakhi &Licy (2011) society is more than the sum of its parts rather each part of society is functional for the stability of the society (p.14). This study argues how the decadence of social order has led to the escalation of the Iraq conflict. In this regard, corruption and bad governance have presented themselves as one of the greatest challenges to the resolution of the Iraq conflict. TI's corruption perception index ranks Iraq 171 out of 177 countries surveyed and this figure portrays the predominance of corruption within the country. In like manner, Gunter (2008) asserts that "corruption in Iraq is so great and pervasive that, during the height of insurgent violence, senior government officials considered corruption to be a greater threat to the future of Iraq than the insurgency." Equally important, there have been allegations of massive embezzlement, procurement scams; money laundering, oil smuggling and widespread bureaucratic bribery in Iraq, and these have played a tremendous role in fuelling political violence and hampering effective service delivery (CSIS, 2014, p.14). Seemingly, allegations put forward by TI which reported on Iraq as being one of the worst performers in the Open Budget Survey clearly revealed that, close to no budgetary information is available to the public and therefore, the government cannot be held accountable by the public either for its decisions on the allocations of public resources (CSIS, 2014, P.17). Thus from this view point, corruption is brought out as being an endemic and rife feature within the society of Iraq.

Significantly, corruption has not spared the military sector, as it has reared its ugly head into this imperative institution of Iraq, and as noted by CSIS (2014)promotions and positions are routinely sold with new recruits often paying bribes to be hired into security positions and then collecting bribes once they are now in positions of power (p.16).Broadly speaking, corruption has extended to the security sector of Iraq and this further compromises the performance and effectiveness of the security forces in dealing with existing threats, thus stifling the resolution of the conflict in Iraq.

4.2.6 Deeply Flawed constitution and electoral system

The other constraining factor to the Iraq conflict is the issue of a flawed constitution and electoral system.[29]In this regard, the CSIS (2014) postulates that, "the US, other outside and exile efforts created a constitution that does not define a functioning executive or parliamentary system" (p.15).Put differently, the creation of the Iraq constitution by the US and external forces highlights and signifies the depth and scale of foreign meddling within the internal affairs of Iraq. Moreover, when Iraq's Federal Supreme Court vetoed a parliamentary term limit that would have prevented Maliki from running for a third consecutive term in the 2014 elections basing its ruling on constitutional grounds and maintaining that all laws voted on in parliament must be first passed through the President or Prime Minister's office, this reflected the gaps within the Iraq constitution (CSIS, 2015, p15-16).For this reason, the extension of Maliki's tenure in office only served to further alienate the Sunnis who already felt marginalized and victimized by his policies. As a result, this fanned the flames of animosity within the Sunnis and intensified the Iraq conflict.

Additionally, Carnegie-MEC (2014) notes that, although the constitution did not explicitly stipulate that power would be distributed according to communities, the practices that have prevailed in Iraq have further validated sectarian identity as a political category (p.5). This approach focused more on finding communal representatives than overcoming communal divide as the three main political positions in the country which were split up among the three major communities, with the position of president reserved for the Kurds, the position of prime minister (the most powerful in Iraq) for the Shia, and the position of speaker of the parliament for the Sunnis (Carnegie –MEC, 2014, p.5). Aggravating the situation is that the constitution was negotiated by the Shia United Iraqi Alliance and the Kurdish parties, with nominal Sunni representation and portraying Iraq as three separate and homogeneous communities (Carnegie – MEC, 2014, p.5).Therefore the deep flaws in the constitution and electoral system of Iraq have deeply divided Iraq.

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[29] The author is grateful to Mr. Wenceslaus Mudyanadzo who highlighted this crucial point during an interview with the author in Gweru on the 9th of February 2015, on the need to explore the issue of the constitution of Iraq and how this issue has impacted on the Iraq crisis.

4.2.7 Deep structural demographic, social and financial pressures

Another prominent constraint to the Iraq conflict is the deep structural demographic pressure. It is crucial to note that Iraq has got a massive ongoing acute population growth yet its government and economy remain grossly dependent on the petroleum sector (CSIS, 2014, p.3). This inevitably puts a strain on the oil sector thereby causing it to be overwhelmed and resultantly less productive. As the CSIS (2014) reports, Iraqi's populations was only 6.8million in 1960 yet rose to 31.9million in 2013(p.13).Correspondingly, these deep structural demographic pressures have also impacted highly on employment as the rate of unemployment has soured with direct and disguised unemployment certainly exceeding 25% and being heavily weighted towards youth population(CSIS 2014, p.13).By the same token, the growing population has further increased pressure on the land to the point that many Iraqis have been forced to move to urban slums yet however, the agricultural sector is over employed and undercapitalized hence reducing productivity(CSIS 2014, p.18).Given these points, the deep structural demographic pressures have resulted in a discontented and frustrated youth population thus presenting stumbling blocks to conflict resolution in Iraq.

4.2.8 Presence of a plethora of actors within the Iraq conflict

The Iraq conflict is a multifaceted conflict that involves many actors who have incompatible goals.[30]Similarly, these multiple actors operate in multiple arenas notably at a domestic level; regional level and international level and tend to have multiple interests which have a tendency of conflicting with each other.[31]Comparatively, each party struggles to gain power, at the expense of the others, as they have incompatible security requirements, which means that the security of each cannot be assured at the same time as the security of its rivals or enemies (Hamourzaiadou, 2014, p.98) .Therefore, in a state as fragile and fragmented as Iraq, all sides see the struggle for power and its attainment as a means to their continued existence. In this regard, Hamourzaiadou (2014) identifies over 40 different groups operating in Iraq singling out armed insurgency groups namely: the Baathists, Iraq nationalists, Sunni Islamists, Shia militias and foreign Islamist volunteers (p102-103).Equally important , on one hand is the Baathist group,

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[30] Interview with Mr Arthur Chikerema a lecturer at the Midlands State University in the Department of Politics and Public Management .5 February 2015

[31] An interesting and important observation made by Prof Eldred Masunungure during an interview with the author in Harare, 13 February 2015.

who are supporters of the former Saddam Hussein administration and who advocate for the restoration of the Baath Regime whilst on the other hand are the Iraq nationalists who believe in self determination and strongly opposed the 2003 US insurgency(Hamourzaiadou ,2014,p.102-103).In addition to these, are the Sunni Islamists known as the Salafi Wahhabi Jihadists who oppose any non Muslim doctrine and advocate for a pure Islamic state(Hamourzaiadou,2014,p.103). Additionally, the Shia militias including the Iran linked Badr Organization and Mahdi Army thought to be Iranian run groups and influenced ideologically and armed by Iran are also part of the armed insurgency groups operating in Iraq (Hamourzaiadou, 2014, p.103). Also dominating the armed insurgency group are the foreign Islamist volunteers including those often linked to Al Qaeda and largely driven by the Salafi Wahhabi doctrine (Hamourzaiadou, 2014, p.103).In addition to these armed insurgency groups, are regional state actors who have various interests within Iraq and these include Iran, Turkey and the GCC countries. Moreover, international actors such as the US and other European countries as well as China are the major players in the Iraq conflict. From the above, it can be seen that there are numerous actors operating in the Iraq conflict. In either case, these multiple actors have proven to be a major stumbling block towards the resolution of the crisis in Iraq.

4.3 Regional Dimension of the Conflict:

4.3.1 The Spillover of the Syrian civil war

The Syrian civil war presents another major constraint to resolving the Iraq crisis. As a matter of fact, Zarras (2014) asserts that the security environment in Iraq has been unstable since the start of hostilities in Syria as Syrian opposition fighters that belong to groups affiliated with Al Qaida began establishing safe havens in Iraq, as platforms from which to launch their attacks inside the country in June 2014(p.1). Similarly, Al-Qaida in Iraq entered the war in Syria in April 2013, where it was rebranded as ISIS and began launching a series of operations aimed at dominating the opposition and controlling a large area of Iraqi and Syrian territory (Zarras, 2014, p.2).Equally important, throughout their modern existence as independent states, Syria and Iraq have been joined at the hip with regard to their fundamental national security issues, consequently, weak central governments is a common feature in both countries which are battling with internal divisions, sectarian violence, and separatist challenges(Zarras, 2014,p.1).Additionally, the current relationship between Syria and Iraq revolves around the

rapport between the regimes of Bashar al-Assad and Nouri al-Maliki, the growing regional influence of Sunni extremist groups and the Shiʿi response, and the Kurdish factions' move towards political autonomy in both countries (Zarras, 2014,p.1).In the same token, Barry Buzan and Ole Waever cited in Zarras(2014,) state that "...threats travel more easily over short distances than over long ones(p.1).Put differently, the geographical proximity to Syria has compromised its security and stability thus presents a major debilitating factor towards the resolution of the crisis.[32]Correspondingly, the historical background of Syrian-Iraqi relations suggests that geographical proximity is usually a recipe for conflict rather than cooperation as areas of ISIS activity have overlapped the Iraqi-Syrian border and merged the two battlefields of Syria and Iraq (Zarras, 2014, p.2). Furthermore, the Sunni minority concentrated in the north-western part of the country is estranged from the current government in Baghdad which has limited sway over this part of the country yet this area serves as the territorial link between the Syrian civil war and the ongoing conflict in Iraq (Saban Centre, 2014, p.5).Consequently the resultant, alienation of the Sunnis complicates the conflict even further.

Moreover the refugee flow from Syria into Iraq has affected instability within Iraq. In like manner, Rand Corporation (2014) asserts that, the smuggling of jihadist fighters, weapons and explosives through the border villages was masked as part of the refugee flow (p.38). This in turn amplified the level of insecurity within Iraq and the resultant insurgency that followed. Moreover, Al Qaida has taken advantage of the vulnerability of refugees in Iraq through recruiting them, thus prompting the fear that radicalized Sunni youth in the Kurdish areas will join their ranks as well (Rand Corporation, 2014, p.38).This is further propounded by the grievances caused by some Iraq government policies which are propelling locals to join these groups as they gain significance and momentum.

Rand Corporation (2014) affirms that tensions in Iraq will continue to rise as long as the Syrian conflict continues (p.41). Therefore a prompt settlement in Syria despite the winner could help improve the climate for Iraqis to negotiate an end to their differences, yet a continuation of the conflict is likely to continue propelling the civil conflict in both countries (Rand Corporation,

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[32] Interview with Dr Heather Chingono, Harare, 18 February 2015.Dr Heather Chingono is a lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe in the Department of Political and Administrative Studies.

2014, p.41).Hence it can be argued that the political landscape in Iraq is dependent upon the security of Syria.

4.4 International Dimension

4.4.1The 2003 US -led invasion of Iraq

The 2003 US-led invasion in Iraq has been at the pinnacle of the conflict in Iraq as it set in motion a rapid upsurge of events which resulted in catastrophic consequences for the nation. Worth noting is that, the 2003 US-led invasion in Iraq epitomizes the concept of national interests overriding national security interests. In other words, the invasion further highlights the double standards of the international community as the invasion in Iraq was carried out against the auspices of the United Nations Charter, which sets out the norms and guidelines of international military intervention. [33] Branded as "Operation Iraqi Freedom", Hinnebusch (2007) affirms that the invasion of Iraq can only be properly understood by bringing together three levels of analysis these being the US global grand strategy, the US strategic position in the Middle East and thirdly the interests of Bush's ruling coalition (p.9).Correspondingly, Iraq was a solution to the US's problems as it had the world's second largest oil reserves and very low production costs, however, as long as Saddam was in power, its oil could not be used for US benefit (Hinnebusch, 2007, p.12). Hence Operation Iraqi Freedom was carried out against the background of pursuing the US's national interests at the expense of the security and stability of Iraq and this triggered a vicious wave of insurgency and political instability that continue to undermine efforts of resolving the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict.

Moreover, the 2003 US invasion in Iraq unleashed a chain of petrifying events that have had a bearing on the political landscape of Iraq. In other words, the invasion ushered in a web of events that posed as significant threats to the peace and security of Iraq. In like manner, CSIS (2005) states that, the rising insurgency in Iraq since March 2003 has become a "war after the war" (p.1).Evidently, this has been attributed to the fact that, the US made significant mistakes during its defacto occupation of Iraq from 2003 to 2011 as evidenced by the dissolution of the Iraqi

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[33] The author is indebted to Col Dr John Max Chinyanganya for sharing this viewpoint in an interview with the author in Harare on the 11th of February 2015.Col Dr Chinyanganya went on to stress how the international community had made use of the UN charter during Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and that this invasion forms the background of interrogating the Iraq conflict.

army under the orders of the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority, L.Paul Bremer leaving 400 000 soldiers' unemployed (CSIS, 2014, p.7). As if this was not enough, the US was not ready to carry out armed nation building in the critical period immediately after the fall of Saddam Régime, and this inevitably contributed to the release of deep divisions between Shiite and Sunnis (CSIS, 2014, p7). Therefore, by late 2004, this mix of mistakes helped trigger a Sunni dominated insurgency and a civil conflict where Sunni Islamists gradually replaced the supporters of Saddam Hussein and the leading insurgent movements became tied to Al Qaeda(CSIS, 2014, p7).Similarly, the US-led invasion led to the creation of rival Shiite factions and growing tensions between Iraq Arab Kurds and other minorities as the US instituted a policy of divide and conquer which meant the playing off of the Shias against the Sunnis(CSIS,2014,p.7). Equally important, the invasion also allowed, for the first time ever, the full, unfettered assertion of previously suppressed sub national identities, by highlighting the multiple, indeed contradictory, visions of what it meant to be an Iraqi and by extension what it meant to be a part of the Arab world (USIP, 2013, p.1). The point the USIP (2003) and CSIS (2014) are trying to bring out is that, the invasion unmasked the deep rooted ethnic and sectarian divisions which had been concealed over the years, and these undoubtedly escalated the Iraq conflict.

The Carnegie Endowment for International peace points out the perilous consequences of the invasion and sums it up as follows:

> Furthermore, as Iraq's political institutions collapsed and its economy stalled in the wake of the U.S. invasion, the United States struggled to rebuild the Iraqi state anew and create some semblance of national unity in a society planning and a flawed understanding of Iraq's political and cultural intricacies, the United States undertook the colossal task of invading Iraq, dismantling the old power structures, and reforming Iraq's polity, economy, and society along the lines of a liberal market-based democracy. Iraq's realities, however, proved far more challenging. Iraq's totalitarian system had rested on oil revenues, a command economy, coercive mass mobilization, and kinship politics. Wars and sanctions had only exacerbated inherent stresses and tensions. Political power structures were personalized, and economic and social institutions were in crisis. There were no social forces to act as agents of change, and no regional environment supportive

of such change. Iraq was emerging from half a century of authoritarian-military rule, with thorny legacy of devastating wars, crippling sanctions, misrule, mismanagement of the oil-based command economy, and all-pervasive nepotism and corruption. These conditions drained much of the nation's resources, destroyed its once vibrant civil society, personalized institutions of power, and left the nation severely divided. Following the demise of the Baathist regime, a plethora of social, political, institutional, and cultural forces were unleashed. The various factions sought to reshape the political order and redefine national institutions in their favour to redress grievances or regain privileges. In other words, the conditions for the natural emergence of stable democratic politics did not exist (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2007, p.3).

To sum it up, the aim of regime change in Iraq was presumably to create a state that would be stable, legitimate and democratic, yet however, the US and its allies failed to take into cognizance that Iraq was a nation that was gripped with inherent challenges which constituted major barriers for any transformation. Seemingly, the outcome was that of a failed state plagued by prolonged insurgency, verging on civil war, and in which the main beneficiary appears to be pro-Iranian Shia groups (Hinnebusch, 2007, p.17).Apparently, Iraq was a fragile artificial state from its creation by Britain, with communal cleavages and instability built- in, and only over several decades of struggle was a formula for stability found: a brutal strongman ruling through a semi totalitarian party and relying on one of Iraqi' communities against the others(Hinnebusch,2007,p17). However, the US in effect deconstructed this state without having or even planning for a viable replacement for it.(Hinnebusch 2007,p.17).Therefore the demise and termination of the Baath regime presented catastrophic and nerve wrecking results which continue to be felt within the Iraq society and have exacerbated the Iraq conflict.

4.5 Prospects to resolving the 2003- 2014 Iraq Conflict:

4.5.1 Haider Al Abadi and the Inclusive government

Offering optimism into the Iraq conflict has been the appointment of Haider Al Abadi as the new prime minister of Iraq. The new Prime Minister has been seen as a better alternative to the divisive leadership of Nouri Al Maliki, through his endeavours of forming an inclusive

government, thus offering a ray of hope within the dawn of Iraq politics. Similarly, Abadi 's appointment of two deputy prime ministers who are Sunni and Kurdish has been a major step in the right direction to foster and enhance a sense of non sectarian and national unity. However, it is crucial to note that the new Prime Minister however faces the arduous task of rebuilding Shia and Sunni relations as well as tackling the fight against the Islamic state insurgency with vast areas outside his control (BBC News, 2014). Therefore, Iraq has to be patient and give Haider Al Abadi a chance to rebuild Iraq and prove himself worthy as a capable leader. So, it is only with time that his efforts will be fully analyzed and critically evaluated.

4.5.2 US-led grand coalition to defeat and degrade ISIS

The formation of a US-led global grand coalition to defeat and degrade ISIS is an endearing prospect to resolving the Iraq crisis. The Guardian Briefing (September 2014,) purports that the US and its allies will degrade and ultimately destroy the global threat of the Islamic State by targeting its bases and fighters in Iraq and Syria. This will be done through a comprehensive and sustained counterterrorism strategy which includes a systematic campaign of airstrikes (The Guardian Briefing, September 2014). Moreover, the coalition has drawn up countries from Europe, the Middle East and Americas which have pledged their support for this coalition by endorsing its mandate and mission. However, Mr R. Sillah, a lecturer at the Midlands State University in the Department of Development Studies cautioned that, for as long as there is a western hand within the Iraq conflict, the prospects of attaining peace and security in that country are minimal, whilst the chances of perpetuating the clash of civilizations are quite high.[34]Moreover, in as much as the presence of the coalition presents a prospect to resolving the conflict in Iraq, there is a great risk that the coalition will eventually end up being a mission creep[35].Michael Eisenstadt of The Washington Institute for Near East Policy(2014)states that the declared goal of degrading and ultimately destroying ISIS has created expectations among many Americans that are unlikely to be met, namely because it is a highly resilient organization

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[34] Interview, Mr R.Sillah, Gweru, 5 February 2015.
[35]Mission creep entails the conduct of any unplanned tasks which tend to supersede the original mandate of a mission. In other words there is the conduct of activities outside the mandate of a mission and thus increasing the likelihood and chances of entangling tasks and activities
see:*www.cna.org/sites/default/files/research/2798010800.*pdf and also See http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28774749

due to ideological and organizational factors, and the nature of the environment it operates in(p.1-2). Therefore the success of the coalition can be said to be elusive and this therefore casts a shadow over the prospects of resolving the Iraq conflict.

4.6 Conclusion

However, it is quite imperative to note that although the 2003-2014 Iraq crisis is a combination of intricate myriad internal and external factors that present a challenge for resolving the conflict, one crisis is nestled into another to form crises. Moreover, there is a syndrome of crises that exist at various levels and various forms and this is further complicated by the wide range of actors; domestic, regional and international actors operating in multiple arenas at multiple levels.[36]Furthermore, the conflict is Iraq is quite a dynamic crisis that is to say it is not static but ever changing. The parties involved in the conflict are also changing due to an upsurge in activities that have propelled the conflict.[37]The issues at stake are also altering and therefore there is need to keep up with the events in this conflict. Moreover the constraints tend to overshadow the prospects and thus the prospects of resolving the 2003-2014 Iraq crisis are presented in a bleak manner.

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[36] Interview with Professor Eldred Masunungure a lecturer in the Department of Political and Administrative Studies Department at the University of Zimbabwe on 13 February 2015.The professor concurred with the author's hypothesis and reiterated that the Iraq conflict is of myriad complexities that has several dimensions.
[37] In an interview with Group Captain E.Kamusoko of the National Defense College, Harare, 11 February 2014, the Group Captain mentioned that the Iraq conflict has taken different forms and hence it is a complex issue that needs one to appreciate the parties to the conflict as well as the various issues resonating within the conflict.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

5.1 Introduction

The discussion under this chapter will provide a synthesis of the empirical findings from the study with respect to the research questions of the study. Having been informed by the view that the 2003 to 2014 Iraq conflict is a combination of intricate myriad internal and external factors that present a challenge to resolving the conflict, it has been observed that these internal and external challenges are interdependent and interrelated such that they mutually reinforce one another. The main empirical findings are chapter specific and were summarized within the respective chapters. Each section will synthesize the empirical findings to answer the study's three research questions. The findings are based on interviews conducted by the author as well as the literature reviewed. The findings also interrogate the theoretical framework and the hypothesis of the study and show whether they were appropriate to the study. The research findings will be presented and analyzed qualitatively.

5.2 Constraints and prospects to resolving the 2003-2014 Iraq Crisis

The study revealed that the Iraq conflict is a myriad and multidimensional conflict that involves numerous actors operating in different arenas. The study looked at the constraints from an internal dimension, regional dimensions and international dimension. The findings of the research question are summarized as the previous chapters have provided a detailed analysis on the prospects and constraints to resolving the Iraq conflict.

5.2.1Domestic Dimension Internal (Factors)

The research drew attention to a variety of internal issues which have made the Iraq conflict complex and thus contributed its escalation. The study noted that sectarianism is quite rife within the society of Iraq and has polarized the nation dividing it into a country of Kurds, Shias and Sunnis. This sectarianism has played off into the hands of ISIL, the Islamic jihad group which has hijacked the grievances of the Sunnis to pursue their fundamentalist doctrine based on sharia law. The presence of an Islamic militant group has by and large taken the crisis to another level. Furthermore the research has availed that endemic corruption coupled by bad governance has

been at the core of the Iraq problems. This widespread and pervasive corruption has manifested itself within the different sectors of the country and thus polarized the nation even further. The tension between the Arabs and the Kurds and the Kurds and the central government has also proven to be another thorny issue within the Iraq conflict plunging the nation into deeper tragedy and chaos. The incompetent leadership of Nouri al Maliki has contributed immensely to the conflict as he played off sect against sect as well as promoted a legacy of nepotism which greatly infuriated the Sunnis as they were often marginalized and neglected by his government. This in turn propelled an upsurge in sectarian violence and later on jihadist violence.

5.2.2 Regional Dimension (External Factors)

The spillover of the Syrian conflict has been presented as another major hurdle to the resolution of the Iraq conflict. The study established that the Syrian crisis has witnessed the dramatic acceleration of the conflict in Iraq through the operations and activities of the Islamic state. This has been the case because the borders of Syria and Iraq are of close proximity such that Iraq has provided bases and safe havens for the flourishing of the Jihadist activities. Furthermore the research revealed that refugees are flowing from Syria to Iraq and their vulnerability allows them to be recruited and radicalized by the Islamic State thus exporting and fuelling the insurgency. Therefore as the Rand Corporation (2014) reports, the tensions in Iraq will continue to rise as the conflict continues in Syria.

5.2.3 International Dimension (External Factors)

The international dimension of the conflict has been characterized by the US invasion in 2003 which gave rise to a propensity of events that followed. The study brought to attention that the US invasion paved way for sectarian violence and tension as the US played sect against sect and this further instigated the post invasion violence that marred the nation from 2003 to 2007.Furthermore the study highlighted that the invasion by the US was responsible for oustering of Saddam Hussein who had been able to keep his country together in spite of the various sects that were a feature in Iraq. His removal from power created a security vacuum which was filled in by different militias who engaged in power struggles and hence has taken a toll on the nation. Furthermore, it is worth noting, that the presence of the Islamic State in Iraq a

product of the US-led invasion of Iraq and thus this invasion laid the foundation for the calamity which has gripped Iraq.

5.3 Role of state and non state actors in the context of challenges encountered in resolving the Iraq crisis

The Iraq conflict has been dominated by a wide array of state and non state actors. However, it is paramount to take note that state actors and non state actors do not resolve conflicts for the sake of resolving them; rather they only put in their efforts in resolving conflicts which affect their immediate interests.[38] This in itself creates an ostensible challenge to resolving the Iraq conflict.

5.3.1 Non state actors

The study discussed the role of non state actors notably Exxon Mobil and the Arab League as being central to the Iraq crisis. The study noted that Exxon Mobil an MNC has largely been driven by the desire to exploit the vast oil fields of Iraq as a means of expropriating profits back to its host country. Moreover, the corporation has been engaging with the KRG over hydrocarbon deals at the expense of undermining the authority of the Central government of Iraq. For this reason Cordesman and Khazai CSIS (2014) have argued that Exxon Mobil has been at the heart of the conflict in Iraq providing an impetus for the centrifugal forces that are tearing the society of Iraq (p.343). The study also established that the Arab League has failed to assert a unified position in regard to the conflict in Iraq. From the onset of the conflict, the regional body was inherently divided over which stance to take in light of the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 as some member states advocated for the invasion whilst others expressed opposition towards invasion. Consequently, the League has shown lack of effective capacity in dealing with security issues within its region. This has led to the conclusion that the Arab League is a toothless tiger which is ineffective and counterproductive (Toffolo, 2008, p.121).

5.3.2 State actors

The research divided state actors into international regional state actors, with regional state actors including Iran, Turkey and the GCC countries whilst international state actors include China and

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[38] Interview, Mr Torque Mude, 23 January 2015.

the European countries. The study highlighted that the GCC countries are alleged to be funding the Islamic state group in a bid to gain hegemonic control over the international oil market and this in itself presents a formidable challenge to the resolution of the Iraq conflict as the Islamic group has been at the heart of the conflict that has engulfed Iraq. However the study availed that the Gulf countries have joined the US established grand coalition to destroy and degrade ISIL thereby presenting a shift in the stance and position of the GCC as they have also recognized that threat of ISIL can have detrimental repercussions on their national security. The study also brought to light that Iran has been a major player in the conflict in Iraq as it has sought to prolong the Iraq conflict and ensure that Iraq is crippled and remains a weak state. Iran has adopted a wide range of tactics to perpetuate or maintain the status quo of affairs within Iraq and these include arming various militant groups in a bid to destabilize Iraq. The study also elaborated on the role played by Turkey in resolving the Iraq conflict. It was noted that Turkey is quite wary of the Kurdish desires and quest for independence in Iraq and its role is that of trying to thwart the sentiments from pervading across its own borders as it also hosts Kurds. Moreover, Turkey is engaged economically with the KRG thus undermining the role of the central government through by-passing any regulation that entails official scrutiny. This has further mired the relationship between the KRG and the Central government of Iraq.

The study further pointed out that Europe was divided over the decision to invade Iraq as some countries joined the US-led coalition and embarked on Operation Iraqi Freedom whilst other countries as well as the EU have sought to re engage with Iraq through viable agreements and partnerships. Also the study shows that most European countries have actively participated in the US led grand coalition to defeat and degrade ISIL through offering support and other various forms of assistance. This move portrays the visible role of European countries in trying to de-escalate the Iraq conflict and ridding it of Islamic extremists who have compromised the security of Iraq. The study went on to highlight the role played by China in the Iraq conflict and revealed that although China enjoys tremendous economic ties with Iraq it is unwilling to blur the lines between economics and politics thus has detached itself from the Iraq crisis.

5.4 Hypothesis testing

The study indeed revealed the 2003 to 2014 Iraq conflict is a combination of intricate myriad internal and external factors that present a challenge to resolving the conflict as the Iraq conflict is marred by multiple issues which entangle the conflict into a web of complex issues such that instead of having one crisis, there are now multiple crises. Iraq is embroiled in several issues that range from internal to external, regional to international.

The internal issues that Iraq is battling with include sectarianism, ethnicity and identity politics, tensions between the KRG and the central government, corruption and bad governance, leadership, a deeply flawed constitution as well as deep structural demographic pressures. The study showed that these internal factors have contributed immensely to the weakening of the security architecture within Iraq thereby emerging as dire constraints to resolving the Iraq conflict.

The study also highlighted that external issues have also contributed to the Iraq conflict. The study focused on the Syrian civil war and how it has spilled over into Iraq thereby hindering any effective conflict resolution. In addition, the US- led invasion of Iraq played a fundamental role in the disintegration of the security and political landscape of the country by opening up a Pandora box of issues that have complicated any meaningful efforts of resolving the crisis. The invasion fanned the flames of sectarianism and bred violence which engulfed the state of Iraq. The emergence of the Islamic State has further proved to be another stumbling block towards resolving the crisis in Iraq as this extremist group has further plunged Iraq into another predicament.

These convoluted numerous factors have resulted in the prolongation and longevity of the Iraq conflict through providing hurdles and obstacles that continue to derail efforts aimed at restoring the peace and security of Iraq. Therefore it is quite accurate and apt to state that the 2003 to 2014 Iraq conflict is a combination of intricate myriad internal and external factors that present a challenge for resolving the conflict.

However, worth noting is that these factors are interrelated and interdependent to one another. For instance the 2003 US-led invasion instigated sectarianism and violence in Iraq as well as being responsible for the coming into power of Nouri Al Maliki. Nouri al Maliki on the other hand severed and worsened sectarianism and propagated bad governance and corruption. He has also been blamed for the rise of Islamic State in Iraq. Therefore whilst it can be said that the Iraq conflict is a combination of intricate myriad internal and external factors it is crucial to note that these factors both internal and external are mutually reinforcing and are dependent on one another.

5.5 Conclusion

The findings of the research reflect that although the 2003 to 2014 Iraq conflict is a combination of intricate myriad internal and external factors that present a challenge to resolving the conflict, these internal and external challenges are interdependent and interrelated such that they mutually reinforce each other. The research also found out that, whilst state and non state actors are primarily driven by national interests in their approach towards Iraq, this has exacerbated the conflict through the convergence of their national interests and the fundamental norms of peace and security of Iraq.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

Based on the view that the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict is a combination of intricate, myriad internal and external factors that present a challenge for resolving the conflict, this chapter sets out to provide concluding remarks and scholarly and policy suggestions that can be proffered in on the prospects of finding a sustainable solution to the conflict. The concluding remarks are also based on the research findings and Lederach's theory on conflict transformation, which all sought to analyze the prospects and constraints to resolving the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict. The research also aimed at evaluating the respective roles of state and non state actors in the context of challenges encountered in resolving the conflict. The research was carried out using qualitative research methods in its collection and analysis of data from primary and secondary sources as well as fieldwork and literature review.

6.2 Conclusions

Chapter one set out to introduce the study area and focused on key concepts such as the background to the research, the hypothesis, research objectives, research questions and significance of the study.

Chapter two focused on literature review and theoretical framework. Literature review was guided by the specific objectives set out by the study as well as through the identification of key themes that were pertinent to the research area. Here, the study set out to identify the various schools of thought and lines of argument propounded by various scholars in light of the Iraq conflict. What is noteworthy is that the research identified that there is a lot of literature provided on the Iraq conflict and scholars such as Cordesman& Khazai of the CSIS have produced extensive material on the Iraq conflict yet portraying it in a negative manner that shows little hope for its resolution. However, the research areas of the study set out to not only highlight the constraints but rather went a step further to investigate on the likelihood of resolving the Iraq conflict.

An overview of the Iraq conflict constituted Chapter Three. The main thrust of this chapter was to provide a critical overview of the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict so as to provide some insight and detailed chronology of events that set out to constitute the conflict. The chapter traced the conflict from the 2003 US-led invasion in Iraq under the banner of Operation Iraqi Freedom which then prompted a wide array of events including the post invasion insurgency as well as the rise of the Islamic fundamentalist group known as ISIS. The chapter also highlighted that the group has unleashed an unprecedented reign of terror that has inevitably compromised the security and stability of Iraq.

Chapter four set out to analyze the prospects and constraints to resolving the Iraq conflict. This chapter formed the main chapter of the research as it set out to explore the issues that have prompted the research. The chapter divided these constraints into domestic, regional and international. The study revealed that the internal issues which have been presented as challenges to resolving the Iraq conflict include sectarianism, the tensions between the Kurds and Baghdad, endemic corruption, bad governance, flawed electoral system, leadership challenge and a deeply flawed electoral system. The regional issue which has constituted a major constraint to the resolution of the Iraq conflict was the spillover of the Syrian civil war. The US led invasion of Iraq proved to be a significant challenge to resolving the Iraq conflict within the international dimension. Therefore these factors constituted the major constraints to resolving the 2003-2014 Iraq conflict. The chapter also discussed the prospects to resolving the conflict as a separate issue and it was noted that the formation of the inclusive Haider al Abadi government offers hope to resolving the Iraq conflict yet on the other hand its lack of legitimacy presents a major setback against this likelihood and as one scholar put it "it is hoping against hope that the Iraq conflict could ever be resolved."[39]

Findings of the research constituted Chapter Five. This chapter was informed by the premise that the 2003 to 2014 Iraq conflict is a combination of intricate myriad internal and external factors that present a challenge to resolving the conflict. This chapter was guided by the three research questions and the findings were presented qualitatively.

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[39] The author acknowledges this crucial analysis provided by Mr Mazambane during an interview with the author on the 5th of February 2015 in Gweru.

The research made use of Lederach's theory on conflict transformation which argues that conflict transformation is more than a set of specific techniques rather, it is about a way of looking and seeing, providing a set of lenses which draw our awareness to certain aspects of conflict, and help bring the overall meaning of the conflict into sharper focus (Lederach &Maiese, 2004, p.7). In simple terms, the theory seeks to go past the immediate causes of conflict through analyzing the deeper and contextual influences that have shaped the conflict. In this regard, the 2003 -2014 Iraq conflict was analyzed within the context of this theoretical framework, and it was discovered that any meaningful efforts aimed at resolving the conflict have to be directed beyond the immediate causes of the conflict and seek to address the underlying issues behind the conflict.

6.3 Recommendations

Against the background of the research findings and concluding remarks, this section sets out to discuss scholarly and policy advice that can be proffered in on finding a sustainable solution to resolving the 2003- 2014 Iraq crisis. The section offers an insight on the various approaches to dealing with the conflict. In coming up with recommendations to the conflict, it is quite essential to take into cognizance the main underlying issues that have led to the conflict[40].This will enable a more comprehensive and direct approach to dealing with the conflict in Iraq and hence providing concise and justifiable solutions. The recommendations are provided for at a national, regional and international level.

6.3.1 Recommendations for action at National level

These recommendations will be subcategorized and analyzed within the political, economic, social and security framework.

6.3.1.1Social

6.3.1.1.1 Deradicalization and disengagement of terrorist activities

One effective way of resolving the Iraq conflict is to embark on deradicalization of extremist Islamic fundamentalism. As the Rand Corporation (2010) points out, there is an emergent consensus among counterterrorism analysts and practitioners that to defeat the threat posed by

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[40] Interview with Gp Capt E.Kamusoko, 11 February 2015, Harare.

Islamist extremism and terrorism, there is a need to go beyond security and intelligence measures, taking proactive measures to prevent vulnerable individuals from radicalizing and rehabilitating those who have already embraced extremism (p.xiii). In this regard measures to counter the threat posed by ISIS should involve a deeper solution which extends to the ideological frontier. It is worth noting that these extremists have been able to export radical Islamic ideology worldwide, advertising and selling it like a lucrative brand such that it has been appealing to many people, Muslims and non Muslims alike. As Wood (2015) notes "the Islamic State is no mere collection of psychopaths, it is a religious group with carefully considered beliefs, among them that it is a key agent of the coming apocalypse."Therefore in light of this statement, it can be noted that, there is need to engage with moderate Muslims to help reconscientise the world about the true meaning and doctrine of Islam thereby persuading Muslims to adopt a mainstream approach to Islamism. This could be done through engaging with the Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei who has often condemned the atrocities of the IS group.[41]

6.3.1.1.2 Gender Mainstreaming in conflict resolution

Gender mainstreaming in the Iraq conflict is one effective way of resolving the conflict. Of Importance is to note that the UNSC Resolution 1325 makes mention of the need to involve women in conflict issues after having noted that armed conflict has a disproportionate and unique impact on women.[42] In that regard, it is paramount to note that women and girls have been greatly affected by the conflict in Iraq as ISIL has been renowned for instigating abusive mechanisms on women through selling them as sex slaves and carrying out abhorrent practices that humiliate and degrade the status of women. As the Clarion Project (2014) affirms, rape is routinely practiced as both a weapon of war and as a means of humiliating and subjugating conquered populations (p.25). It is also used to 'reward' fighters for services rendered, with women as young as 14 being given as 'gifts' to ISIS commanders, while others are sold as

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[41] The author appreciates the view point provided by Mr R.Sillah during an interview with the author in Gweru on 4 February 2015.
[42] Resolution 1325 was the first Resolution to address the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women. It stresses the importance of women's equal and full participation as active agents in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace-building and the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspective in all areas of peace building. See UN Peacekeeping, http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/issues/women/wps.shtmlpeacekeeping

slaves in the market place(Clarion Project,2014,p.25). Therefore, any meaningful attempts to resolve the conflict in Iraq should incorporate gender mainstreaming.

6.3.1.2Political

6.3.1.2.1 Need to make a Distinction between Anti Terrorism and Political Calculations

There is need for the Iraqi government to demarcate between its antiterrorism operations and political calculations. In light of this, the government should bear in mind that winning the war against al-Qaeda and radical Sunni groups requires a genuine effort to isolate these groups and delegitimize their claim of representing the Sunni community. In the same token, the political emphasis must be placed on Iraqi citizens rather than sectarian communities. One way to do that is by replacing the current electoral system, which favours competition in large constituencies, with one based on small districts. This will help underline local concerns and could produce more genuine representatives who can be held accountable by their direct constituencies, rather than representatives chosen by political leaders to represent the interests of large sectarian parties (Harith Hasan Al-Qarawee of Carnegie-MEC, 2014, p.18).In essence a clear distinction between anti terrorism and political calculations will enable the government to isolate the terrorist groups whilst appealing directly to the Iraq population.

6.3.1.2.2 Embarking on Peace Building and National Reconciliation

Iraq should be encouraged on a path of national reconciliation and cross sectarian dialogue with the objective of developing a sense of citizenship separate from sectarian and ethnic identity and promoting the richness of Iraq's cultural diversity. By the same token, the wounds of the past should be healed and there should be the promotion of peace building and reconciliation. Equally important, the process of national reconciliation should be led by the Iraqi civil society groups, which should promote Iraqi national identity, countering sectarian propaganda, protecting cultural heritage and diversity, as well as in advocacy on these key themes vis-à-vis the government. In like manner, the media should also play a role in promoting and advocating for national reconciliation through broadcasting media sensitive material that is appealing to all groups and fosters a spirit of unity and harmony. Consequently, the promotion of reconciliation will go a long way in minimizing sectarianism through fostering peace and harmony which are

imperative and key to resolving the conflict. Moreover, addressing Sunni feelings of alienation is crucial to achieving more legitimacy for the regime and stability for the country. Generally speaking, Iraq needs to undertake credible steps to build confidence and reassure its various communities of their place in the state through a serious reconciliation plan.

6.3.1.2.3 Inclusion and representation of all groups

Inclusion and representation of all ethnic groups is a paramount issue that needs to be looked into by the new government of Iraq in a bid to ensure that the conflict is resolved. The marginalization of the Shiites and Kurds under the Baath regime bred feelings of resentment and animosity towards the Sunnis such that with the end of the Baath regime these groups embarked on retribution politics to settle past scores. Seemingly, this was further worsened by the Prime Minister Maliki who centralized and personified the politics of Iraq to advance the cause of the Shiites whilst marginalizing the Sunnis (Harith Hasan Al-Qarawee of Carnegie-MEC, 2014.p.19).Therefore there is need for concerted efforts to address Iraqi citizens' legitimate grievances and to promote a long-term process of inclusion whilst addressing the Sunni grievances. In this regard, the Haidi Abadi government should continue to take great strides in ensuring that there is inclusion of all ethnic and sectarian groups within the government and decision making structures.

6.3.1.2.4Engage with moderate marginalized Sunni groups

The Iraqi government should engage with all components of Iraqi society, especially moderate religious and political groups in order to give them a stake in Iraq's future. Particular attention needs to be given to the Sunni community in an effort to disengage this population from offering support to ISIS. The engagement with the Sunni community should spell out measures to address known injustices and promote reconciliation, to ensure the safety of the population and to provide guarantees of future consultation on policy making. At the same time moderate Shia communities and civil society groups need to be supported to counter the stigmatization and backlash against the Sunni community.

6.3.1.2.5 Engage with the KRG

Re-engagement between the KRG and the central government on the various disputes and areas of conflict is a major area that needs to be addressed in order to improve the political landscape of Iraq. It has been noted that the tensions between the KRG and the government of Baghdad present an ostensible challenge to the resolution of the conflict. Hence both parties should come forward and work on a negotiated settlement that will deescalate the tension that is thwarting meaningful resolution to the conflict. In this regard, the federal government and the KRG should therefore agree on a clear roadmap with timelines for the resolution of the disputes on the basis of constitutional provisions in order to improve the political climate of Iraq. Significantly, as has been noted earlier, cessation is not a viable solution as it will only instigate and fuel a sense of liberation which will set a precedence that will cascade within the region thereby causing unnecessary confusion. [43] Therefore a viable proposition will be that of trying to reach a negotiated settlement between the KRG and the central government as a means of resolving the Iraq crisis.

6.3.1.2.6 Democratically consolidate state-run institutions and support political and legislative reform

As a major step forward, the Iraq government should strive to incorporate democratic principles within its government. In like manner, a true democracy instituted by the Iraqis will go a long way in mitigating the conflict.[44] This includes fostering principles of inclusivity and tolerance, free and fair elections, the upholding and respect of human rights and freedoms, equality as well as good governance, rule of law, transparency and accountability. Fundamental principles of democratic reform lie in the separation of political and administrative positions, the creation of an independent civil service and application of a non-sectarian equal opportunities policy based on qualifications and competency (European Commission 2015, p.17.). Equally important is that, jihadism has thrived in unequal societies where one group is denied equal access to opportunities and hence, jihadism offers an alternative means of support to the deprived groups. Moreover, the government should create adequate and conducive political space for a vibrant civil society which can help in fostering democratic ideals that are fundamental in improving the society. The

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[43] Interview with Dr Heather Chingono, Harare, 18 February 2015.
[44] Interview with Major Mutambudzi, Harare, 13 February 2015.

government of Iraq can therefore engage with successful democracies which can provide extensive state building assistance by advising institutions and supporting democratic education (GIGA Focus, 2014, p.7).

6.3.1.2.7 Non interference of external actors in the domestic policy of Iraq

The non interference of external actors in the domestic policy of Iraq is another important way of resolving the Iraq conflict.[45] In the same manner, there should be an Arab solution to Arab problems and the adoption of inward looking approaches. Thus there is need to allow an internal solution to emerge in the form of a personality or individual recognized as a stabilizing force who can rally the support of the majority of Iraqis.[46] In other words, the presence of multiple actors in Iraq presents a real challenge to resolving the conflict, as these various actors have vested interests which compromise the ability of finding a sustainable solution to the conflict. Therefore, there is need to do away with tendencies that seek to involve multiple actors in Iraq thus ensuring that Iraq will take the lead in peace building strategies. Consequently, other states may intervene upon the invitation by the government of Iraq as a means of complimenting the efforts of the government[47]. In this regard there should be respect for humanity as the international community has to be sensitive enough to know that Iraqis are also human and are entitled to be treated in dignity.[48]

6.3.1.2.8 Reformation of Judicial services and mainstreaming respect for human rights

Failure in the rule of law lies at the heart of the crisis in Iraq; therefore there is an urgent need to address this situation in the hope of resolving the conflict. In the same manner, there is need to reform existing controversial legislation and its implementation, which have been drivers of radicalization and resistance to the Iraqi government. This can include strengthening the independence of the judiciary as well as the mainstreaming of human rights in the curricula of

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[45] The author is greatly indebted to Mr R.Sillah for this valuable information that he shared with the author during an interview,4 February 2015,Gweru.

[46] Interview with Dr Joseph Kurebwa, Harare, 17 February 2015.

[47] Interview with Mr T.Chibanda, Gweru, 4 February 2015.

[48] The author acknowledges the valuable contribution made by Col Dr John Max Chinyanganya during an interview with the author on the 11th of February 2015,in Harare.

civilian and military security forces. Moreover, emphasis has to be on the cooperation of the security forces with legal institutions. There is also need to improve judicial capacities to deal with terrorist organizations. In this regard, the government of Iraq should collaborate with the ICC and refer the war crimes and crimes against humanity carried out by the Islamist extremist group to the ICC. This will set a precedence of the condemnation of human rights abuses and terrorist activities within the country.

6.3.1.3 Security

6.3.1.3.1 Streamlining of the security sector

The restructuring of the security sector in Iraq should be carried out as a means of resolving the Iraq crisis. The security sector in Iraq has been overwhelmed and severely malfunctioned in the wake of the insurgency. There is need to ensure that the security forces who have been purported to conduct gross human rights violations are held accountable and brought to justice in a bid to end impunity within this sector .The progressive demobilization of Shia militias and other armed groups, and their replacement by competent cross-sectarian Iraqi security forces is fundamental to enhancing the competency of this sector. Therefore, the Iraqi government has a duty of care to ensure that it will be the only weapons holder, and will ban any armed formation outside the government framework, in line with the Iraq Constitution.

6.3.1.4Economic

Develop basic services, economic development and fight corruption

The European Commission (2015) purports that; stability in Iraq can only be sustainable if its huge wealth is harnessed for the benefit of all citizens (p.19). Similarly, the government should embark on equal distribution of wealth, resources and opportunities as well as rid the state of corruption.[49] Addressing these fundamental issues will go a long way in harnessing the root causes to the conflict in Iraq. Seemingly, weak public financial management in general and pervasive corruption has led to inefficient budget implementation and poor service delivery. This has resulted in poor standards of living amongst the Iraq populace and growing discontent and tension within the society. Therefore, prudent economic and fiscal policy reforms are essential to

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[49] The author is grateful to Dr Heather Chingono who shared this valuable information with the author during an interview on the 18th of February 2015 in Harare.

ensure the fiscal sustainability that is crucial to meet the increased costs of social needs and security (European Commission, 2015, p.19). Moreover, a determined fight against corruption and an improvement of Iraq's administrative capacity are essential in upgrading human development index .This should be done through the promotion of accountability and transparent measures within each and every sector of the government. The intensive fight against corruption is quite pivotal in resolving the Iraq conflict.

6.3.2 Recommendations for action at Regional Level

6.3.2.1 Regional concerted effort to end the war in Syria

As the study has highlighted the war in Syria is a major setback to achieving conflict resolution in Iraq. Therefore what is needed is a concerted effort led by regional countries under the leadership of the Arab league to try and push for a negotiated settlement within Iraq. The Arab countries have to set aside their differences and work together to ensure that peace and security are restored in Syria. By focusing on the Syrian civil war, this will entail that the jihadist groups are denied any operating space hence will be useful in containing the threat posed by these Islamic fundamentalist group.

6.3.3 Recommendations for action at International level

6.3.3.1 A more visible role of the Arab League and the UN is necessary

A more rigorous approach by the Arab League in the Iraq conflict is of uttermost importance towards the resolution of the conflict. It is important to note that, Iraq is not only a member of the Arab League, but it also contributed to the founding of the organization in 1945 and thus its relevance in the organ is unquestionable (Arab Forum for Alternatives, 2013).Moreover, the main purpose of the League is to consider in a general way the affairs and interests of the Arab countries. In this light, the conflict has severely hampered and curtailed Iraq's national interest hence providing an adequate reason for the intervention by the Arab League (Department of International Affairs Secretariat for External Relations, 2013, p.2). Moreover, the conflict has not only affected Iraq, rather it has poured into neighbouring countries through the infiltration of refugees and resultantly impacting upon the security of neighbouring states. It is thus paramount

for the Arab League to work with the UN in resolving the conflict in Iraq as well as engage the government of Iraq in restoring stability and sanity within the political apparatus of the nation.

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Interviews and place

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Mr Ishmael Mazambane, MSU, 04 February 2015.

Mr Tawanda Chibanda, MSU, 04 February 2015.

Mr Ramaphal Sillah, MSU, 04 February 2015.

Mr Arthur Chikerema, MSU, 05 February 2015.

Mr Wenceslaus Mudyanadzo, MSU, 09February 2015.

Harare

Brig Gen Waqar, NDC, 26 February 2015.

Dr Heather Chingono, UZ, 18 February 2015.

Col Dr John Max Chinyanganya, NDC, 11 February 2015.

Gp Cpt E.Kamusoko, NDC, 11 February 2015.

Major A.Mutambudzi, Munhumutapa Building, 13 February 2015.

Professor Eldred Masunungure, UZ, 13 February 2015.

Dr Joseph Kurebwa, UZ, 17 February 2015.

Anonymous security official, 26 February 2015.

Appendix 1: Iraq Map

Source: http://www.mapsofworld.com/iraq/maps/iraq-map.gif(accessed 1 May 2015)