

# Post-2005 United States' Grand Strategy towards Iraq: From *Shock* and *Consociational Democracy* to War against the Islamic State

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## **Abstract**

The Gulf War was projected as a liberal war – waged as a necessary war – in order to remove a tyrant, eliminate terrorism and promote democracy and liberal economic reforms in Iraq. Since then, despite a series of elections and efforts to introduce liberal economic reforms, the country continues to experience political destabilisation and sectarian conflicts. This has culminated in the rise of militant organisations which includes the Islamic State (IS). At the same time, the United States' (US) global strategy appears to be undergoing a transformation with evolving ideological discourses seeking to justify a new war against the IS. As a consequence, its Grand Strategy is experiencing modernisation and transformation in warfare, complimented by the growing influence of global corporate organisations on military planning and policymaking. This article presents an analysis of these trends in the perspective of Iraq, and contributes to the broader understanding of US foreign policy towards the Middle East.

**Key words:** Grand Strategy, Liberal War, Liberal Militarism, *Consociational Democracy*, Corporate Entities.

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## **Introduction: Iraq as a Test Case for Intervention**

The Iraq War by United States' (US) in 2003, interchangeably called the Second Gulf War, was waged under the primary pretext of preventing a possible threat of nuclear terrorism. However, the official discourse included arguments calling for the overthrow of 'tyrants'<sup>1</sup> – as Saddam Hussein had been portrayed<sup>2</sup> and – replacing the Iraqi Ba'athist regime with a democracy that may promote neoliberalism – in order to rescue the failing and collapsing state.

The idea of 'Liberal Wars' has been promoted by academics and thinkers who interpret the writings of various classical thinkers (primarily Immanuel Kant and his 1795 essay *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*) calling on modern, liberal, democratic and free states to wage (morally justified) wars for the elimination of threats to human and global security, promotion of freedom, democracy and liberal economic reform. The arguments in favour of waging a 'liberal' war, to be followed by elections, democracy and neoliberal economic reforms appealed to the political leaders of Western states and appeared logical to some sections of Western academia. However, these arguments and policies faced continuous criticism from a substantial segment of global academics as well as political leaders, contributed to the emergence of two significant strands in the discourse on the post-9/11 wars pursued by the US. While a group of Liberal and Liberal Internationalist,<sup>3</sup> Liberal-left,<sup>4</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup> White House, GoUS, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Government of United States, 2002),

<https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> George W. Bush, "Remarks by the President to Students and Faculty at National Defence University" (speech, Washington, D.C., May 1, 2001), White House, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/05/20010501-10.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Jean Bethke Elshtain, "How to Fight a Just War," in *Worlds in Collision: Terror and the Future of Global Order*, eds. Ken Booth and Tim Dunne (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 263-269; Judith Lichtenberg, "Some Central Problems in Just War Theory," in *The Just War and Jihad: Violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. R. Joseph Hoffman (New York: Prometheus Books, 2006), 23; and Neta C. Crawford,

Cosmopolitan<sup>5</sup> academics advocated for a proactive war in face of threats from terrorists, such as perpetrators of 9/11; Marxists,<sup>6</sup> Anti-Imperialists,<sup>7</sup> and Feminists<sup>8</sup> argued for a critical examination of the negative impacts of this ‘US Grand Strategy’<sup>9</sup> and global military dominance, prior to the propositions for War against Terror and for promotion of democracy and liberal economic reforms.

The pre-Second Gulf War discourse fundamentally focused on the factors linked with going to war for the promotion of liberalism. However, in the post-Second Gulf War Iraq, the actual conduct of war requires a new explanation and examination of ‘war’ given the transformations in the politico-military relations and the economic basis of interstate and intrastate warfare and militarism. This essentially implies looking at the increasing role of civil, corporate actors and economic factors in modern warfare. Considering post-2001 Afghanistan and post-2003 Iraq, so-called

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“The Justice of Preemption and Preventive War Doctrines,” in *Just War Theory: A Reappraisal*, ed. Mark Evans (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 26-27.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, 4th ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 251-255.

<sup>5</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Cosmopolitan Patriots,” in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, eds. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 91-114; and Daniele Archibugi, ed., *Debating Cosmopolitics* (London: Verso, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> Alex Callinicos, *New Mandarins of American Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003). Also Alex Callinicos, *Imperialism and Global Political Economy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> Gilbert Achcar, *The Clash of Barbarisms: The Making of the New World Disorder* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Gilbert Achcar and Noam Chomsky, *Perilous Power: The Middle East and US Foreign Policy: Dialogues on Terror, Democracy, War and Justice* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2007); and Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy and the End of Republic* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> Elaheh Rostami-Povey, *Afghan Women: Identity and Invasion* (London: Zed Books, 2007); and Nadjie Al-Ali and Nicola Pratt, *What Kind of Liberation? Women and the Occupation of Iraq* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009).

<sup>9</sup> The term ‘Grand Strategy’ has been employed to conceptualise US’ global geopolitical, military, and geoeconomic strategies and policies, which have been evolving especially since the Second World War. See Edward A. Olsen, *US National Defense for the Twenty-First Century: The Grand Exit Strategy* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2002), 176; and John Lewis Gaddis, “A Grand Strategy of Transformation,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 133 (2002): 50-57.

'liberal' wars and evolving US militarism – with a capitalist hue – are transforming the nature of US' global hegemony.

Considering the case of the Second Gulf War of 2003 and US supervised elections in 2005 and 2010, the ensuing narratives presenting justifications for this war to promote democracy and neoliberalism gradually waned,<sup>10</sup> while Iraq suffered rapid destabilisation. The nature of destabilisation extended from the plunder of Mesopotamian historical artefacts – amounting to the destruction of Iraqi history and culture – to the degeneration of the political system and rise of extremist and sectarian violence.

The US occupation forces and the administrative structure appeared to deliberately ignore warnings regarding this likely post-war destabilisation. In comparison, this approach is different from US' post-Second World War policies towards Germany and Japan, which included planning to prevent post-war destabilisation.<sup>11</sup> Currently, Iraq faces critical challenges of national consolidation, countering the threat from the Islamic State (IS) and the growing number of civilian casualties, which have been termed as the 'unintended' outcomes of Iraqi and US military responses to IS. The ensuing war against IS is also continual transforming the nature of war and the dynamics of militarism, while substantiating and supporting the US' Grand Strategy.

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<sup>10</sup> Alan Greenspan, *The Age of Turbulence: Adventures in a New World* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), 463; and George Wright, "Wolfowitz: Iraq was about Oil," *Guardian*, June 4, 2003, <http://whatreallyhappened.com/WRHARTICLES/aboutoil.htm?q=aboutoil.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> Ahmed Ijaz Malik, *US Foreign Policy and the Gulf Wars: Decision Making and International Relations*, Library of International Relations (London: I B Tauris, 2014), 170-171. See also Central Intelligence Agency, Directorate of Intelligence, GoUS, *The Post War Occupations of Germany and Japan: Implications for Iraq* (Government of United States, 2002), <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB328/II-Doc17.pdf>.

## Occupation of Iraq

Iraq's occupation appeared to serve greater interests despite the overt discourse justifying war, creation of strategic alliances, and mustering economic resources to fight a projected 'continuous' threat to the civilised nations. Moreover, capitalising on the disorientation of the *shock* and awe associated with the actual conduct of war and engaging in post-war restructuring and propagation of neoliberalism, capitalism and democracy had been promoted as viable options as well as necessary tactics to support an evolving post-9/11 US strategy.<sup>12</sup>

In this article, it is primarily assumed that Iraq's occupation and the plans to hold elections can be traced to post-9/11 discourse on US' Grand Strategy, where militarism and catastrophic destruction was not argued through negative connotations since it was coupled with the promotion of democracy and economic liberalism.<sup>13</sup> The lingering problem of national consolidation and rise of violence perpetrated by IS may be explained through the US administration's war in 2003 and subsequent elections, which were regarded as engineered and were directed towards establishing a specific type of regime and a deliberate exclusion of influential political actors.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the disbanding of Iraq's army and (mis)use of irregular militias and resistance groups contributed towards the systematic creation of Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), which – as a consequence of sectarian victimisation in Iraq by the ruling regime and foreign interference by the US and its allies in Syria – gradually transformed into IS. The emergence of IS, subsequently, further fuelled conflict in Iraq and Syria along sectarian lines.

However, the trend of conducting war against IS by the US and its allies follows a new form of militarism which has been strengthening the arguments for acquiring huge economic and military resources for a greater US global military strategy. The projected threats from IS to the

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<sup>12</sup> Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Picador, 2007).

<sup>13</sup> Elshtain, "How to Fight a Just War," 263-269; and Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*.

<sup>14</sup> Malik, *US Foreign Policy and the Gulf Wars*, 115-157.

US and the free world appear to justify the continual need for defining and redefining of US' geostrategic and geoeconomic interests. The war against IS has taken a global dimension and the critical factor common in the rise of IS in Iraq and Afghanistan appears to be a deliberate engagement by the US with rogue militant groups (as in the case of Iraq) and a deliberate disregard of the initial warnings to the US administrations (as in the case of Afghanistan). US' post-2003 changes in strategy and practice of war display that these projected interests may be effectively pursued and attained in a global strategic order where war has gradually attained the status of a necessity.

Among the academic discourse on Iraq, realists, liberals and cosmopolitans maintained significant influence regarding US motivations and justifications – in waging a liberal war in Iraq and holding elections. While the liberals and cosmopolitans sought to explain the role of ideology in the decision to attack and occupy Iraq to promote democracy; the realists refuted the role of ideological motivations.<sup>15</sup> Ironically, mainstream academics<sup>16</sup> – who initially tried to explore and establish the moral justification for intervention and occupation of Iraq and introduction of democracy under the notion of a liberal war – after the failure of US policies in Iraq – presented alternative explanations<sup>17</sup> that

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 17-63.

<sup>16</sup> A reference to academics from the disciplines of politics and international relations who accepted to join the US administration as advisors and practitioners hoping to experiment war may be employed to introduce democracy and liberal economic reform in post-war Iraq.

<sup>17</sup> Larry Diamond, "Universal Democracy?" *Policy Review*, no. 119 (2003); Larry Diamond, "Can the Whole World Become Democratic? Democracy, Development and International Policies" (paper, Center for the Study of Democracy, University of California, Irvine, 2017), <https://escholarship.org/content/qt7bv4b2w1/qt7bv4b2w1.pdf>; Larry Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq* (New York: Times Books, 2005), 16-22; Kanan Makiya, "A Model for Post-Saddam Iraq" (paper presented at American Enterprise Institute Conference, Washington, D.C., October 3, 2002); Kanan Makiya, "A Model for Post-Saddam Iraq," *Journal of Democracy* 14, no. 3 (2003); and Tim Arango, "Advocating a War in Iraq, and Offering an Apology for What Came After," *New York Times*, May 13, 2016,

amounted to conducting dissections of the contradictions in the ideological bases and practical policies of the US administrations. These explanations ignore the strategic motivations behind the simultaneous use of war and economic liberalism, and subsequently, the gradual evolution of liberal militarism<sup>18</sup> in US' Grand Strategy.

### Second Gulf War and Liberal Militarism

Peace has historically maintained a pivotal position in idealist and liberal political thought. On the other hand, Realism does not delve in the moral justification for war, and therefore, sees war as a means to the attainment of ends. The idealist and liberal political thought has endeavoured to create a balance between use of war and attainment of interests through amicable means.<sup>19</sup> These discourses on war have been employed by liberal states in their foreign and military policies.<sup>20</sup> Paradoxically, liberal states have resorted to more wars than non-liberal states. The fundamental questions since the evolution of classical idealist and liberal political thought – since St. Augustine<sup>21</sup> and Thomas Aquinas<sup>22</sup> to modern day advocates of punitive war,<sup>23</sup> which include – Liberal Internationalists

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<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/14/world/middleeast/iraq-war-kanan-makiya.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Bryan Mabee, "From 'Liberal War' to 'Liberal Militarism': United States Security Policy as the Promotion of Military Modernity," *Critical Military Studies* 2, no. 3 (2016): 1-20 (2), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23337486.2016.1184418>. In order to explain liberal militarism, Mabee seeks to develop a strengthened and historicised concept of militarism to present an in-depth understanding of the links between liberal wars and the institutionalisation of military power within liberal states.

<sup>19</sup> David Boucher, *Political Theories of International Relations: From Thucydides to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 28-43.

<sup>20</sup> Mabee, "From 'Liberal War' to 'Liberal Militarism'," 2.

<sup>21</sup> St. Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, ed. Philip Levine (London: Heinemann, 1966), 317.

<sup>22</sup> M. H. Keen, *The Law of War in the Late Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1965), 10-11.

<sup>23</sup> Cian O'Driscoll, "Re-Negotiating the Just War: The Invasion of Iraq and Punitive War," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 19, no. 3 (2006): 405-420.

advocating for a war to attain world peace<sup>24</sup> and Cosmopolitans calling for a humanitarian war for the creation of a cosmopolitan civil society<sup>25</sup> have remained the same:

- Is war morally justified?
- Can war be employed to scientifically and pragmatically resolve the recurring problem of war?
- Can war be used for the promotion of Idealist (global ideals) and Liberalist (state-specific economic) objectives?

On the other side of the continuum, critical discourse regards these philosophical arguments as just, necessary and unavoidable as the reinstatement of modern versions of colonialism,<sup>26</sup> imperialism,<sup>27</sup> and extension of advanced capitalism.<sup>28</sup> The critique of liberal wars also highlights the problem of correlating war with capitalism and imperialism. It has been further claimed that these critical arguments appear to ignore the historical and archaeological analysis of moral argumentations and militarism practiced by liberal states. Such states exemplify the systematic connection between discourse and practices of liberal wars leading to institutionalisation of military power and emergence of liberal militarism.<sup>29</sup> This also necessitates an analysis of the process of institutionalisation and the role played by war in transforming military policies. Observed from an enduring sequential or temporal perspective,

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<sup>24</sup> Jean Bethke Elshtain, ed., *Just War Theory*, Readings in Social & Political Theory (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

<sup>25</sup> Ulrich Beck, *Democracy without Enemies*, trans. Mark Ritter (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998); and David Held and Mathias Koenig-Archibugi, eds. *American Power in the Twenty First Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006).

<sup>26</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 1-5, 20-21; and Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire*.

<sup>27</sup> Callinicos, *New Mandarins of American Power*, 100-101.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Gowan, *The Global Gamble: Washington's Faustian Bid for World Dominance* (London: Verso, 1999), 141-186.

<sup>29</sup> Mabee, "From 'Liberal War' to 'Liberal Militarism'," 2.

militarism demands and justifies systematic security and military practices and a particular assemblage of social forces surrounding the military, in turn encompassing the institutionalisation of military power where the specific orientations of political, corporate and military leaderships appear to converge, creating a new identity and character of military institutions. This change is indicative of the latter's evolving character beyond the limited scope of military interventions or militarism being employed to demonise the enemy.<sup>30</sup> This modern form of US liberal militarism – through practice – appears to justify the need for continual process of military modernisation accompanied with the practice of militarism for the preservation of the collective interests of liberal states as well as the attainment of global peace.

It may be observed in post-9/11 era that the US war and militarism have evolved from organising military power domestically to extending militarism across the globe. It capitalised upon the modernity inherent in industrialisation and complimented it with the 'professed' values of civil-military relations which emphasised the acceptance of hierarchies and culture of command, thus developing a broad structure and mechanism of political economy of militarism and using arms production and transfers as political tools as well as strategies of extending and reproducing a particular global military order,<sup>31</sup> which resonated with the Cold War discourses calling for the importance of geopolitics of heartland, rimland, sea power and the creation of a New World Order. Middle Eastern region generally, and Iraq<sup>32</sup> specifically had figured in these discourses.

The Marxist, Leftist and Anti-Imperialist critics of the US' post-9/11 foreign policy regarded Iraq – which began even prior to first Gulf War 1991 – as the arena where a colossal power struggle was likely to

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 1-6.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

<sup>32</sup> Alex Callinicos, "Iraq: Fulcrum of World Politics," *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 4 & 5 (2005): 593-608; and Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

occur.<sup>33</sup> The acquisition of Rumaila oil fields by Iraq prior to the 1991 Gulf War had polarised the US, European and Japanese opinions and policies on financial and monetary interests emerging out of trade in Iraq's oil,<sup>34</sup> while through the conduct of the Gulf War, the US projected a clear and significant message to its global competitors. This war also sent symbolic messages to the global corporate actors whom the US expected to include in its future Grand Strategy. Acquiring strategic control over the territory of Iraq and its natural resources and the manipulation of the globally circulating financial resources generated from trade in Iraqi oil, in order to grant a superior status to the US dollar had been regarded and widely perceived as the primary litmus test for the emerging global hegemon.<sup>35</sup> The lessons from this war strengthened the US resolve and provided evidence of the impacts of using modern military arsenal. Therefore, since 1991, Iraq remained an area of strategic and economic interest for the US, as a militarily subdued state, systematically weakened by sanctions as a result of the US policies and financial manipulation by Saddam Hussein's<sup>36</sup> dictatorial regime.

When President G. W. Bush declared Iraq, Iran and North Korea among the 'Axis of Evil,' in January 2002, the use of deterrence against Iraq was deemed unethical and dishonourable – similar to taking counsel from fear or a submission to blackmail. While Iraq did not declare or pose a strategic threat, it was projected by the US as presumptuous for a country such as Iraq to aspire to paralyse the former's power. It was

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<sup>33</sup> Gilbert Achcar, "The Strategic Triad: The United States, Russia and China," *New Left Review*, no. 228 (1998).

<sup>34</sup> Gowan, *The Global Gamble*, 141-187.

<sup>35</sup> William R. Clark, *Petrodollar Warfare: Oil, Iraq and the Future of the Dollar* (Gabriola Islands: New Society Publishers, 2005), 1-38. For extensive historical accounts and details of the global mechanism of acquiring Middle Eastern oil and also maintaining global dollar supremacy, see Vassilis K. Fouskas and Bülent Gökay, *The New American Imperialism: Bush's War on Terror and Blood for Oil* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2005), 11-27.

<sup>36</sup> Daniel Byman and Matthew Waxman, *The Dynamics of Coercion: American Foreign Policy and the Limits of Military Might*, RAND Studies in Policy Analysis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

projected as a matter of the US honour not to be deterred by someone they considered evil.<sup>37</sup> The military strategy of *shock* and awe for Iraq implied inflicting the *shock* and national self-aggrandisement based upon techno-military superiority with the goals of glorification and superiority; while awe implying inferiority of the adversary.<sup>38</sup> The Bush administration anticipated that the US and allied victory against Iraq, and in the aftermath, the euphoria surrounding Saddam Hussein's removal from power, may make it possible for the US' Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) to induce a type of transitional governance structure, which may hold elections leading to the installation of a US-friendly regime in Iraq. The administration also expected to exploit the post-war shock and disorientation among the Iraqi people.<sup>39</sup> It may be observed that the most significant development in the post-9/11 US' Grand Strategy had been the acquisition of financial means for the purpose of monetary coercion. This trend had begun much earlier under the Presidency of Bush Sr. after the development of a systematic Dollar Wall Street Regime in the global political economy, which allowed the administration to finance rapidly growing US trade and budget deficits by controlling the flow of capital, especially from East Asia.<sup>40</sup> Global monetary ascendancy complimented and promoted wars and militarism and substantiated military dominance and hegemony.

Tracing the history of this trend, Nikolai Bukharin in *Imperialism and World Economy* argued that as a result of gradual collaboration and union of capitalism and war in the Nineteenth Century, the geopolitical rivalries among states and the economic competition between capitals fused together. Accordingly, war had become increasingly industrialised.<sup>41</sup> As a result, great powers could not maintain their

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<sup>37</sup> Richard K. Betts, "Suicide from Fear of Death?" *Foreign Affairs* 82, no.1(2003): 39-41.

<sup>38</sup> Colin Flint and Ghazi-Walid Falah, "How the US Justified its War on Terrorism," *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 8 (2004): 1379-1399.

<sup>39</sup> Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, 323-360.

<sup>40</sup> Gowan, *The Global Gamble*.

<sup>41</sup> Nikolai Bukharin, *Imperialism and World Economy* (London: Martin Lawrence, 1929), 110-160.

hegemony without developing capitalist economic bases. Similarly, the growing concentration and industrialisation of capital caused economic rivalries among firms which spilled over across national borders, and took the shape of geopolitical contests in which combatants sought the support of their respective powerful states or centres. In addition, Giovanni Arrighi conceptualised hegemonic transitions as part of a quasi-cyclical philosophy of history, which explained the partial disassociation of military and economic competition after Second World War, in the form of excessive defence-spending by the US and the United Kingdom on the one hand, and lower defence spending and relatively higher spending on financial enterprise by Germany and Japan, on the other hand. This pattern re-emerged in the so-called 'Second Cold War' under US President Carter in the 1970s, and continued under Reagan until Gorbachev's efforts to reform the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), began to undermine the superpower partition of the world. This innovative development – the bifurcation of military and financial capabilities – reduced the chances of war by creating a division of labour, where the hegemon excessively spent on arms, while its allies contributed towards increasing global capital flows.<sup>42</sup>

In the perspective of these two theoretical constructs formulated by Bukharin and Arrighi, Alex Callinicos drew upon Gowan's visualisation of the US as an imperial parasite able to attract foreign capital and maintain a kind of 'racket' underpinned by its military power.<sup>43</sup> In this perspective, Bush Jr.'s administration in the preparation of the Gulf War in 2003 appeared to be pursuing a rational, global, military and financial strategy based on its reading of the long-term economic and geostrategic threats facing US capitalism. This involved the decision to exploit 9/11, develop ideological discourses, and utilise the US' current military and economic supremacy to shift the global distribution of economic and

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<sup>42</sup> Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power and the Origins of Our Times* (London: Verso, 1994), 247-335.

<sup>43</sup> Callinicos, *New Mandarins of American Power*, 104-126.

political power further to its own advantage.<sup>44</sup> As explained earlier, while the 1991 Gulf War enabled the US to project the wide ranging symbolic spectacles of war and acquire new insights into modern warfare and ally global corporate actors; the Second Gulf War appeared to provide a test case for the new militarism, transformation of the US policy into a type of ‘liberal militarism’ substantiated with ideological discourses on justifications for war, democratisation, and role of capital circulation for economic welfare. It appeared logical for the US policymakers to argue in favour of the enormous defence budget and excessive spending as necessary for national interest, leading to an inexorable cycle powered through a continuous promotion of an imminent threat of war as well as promotion of war.

Considering this pattern of spending and warmongering, a revolution may be required to bring the Pentagon back under democratic control or the enforcement of the Article 1, Section 9 of the US Constitution. This Article which calls for the accountability of resources for waging wars appears to have receded into oblivion.<sup>45</sup> While at the time of the Second Gulf War, Saddam Hussein and the projected nuclear threat from Iraq was made to fit a profile of the continuous threat to the collective interests of Western states;<sup>46</sup> in the post-occupation Iraq, the IS appears to serve the same purpose. War – in its newer manifestations appears to have found a central role in the US’ post-9/11 Grand Strategy – serving greater economic and geostrategic interests.

The Gulf War 1991 and post-9/11 Afghanistan were perceived as a casualty-free war model for use of high technology either to directly attack an enemy or to support proxies such as the Kosovo Liberation Army or Northern Alliance in Afghanistan. In the perspective of modernity, globalisation, transformation of the state as well as the evolving nature of warfare in the post-Cold War era, these ‘new wars’ appear to target areas regarded as failing, failed, collapsing or shadow

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire*.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Cushman, ed., *A Matter of Principle* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005).

states where the domination of legitimate organised violence<sup>47</sup> and justifications for using war as a means to liberal ends appears to be diminishing. Through the widescale projection and use of advanced warfare tools against such states or 'undeterrable' entities, war evolves into a form of political mobilisation where the ulterior purpose of the violence is expanding the arena of warfare against scattered non-traditional militias in turn expanding the networks of resistance and extremism – paving way for extended warfare and militarism. These techniques were used against Iraq in December 1998, against former Yugoslavia in 1999, against post-Taliban Afghanistan in 2001 and against ISI and the Levant (ISIL) in Iraq.

For the US war machine, this approach also induced the convergence of civil-corporate-military interests and justified the needs of scientific investments by corporate enterprises for infrastructural extensions and supportive civilian expertise complimenting the US military efforts. Imaginary wars and drone warfare minimise the possibilities of battles and casualties of troops, while increasing casualties of civilians, refugees and displaced persons. Violations of human rights law appear unavoidable in new wars.<sup>48</sup> These spectacles are directed towards projecting military absoluteness and are expected to strengthen the ideas of US dominance and hegemony while denying the notions of imperial decline.

The Cold War and post-Cold War mainstream discourses emerging from the US highlight evidence of the gradual and systematic

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<sup>47</sup> Mary Kaldor, "Beyond Militarism, Arms Races and Arms Control" (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2001), <http://essays.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/kaldor.htm>. Kaldor has described and delineated modernity as that period of human development that began between the Fifteenth and the Eighteenth centuries characterised by the development of science and technology, the nation state, modern industry, and Clausewitzean or modern war. In her, earlier works, she has developed the ideas of 'New', 'Spectacle' and 'Imaginary' Wars.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

development calls for undermining international law,<sup>49</sup> the blatant disregard of the UN at the time of the invasion of Iraq in 2003 may be observed as a contributing factor to the post-Second Gulf War US and Iraqi forces combined war against IS, especially in Mosul (at the time of this writing) and the ‘declared’ victory at the expense of the violation of international and humanitarian law.<sup>50</sup> These appear as evidences of a trend being gradually validated in the post-9/11 US’ Grand Strategy, and the expanding global influence of US military and corporate entities.

In the perspective of wider geostrategic and economic strategies directed towards acquisition of oil<sup>51</sup> and expanding influence of US corporate entities in other regions, it may be observed that oil and natural gas resources were divided among major multinationals. This strategy is an emerging dynamic in the new version of militarism, which has led to post-9/11 wars of occupation and increasing geostrategic competitions among US and significant regional powers, such as China and Russia.<sup>52</sup> Currently, US presence in Afghanistan supports these geostrategic and geoeconomic objectives and appears to extend its influence in the Caspian region as well. Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union leading multinational oil companies including BP and Amoco (after their merger), Union Oil Company of California (UNOCAL), Texaco, Exxon, Pennzoil and Halliburton built intricate networks of pipeline maps connecting the Balkans to Afghanistan. However, Caspian oil resources are non-OPEC owned, therefore, this region is less affected by price and supply policies applied by oil exporting cartels. However, with the apparent shift in policy, the US and its allied multinational oil companies and cartels

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<sup>49</sup> Charles Krauthammer, “Let it Sink: Why the US should Bail Out of the UN” *The New Republic* 197, no. 8(1987): 18-23. See also Robert W. Gregg, *About Face? The United States and the United Nations* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993), 43.

<sup>50</sup> Stephen Kalin, “Iraq and Allies Violated International Law in Mosul Battle: Amnesty,” *Reuters*, July 11, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-civilians-isUSKBN19W0CR>.

<sup>51</sup> Fouskas and Gökay, *The New American Imperialism*, 11- 27.

<sup>52</sup> Bülent Gökay, “The Most Dangerous Game in the World: Oil, War and US Global Hegemony,” *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Affairs* 1, no. 2 (2002): 47-68 (64), <http://dergipark.gov.tr/download/article-file/19369>.

gaining monopoly over a large supply of Caspian oil from non-OPEC areas, potentially erodes the power of OPEC and garners the US' ability to maintain high oil prices and even employ oil as a mode of blackmail. Commentators on war, oil politics and advanced capitalism argue that the main globalist objective of the US-led North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) operations in Kosovo – supported by liberal discourses – actually ensured the country's pacification and subjugation,<sup>53</sup> and in the long-term consolidated oil transport routes from the Caspian Sea through this region into Central Europe. In order to support these geostrategic policies with military might, the corporate sector played a central role and Camp Bondsteel base was built by the Brown and Root Division of Halliburton in southern Kosovo. This is the largest US foreign military base constructed since the days of the Vietnam War and remains the world's biggest oil services corporation. The influence of policymakers is evident from the fact that Brown and Root was headed by Dick Cheney before he became the Vice President (2001-09),<sup>54</sup> his election campaign was funded by oil cartels<sup>55</sup> and he played a fundamental role in the policy planning to invade and occupy Iraq after the 2003 war. The US bases overseas appear to be gradually developing mechanisms for increasing the country's strategic and geoeconomic influence.

These bases are also a means of advancing corporate interests through the protection of trade routes. This implies that military contractors have gradually acquired monetary profits as well as a significant role in military decision-making about global strategy.<sup>56</sup> This

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<sup>53</sup> Peter Gowan, "The Euro-Atlantic Origins of NATO's Attack on Yugoslavia," in *Masters of the Universe? NATO's Balkan Crusade*, ed. Tariq Ali (London: Verso, 2000), 11; and Peter Gowan, "The NATO Powers and the Balkan Tragedy," *New Left Review*, no. 234 (1999).

<sup>54</sup> Gökay, "The Most Dangerous Game in the World," 56-58.

<sup>55</sup> Dan Briody, *The Halliburton Agenda: The Politics of Oil and Money* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2004).

<sup>56</sup> David Vine, "We are Profiteers: How Military Contractors Reap Billions from US Military Bases Overseas," *Monthly Review*, July 1, 2014, <https://monthlyreview.org/2014/07/01/were-profiteers/>.

trend of a gradual inculcation of leaders from corporate and entrepreneurial sector into foreign and defence policymaking in the US began since the drafting of the National Security Council Report 68 (NSC 68)<sup>57</sup> and the inclusion of Paul H. Nitze, Albert Wohlstetter<sup>58</sup> and James Forrestal in grand strategy-making. Although the US' increasing influence in Eurasia has the capacity to pose strategic threats to China, the recent economic dependence and monetary collaborations and the latter's accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2001<sup>59</sup> have made it more imperative for both to economically cooperate. Also, Beijing appears to concentrate more on increasing its global economic ascendancy, rather than indulging in a military-strategic competition with Washington. China's need for oil is likely to increase and it is likely to gain access to Eurasian oil.<sup>60</sup> An evidence of these plans is the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) of communication and trade corridors. Considering the Sino-US monetary and financial cooperation and creation of Sovereign Wealth Funds, the US is likely to assist China in attainment of oil for its industries to reciprocate the monetary support to its domestic entrepreneurs when they face economic stagnation.<sup>61</sup>

This neo-militarisation appears to be opening vast avenues for modernisation in military-economic-strategic enterprise and transformations in the very character of the US as a welfare and commercial republic, actively waging wars and paving room for neoliberal commercialisation and corporatisation.<sup>62</sup> Military services appear to be evolving as productive market commodities and advanced capitalism

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<sup>57</sup> Malik, *US Foreign Policy and the Gulf Wars*, 83-91.

<sup>58</sup> Albert Wohlstetter, Paul H. Nitze, Joseph Alsop, Morton H. Halperin, and Jeremy J. Stone, "Is There a Strategic Arms Race (II): Rivals but No 'Race'," *Foreign Policy*, no. 16 (1974): 48-92.

<sup>59</sup> Mark Beeson, "Trading Places? China, the United States and the Evolution of the International Political Economy," *Commentary*, *Review of International Political Economy* 16, no. 4 (2009): 729-741.

<sup>60</sup> Gökay, "The Most Dangerous Game in the World," 58.

<sup>61</sup> Beeson, "Trading Places? China, the United States and the Evolution of the International Political Economy," 729-741.

<sup>62</sup> Philip Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace and the Course of History* (London: Allen Lane, 2002), xxi.

appears to be the engine of new wars. Iraq and Afghanistan have served as the experimental laboratories and arenas for applying these new policies of militarism and initiating programmes such as creation of the Commanders' Emergency Response Programme (CERP since 2005) and the Task Force on Business and Stability Operations (TFBSO since 2010), which empowered military commanders to dispense funds (without foresight or accountability) to domestic and foreign private companies for medium level developmental projects and also created links between these companies and private entrepreneurs.<sup>63</sup> The ensuing war against IS in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and across Middle East appears to substantiate the arguments regarding the evolution of such a liberal strand of militarism.

### **Second Gulf War (2003), Iraq Elections (2005) and Rise of IS**

The discourse on justification for war and intervention in Iraq developed by mainstream commentators,<sup>64</sup> liberal internationalists and cosmopolitans<sup>65</sup> utilised arguments such as standards of civilisation,<sup>66</sup> removing tyrants and terrorists as well as liberalising the illiberal states. This new strand of militarism has capitalised upon a crusading ideology with capital-oriented warfare emerging as a consequence of revolutions in military affairs and the subsequent corporatisation of war as well as a confluence of hierarchical cultures of military, traditional political and the entrepreneurial leaderships leading to interventions by corporations in political and military domains. Historically, these trends have also been regarded as the outcome of an enduring modernising project that strove to

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<sup>63</sup> Mabee, "From 'Liberal War' to 'Liberal Militarism'," 10.

<sup>64</sup> Cushman, *A Matter of Principle*, 3.

<sup>65</sup> Ulrich Beck, *Democracy without Enemies*, trans. Mark Ritter (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998); Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, trans. Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006); and Ulrich Beck, *The Brave New World of Work* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>66</sup> Gerrit W. Gong, *The Standard of 'Civilization' in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 5-10, 103.

scientifically employ war and military power to solve the ‘problem’ of illiberal (and ‘uncivilised’) states.<sup>67</sup> The corporatisation of war necessitates the rise of private military firms fighting alongside state militaries against irregular militias. Therefore, the need of continuously refining and re-defining the strategies and approaches of war extends to the private financiers of military arsenals and services of privatised military firms that appear to have become indispensable for fighting insurgencies and new wars. The 2003 Gulf War, occupation and elections set in motion the processes that divided the Iraqi state and society along sectarian and ethnic lines, contributing directly (although not inevitably) to the resurgence of IS in 2014.

After the 2005 elections in Iraq, the US administration attempted to create and engineer a type of *consociational* democracy, which primarily comprises of a government under a grand political coalition combined with segmental autonomy with discrete racial, ethnic, religious, sectarian and regional segments. In such a governance structure, power was expected to be shared between different religious and national communities according to a quota system.<sup>68</sup> The *consociational* approach towards democracy combined with interventions by corporate actors in policymaking contributed to the creation of a society polarised along sectarian lines. The US administration appeared to be developing a new strand of modernisation accompanied with neoliberalism and advanced capitalism. This new version of economic reform did not appear to correspond with the classical, neoclassical or Keynesian economic principles. This new approach is indicative of the promotion of military modernisation through direct military intervention, nurturing local armies along modern lines of liberal militarism and transforming their fighting techniques (e.g. the US forces supervising the Iraqi Ground Forces fighting IS and Peshmerga Kurds; and the Afghan National Army fighting the Taliban and IS), arms transfers, security assistance and a gradually

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<sup>67</sup> Mabee, “From ‘Liberal War’ to ‘Liberal Militarism’,” 3.

<sup>68</sup> Anne Alexander, “ISIS and Counter-Revolution: Towards a Marxist Analysis,” *International Socialism*, no. 145 (2015), <http://isj.org.uk/isis-and-counter-revolution-towards-a-marxist-analysis/>.

diminishing role of traditional state security apparatus, thereby, paving way for corporate and market-driven security programmes and encouraging the private sector to flourish.<sup>69</sup>

A politically engineered regime inclined towards introduction of neoliberal reforms and corporatisation of conflict in Iraq under the notion of *consociational* democracy appeared to serve these purposes. Continuing with the greater impacts of war, elections and creation of a relatively liberal – albeit a selectively chosen regime comprising US-friendly leaders with specific ethnic and sectarian affiliations remained the primary objectives of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). These preferences along ethnic and sectarian lines contributed to violent victimisation of opposing political groups which is one of the causes of the rise of violent resistance against the US and its allies in Iraq and subsequently the rise of IS.

During 2004, the CPA was able to ally with Kurdish leaders Jalal Talabani and Masoud Barzani while Ahmed Chalabi was politically sidelined. Chalabi claimed that he had lost favour because of raising the issue of a financial scam related to the Oil-for-Food programme, involving senior Arab United Nations (UN) figures. Chalabi remained wary of the UN's pro-status quo role in Iraq, while the G.W. Bush administration and Bremer<sup>70</sup> wanted to gradually disengage from Chalabi because of the falsity of Chalabi's Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction reports and the Bush administration's suspicion of his involvement with Iran.<sup>71</sup> The US could no longer promote Chalabi as the US-friendly leader of Iraq. It is also vital to note that during the time the CPA had been making efforts to form an interim government and engage with Adnan Pachachi, Jalal Talabani, Masoud Barzani and Ayad Allawi, Nouri al-

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<sup>69</sup> Mabee, "From 'Liberal War' to 'Liberal Militarism'," 9.

<sup>70</sup> Editor's Note: Paul Bremer was appointed as Presidential Envoy to Iraq by President Bush in May 2003. His appointment was subject to the 'authority, direction and control' of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.

<sup>71</sup> Ali A. Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 281-282.

Maliki's name did not figure anywhere among the future candidates. Much later, after the elections and a series of political power struggles and wrangling, al-Maliki assumed the office of Prime Minister. This showed that the CPA neither had any genuine support from Iraqi politicians, nor did they have any knowledge of Iraq's political culture, history and social affiliations, but were seeking to raise and support any candidate from the Iraqi parties who supported the US presence and ensured its strategic and economic interests in Iraq.<sup>72</sup> After gaining political power, Maliki pursued a ruthless campaign to assert his personal control over Iraq's sprawling armed forces and politically targeting the Sunnis and Kurds. The State of Law Alliance (SLA) created by Maliki contributed to the destruction of Sunni political opposition, which were against his policies and this resulted in a violent insurgency by Sunni factions in Iraq. Moreover, rise of the Shia militant force Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) headed by former Sadrist Qais al-Khazali, backed by Iran, may be attributed to Maliki's political manipulations<sup>73</sup> and active support of Shia militant factions against Sunnis. The foundations for IS in Iraq may be plausibly traced to Maliki's policies of political victimisation and violence against his ethnic and sectarian opponents. Sectarianism had risen to a high degree as a result of an artificially contrived and forced *consociational* system of democracy. The main cause had been the establishment of sectarian parties in Iraqi politics. These parties were supported by the occupying forces politically as well as financially. These factions cooperated with CPA and virulently competed with each other for greater share in political power and ultimately Iraqi wealth, especially control over oil.

A new strand of violence with a corporate hue emerged as a direct consequence to the occupation forces engaging, aiding and abetting private and irregular secret militias led by former generals of Saddam Hussein. The introduction of private mercenaries, non-accountability of financial resources and intervention by corporate leadership in

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<sup>72</sup> Malik, *US Foreign Policy and the Gulf Wars*, 199.

<sup>73</sup> Ahmed Ali, *Iraq's 2014 National Elections*, report 20 (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Study of War, 2014), <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/AhmedAliIraqElections.pdf>.

policymaking on security contributed to the creation of private assassination squadrons with 50,000 local and foreign mercenaries recruited from groups of former soldiers including Special Forces from across the world. They were hired by the Pentagon and worked in collaboration with private contractors. The US administration, including CPA, placed these mercenaries above Iraq's domestic law which responded to the rising insurgency with a disregard for the laws of war and international conventions on use of military means and did not differentiate between combatants and innocent civilians contributing to sectarian clashes and divisions in Iraq. In addition, Facilities Protection Service (FPS) comprising 150,000 personnel was established by the head of CPA, Paul Bremer.<sup>74</sup> The Iraqi government paid them, but did not control their activities. The media branded most of their terrorist acts as sectarian – adding the term and image to the broader discourses on counterinsurgency in Iraq, thereby justifying the necessity of expanding its domain and modifying tactics to counter sectarianism. The Wahhabi (Sunni) groups had connections with groups of insurgents and despite being a significant majority were unable to acquire influence in Iraq primarily because of their history in Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion. With Saudi-financing, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had supported and trained Wahhabi forces including Bin Laden's mercenaries in Afghanistan. Evidence of rising sectarianism included statements attributed to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi calling on Sunni militias to attack Shias, while at the same time Wahabis clandestinely continued targeting other Sunni groups and leaders,<sup>75</sup> who refused to follow them. Ironically, the addition of sectarian strife and violence to Iraq can be observed as a post-US invasion trend.

This sectarian marginalisation and victimisation was systematically conducted by the Iraqi ruling regime headed by Nouri al-Maliki who appointed advisors, ministers and military commanders based on their

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<sup>74</sup> Sami Ramadani, "Iraq is not a Communal War," interview, *International Socialism*, no. 114, (2009), <http://isj.org.uk/sami-ramadani-interview-iraq-is-not-a-communal-war/>.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

sectarian affiliations, while clearly sidelining the Sunnis. The Office of the Commander in Chief was dominated by Shias and Shia sectarian militias and assassination squads, including AAH which reported directly to al-Maliki. A process of clandestine elimination of Sunni army officers was conducted by these Shia militias gradually leading to an uprising (motivated to some degree by revolutionary resistance and occupation) during the Arab Spring of 2011. Maliki regime's official rhetoric portrayed the violent repression of popular resistance as fighting terror(ism) – resonating the developing US discourse of fighting insurgency. On the other hand, Shia leader Muqtada al-Sadr in a pragmatic manner provided mere rhetorical empathy to the uprising and superficial condemnation of the regime's repression. The latter took a violent turn after a raid on one of the protest camps at Hawija by the Iraqi security forces on April 23, 2013, which killed 50 people. This contributed to the declaration of violent reaction by AQI.<sup>76</sup> The created divisions along sectarian lines, victimisation of Sunnis, introduction of corporate warriors<sup>77</sup> and mercenaries, collaboration with violent private militias and increased influence of private military contractors combined with the US and CPA's policies of controlling Iraqi oil through multinational oil cartels led to the contestations over oil-rich regions between the Iraqi regime, CPA and various militant organisations.

While Bush Jr. claimed that Iraq's oil revenues were being utilised for the Iraqi people, the International Petroleum Finance (IPF) observed that the country's 112 billion barrels of known oil reserves were expected to be opened to foreign participation.<sup>78</sup> While the US attack and al-Maliki's political victimisation of his political opposition exacerbated sectarianism, the agreement on Iraqi Oil Law (or the Iraq Hydrocarbon Law) became difficult as Iraqi oil experts, trade unions, and religious

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<sup>76</sup> Alexander, "ISIS and Counter-Revolution."

<sup>77</sup> P. W. Singer, "Corporate Warriors: The Rise of Privatized Military Industry and its Ramifications for International Security," *International Security* 26, no. 3, (2001-2):186-200.

<sup>78</sup> Greg Muttitt, *Fuel on the Fire: Oil and Politics in Occupied Iraq* (London: The Bodley Head, 2011), xxii, 81-82, 100-101.

groups politically resisted its passage under the existing political turmoil.<sup>79</sup> Faleh al-Khayat, a candidate for the oil ministry, advocated for state-owned companies over foreign contractors and argued that state enterprise cannot declare *force majeure* – a contractual clause that absolve a company from its obligations if subjected to unexpected events including war, terrorist attack or natural calamities.<sup>80</sup> Through Iraq's history, state-owned companies had continued working and producing irrespective of circumstances, while foreign companies demanded guarantees to work. Since the establishment of the Iraqi Governing Council, interference and nepotism had began to grip the oil ministry. The Governing Council increased the number of ministers for the CPA's bureaucracies from 21 to 25 who were mainly allies or members of the same party and were not qualified for the jobs. Al-Khayat called it 'the invasion of Chalabis.' One of the early victims of the new system was Mohammed al-Jabouri, the head of State Oil Marketing Organisation, who was removed because he remained committed to selling Iraqi oil to end users (refineries) rather than traders.<sup>81</sup> The CPA approved officials at the Ministry of Oil resolved to hastily auction the oil fields before any further political resistance. As an unexpected consequence, the political resistance over auctioning of oil fields united the various Iraqi factions and led to relative solidarity within Iraqi society<sup>82</sup> in opposition to the interests of corporate entities. This emerged as another terrain for the IS to exploit. Considering the post-election political turmoil and induction of corporate entities, it may not be inferred that CPA or Maliki's regime were striving to create a militant group in Iraq, but manipulating oil resources, dealing with private militias and adding a corporate<sup>83</sup> and sectarian shade to the conflict by engaging with private mercenaries and privatised military

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<sup>79</sup> Eddie J. Girdner, "Wake up and Smell the Oil: The Grass-Roots Struggle against the Oil Plunder in Iraq," *Monthly Review*, April 1, 2014, <https://monthlyreview.org/2014/04/01/wake-smell-oil/>.

<sup>80</sup> Muttitt, 82.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 72-73.

<sup>82</sup> Girdner, "Wake up and Smell the Oil."

<sup>83</sup> Singer, "Corporate Warriors," 186-200.

firms, proliferated warfare and militarism beyond Iraq and contributed to the US administration's justifications for expanding its policies of war and militarism.

In addition, the US' indirect intervention in Syria had significant implication for Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) as the Syrian resistance (revolution) and civil war also created new spaces for militants to operate, guided by their professed agenda of creating a borderless Caliphate, through merger of Syrian and Iraqi border regions. The militant organisation IS, later called Daesh, remained a subsidiary of AQI and emerged as the ISI in 2006.<sup>84</sup> In retrospect, considering the case of Iraq, Maliki, was considered a US-friendly leader, instrumental in promoting the US agenda of liberalising the illiberal and the so-called failing or collapsing state, a similar example may be observed in Afghanistan where Ashraf Ghani had earlier advocated fixing failed states.<sup>85</sup> While Ghani's predecessor Hamid Karzai during his time as President, was also seen as a US-friendly President, he continually warned of Al-Qaeda and IS's growing influence in Afghanistan, which was clearly disregarded and instead a military campaign was waged in Pashtun Sunni majority areas. Karzai accused the US of enabling Daesh presence in Afghanistan.<sup>86</sup> It appears that a war against the IS is likely to be exploited in a manner that it may be instrumental in re-creating the cycle of alliances, acquisition of resources and post-war reconstruction that appear to have become the fundamental factors in the US' militarism and global strategy.

The rise of IS in Iraq compelled analysts to pose various questions regarding its identity and objectives. There were speculations whether it may be regarded as a revolutionary movement trying to establish a merger of Middle Eastern states into a grand Neo-Wahhabi state; or was it merely

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<sup>84</sup> Alexander, "ISIS and Counter-Revolution."

<sup>85</sup> Ashraf Ghani and Clare Lockhart, *Fixing Failed States: A Framework for Rebuilding a Fractured World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3-14, 221-231.

<sup>86</sup> Hamid Karzai, "Karzai Accuses US of Enabling Daesh Presence in Afghanistan," interview by Imran Garda, *TRT World*, June 29, 2017, <http://www.trtworld.com/magazine/q-a-karzai-accuses-us-of-enabling-daesh-presence-in-afghanistan-389813>.

a band of highly paid and politically alienated mercenaries with no agreed political agenda; or was it a direct consequence of the victimisation of Sunnis in Iraq reflecting growing divide between Sunnis and Shias?<sup>87</sup>

The IS remains primarily a continuation of AQL. This is ironic since Al-Qaeda was not present in Iraq at the time of the US invasion, while its growing presence post-2003 represented a major challenge to this occupation, especially since the country was invaded under the primary pretext of eradicating Al-Qaeda.<sup>88</sup> It may be observed that in Afghanistan and Iraq unlimited use of military arsenal and engagement with warlords and militant organisations contributed to the rising resistance and emergence of militant organisations. The ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi remained under detention at Bucca in southern Iraq under suspicion of militancy and terrorism, but was released in 2009 and continued leading the group.<sup>89</sup> The US policymakers displayed similar contradictions in policy in the past when during the Cold War years, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) supported the Afghan and Arab mercenaries in Afghanistan, which led to the creation of Taliban<sup>90</sup> and months prior to 9/11, clear evidence of a possible attack on the US soil was systematically undermined and disregarded by the Bush administration.<sup>91</sup> Despite the 2017 US and Iraqi forces allied operation and recapture of Raqqa (a stronghold of IS) and the contested claims of the killing of al-Baghdadi, IS continued to hold key areas in Iraq such as Tal Afar, Hawija and Western Anbar.<sup>92</sup> This is indicative of the fact that the war against IS may not be regarded as over; while the US in its

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<sup>87</sup> Alexander, "ISIS and Counter-Revolution."

<sup>88</sup> Gilbert Achcar, "Nothing Mysterious about the Islamic State," interview by Farooq Sulehria, *News on Sunday*, December 27, 2015, <http://tns.thenews.com.pk/nothing-mysterious-islamic-state-interview-gilbert-achcar/#.WT4zprjhKuJ>.

<sup>89</sup> Alexander, "ISIS and Counter-Revolution."

<sup>90</sup> Anwar Iqbal, "US Created Taliban and Abandoned Pakistan, says Hillary," *Dawn*, April 25, 2009, <http://archives.dawn.com/archives/33371>.

<sup>91</sup> Malik, *US Foreign Policy and the Gulf Wars*, 158-213.

<sup>92</sup> "IS Still Holds Key Areas in Iraq," *Dawn*, July 10, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1344289>.

cooperation with Iraqi army fighting IS as well as Kurd Peshmerga in northern Iraq, appears to continually transform the command and war fighting structure of the Iraqi army along the lines of liberal militarism.

Currently, the Iraqi military fighting IS in Mosul and Kurd Peshmerga in Kirkuk, appear to be influenced by the pattern of modernisation and militarism promoted by the US where military power can be exercised both in terms of actual war-fighting and as a modernising practice.<sup>93</sup> The US engineered elections in Iraq in 2005 and efforts to promote *consociational* democracy – ironically leading to sectarian strife and violence – followed by the induction of a specific type of military modernisation and militarism to fight IS – are evidences of the broader approach of liberal militarism, however, this new strategy also has fundamental global capitalist, corporate and strategic implications.

### **Liberal War against IS and the Corporate Aspects of the US Hegemony**

The US war against IS, the pattern of strategic alliances and evolving role of corporate actors may also be analysed in view of great power confrontation and the recent strategic confrontation between the US and Russia; and economic competition between the US and its European allies. The turbulence and volatility of the international strategic situation may be explained as one of the consequences of power shifts among the leading capitalist states. This trend of global capitalist actors influencing strategic alliances may be traced to the period prior to the First World War when on the one hand, Europe had been polarised into rival power blocs, however, the chances of conflicts between the great alliance blocs appeared to be receding as a result of rising economic stakes. Ironically, the confrontations between global capitalists contributed to a chain of events that ultimately led widescale war.

Keeping in view the historical reading of such confrontations between great powers and global capitals, the unifying theme in such

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<sup>93</sup> Mabee, “From ‘Liberal War’ to ‘Liberal Militarism’,” 3.

crises is the assertion of the US power to maintain and even expand its global domination through war and transforming the post-war order through capitalist expansion.<sup>94</sup> In the post-9/11 era, the US appears to be continuing this strategy and in the process destroying, pulverising and striving to re-structure states such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. The US, as a hegemon, pursuing such territorial expansion appears to fit the definition of an empire that successfully expands from a metropolitan centre across various territories in order to dominate diverse populations.<sup>95</sup> Moreover, in the expansion of its operation across the Middle East, IS has evolved more into a venture capitalist company that commissions and finances projects proposed by different militant groups around the world as well as dealing in the smuggling and illegal trade in historical artefacts from historical sites occupied in Iraq and Syria and financing their war. The US and Saudi Arabia exploited the Syrian revolutionary process and by supporting Sunni Arabs against opposing sectarian factions such as Assad's Alawi allied to Iran and Jabat Al Nusra affiliated with Al-Qaeda, thus contributing in transformation of the resistance against Assad's regime into a civil war. Assad's regime indirectly favoured IS as its forces avoided fighting them, instead concentrated their attacks on secular factions of the resistance.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, IS having gained influence in smuggling and illegal trade, supplies illegally acquired oil to the Assad regime and his regime selectively focuses on some IS controlled cities in return.<sup>97</sup> The US policy of interference in Syria, its continued war in collaboration with the Iraqi army and introduction of corporate actors have contributed towards the increased influence of IS in the region as well as the corporatisation of war.

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<sup>94</sup> Alex Callinicos, "The Multiple Crises of Imperialism," *International Socialism*, no. 144, (2014), <http://isj.org.uk/the-multiple-crises-of-imperialism/>.

<sup>95</sup> Alejandro Colás, *Empire, Key Concepts in the Social Sciences* (London: Polity Press, 2007), 28.

<sup>96</sup> Callinicos, "The Multiple Crises of Imperialism."

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

The post-9/11 US unilateralism appears to be directed towards the possibility that a single state may take on the role of a global hegemon which monopolises the justification, means and strategies of war, while its allies are restricted to the status of financiers of war with expectations to benefit from post-war liberal reforms and reconstruction. This band of imperialism results from the logic of capitalist and territorial expansion and leads to a division of labour between the hegemon and its supporting allies. Prevented from progressing in military technology, the allies pose no significant challenge to the hegemon. Such global wars of hegemony are complimented with a continuous re-division and reallocation of territories around the world<sup>98</sup> and a re-definition and re-profiling of the enemies of the liberal free world.

The US appears to evolve as a corporate and commercial imperial power having acted unilaterally in imposing spectacle wars supported by advanced technology and drones geographies,<sup>99</sup> which increase the time and space dynamics of targeting, and minimise its military casualties. These trends are also directed towards satisfying various domestic constituencies<sup>100</sup> even though they lead to wider resistance against the US. However, the corporate gains of war appear to dominate its negative impacts. The continuing war against IS in Afghanistan and the Middle East serve as guides to understand and explain the manner in which the war itself has acted as a transforming factor in the US' Grand Strategy.

Considering the legacy of the Iraq War (2003), the country briefly experienced an effort towards *consociational* democracy between 2008 and 2010, but the political victimisation of opponents by the ruling regimes led to sectarian strife which was worsened by the premature US

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<sup>98</sup> Neil Smith, "After Iraq: Vulnerable Imperial Stasis," commentary, *Radical Philosophy*, no. 127 (2004), [https://www.radicalphilosophyarchive.com/wp-content/files\\_mf/rp127\\_commentary\\_afteriraq\\_smith.pdf](https://www.radicalphilosophyarchive.com/wp-content/files_mf/rp127_commentary_afteriraq_smith.pdf).

<sup>99</sup> Derek Gregory, "Drone Geographies," *Radical Philosophy*, no. 183 (2014): 7-19, [https://www.radicalphilosophyarchive.com/wp-content/files\\_mf/rp183\\_article1\\_gregory\\_dronegeographies.pdf](https://www.radicalphilosophyarchive.com/wp-content/files_mf/rp183_article1_gregory_dronegeographies.pdf).

<sup>100</sup> Kaldor, "Beyond Militarism, Arms Races and Arms Control."

withdrawal in December 2011.<sup>101</sup> Withdrawing from Iraq appeared to serve the objective of expanding liberal war across the Middle East and mustering economic resources for building networks and mechanisms of global security. The expansion of security and geoeconomic networks across Europe, search of strategic and corporate allies to support the US military-related industry strongly resonates in official documents, statements as well as policies of the US administrations, and are outlined in the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) 2014. The QDR emphasises creating global security as the second pillar of its defence strategy.<sup>102</sup> This also implies collaborating with strategic and economic partners to achieve common (geoeconomic and corporate) goals. The Asia-Pacific alliances including Australia, Japan, Philippines, Republic of Korea and Thailand are expected to expand with the inclusion of Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore and India. The Defence Technology Trade Initiative (DTTI) between the US and India is expected to develop a geostrategic partnership with India's defence industrial base and promote business ties between the two defence industries.<sup>103</sup> In addition to the military industrial and corporate cooperation, the US appears to favour India as a regional actor in South Asia.

The US domestic military modernisation, monopoly over means of global warfare, military assistance to strategic partners and expanding global militarism are collectively directed towards transforming military structures and fighting strategies of its allies.<sup>104</sup> These developments have

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<sup>101</sup> Reidar Visser, "Iraqi Democracy was Not so Bad – Until US Pulled out," March 20, 2013, *National*, <https://www.thenational.ae/iraqi-democracy-was-not-so-bad-until-us-pulled-out-1.296294>.

<sup>102</sup> Mabee, "From 'Liberal War' to 'Liberal Militarism'," 12; and Department of Defense, GoUS, *Quadrennial Defense Review 2014* (Government of United States, 2014), 11, [http://archive.defense.gov/pubs/2014\\_Quadrennial\\_Defense\\_Review.pdf](http://archive.defense.gov/pubs/2014_Quadrennial_Defense_Review.pdf).

<sup>103</sup> Mabee, "From 'Liberal War' to 'Liberal Militarism'," 13.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 13. The programmes led by the State Department, Department of Defence and Defence Security Cooperation Agency are in charge of running global training, foreign military sales, foreign military financing, and international military education. Training courses link key goals such as military professionalisation, interoperability with the US

long-term implications and are indicative of a continually increasing influence of the corporate military contractors on policy and strategy.

### **Conclusion**

The US Grand Strategy post-9/11 has displayed active use of war combined with promotion of democracy, economic liberalism and capitalism. This article has analysed the case of the 2003 Gulf War, the efforts for promotion of *consociational* democracy and the rise of IS to explain the corporatisation of war and creation of militant entities as trends in the evolution of militarism and transformation of the mechanisms of its global hegemony. The war against IS in Afghanistan and Syria also supports this claim regarding evolution of militarism supported by corporate entities directed towards transformation of the US' allied militaries. ■

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and Coalition Forces, strategic bilateral and regional relations, institutional and security sector reform and border security and transnational threats.