

'Freedom of Iraq' is grotesque

ABU SYED MUHAMMAD BELAL

'IRAQ war has ended' or 'US occupation of Iraq has come to an end' contradicts with history. History confirms that foreign occupation is nothing new to Iraq. Whenever the great players in the international system opted for change in the order of the game in the Middle East, they started with Iraq. The great siege of Baghdad by Mongols in 1258AD with their mission to impose imperial control over the Middle East was not different from the ones Americans did in 1991 and 2003. Only the context and pretext had changed, the motive remained the same. The people of Iraq over the ages have built a psychic shield: they have been used to this reality. Mongols massacred 100,000 to 1,000,000 inhabitants; Americans scored not less: they killed more than 100,000.

This time the wounds caused to Mesopotamia is immense. The US played the ethnic and sectarian cards to weaken Iraqi resilience against the occupation forces. Today, Shiite, Sunni and Kurd are their overriding identity. Al-Qaeda is in Iraq, a gift from the Bush administration to the Iraqi people. Where there is al-Qaeda there is America. How can America leave Iraq in the hands of al-Qaeda? It is a taboo though. It cannot leave an Iraq living at the mercy of Iran as well. Shiite-dominated Iraqi government offers Iran an added leverage to maintain its control over its neighbour. An Iraq, free from US occupation, provides a strategic cushion for the nuclear aspirant Iran. The latter would not hope a Saddam like military

might. Iran has its own design for Iraq. At present, Iraqi army are psychologically divided along the lines of Shiite, Sunni and Kurd. They are no longer able to provide national resistance against foreign aggression.

If the US wants to keep control over Iraq without US troops, who else will do the job for them? While the US military are leaving Iraq, its paramilitary forces remain back to keep control of the country. It is too nasty a job for Americans to leave Middle East. Americans have just privatized the occupation. Around 100,000 private contractors are working for the United States in Iraq, of whom more than 11,000 are armed mercenaries. They are mostly third country nationals, typically from developing countries.

In fact, the occupation is outsourced to third countries working for Americans, the advantage of which is that someone other than US soldiers can do the dying to maintain control over Iraq in return for money. Feeding these forces is less costly than feeding the whole army. It is no



more possible to continue \$1 trillion worth unnecessary war. US embassy in Baghdad, occupying a Vatican City size of area, is there to take care of them. Though Obama declared the withdrawal of troops at the end of 2011, his administration was willing to extend the presence of US forces in Iraq. Negotiation with Iraqi officials had been continued for one year led by US officials, but the Iraqi government rejected American

demands of immunity for the remaining US forces. It means that the advocates of rule of law across the world have motive to do whatever necessary for their security.

Obama said that the US troops were coming back with victory. His statement is clear contradiction of his election speech which

termed, "Iraq was a strategic mistake". He as an educated US citizen was right but as a US president is wrong. Iraqis now engaged in fighting within themselves, no more able to keep its eye on the developments in greater Middle East. In order to detonate

Iran, US maintain military bases in Iraq and Kuwait. Afghanistan provides the largest US military base with the same view. More military bases have been established across the Middle East. What would happen to Iraq? US officials say their target is to ensure stability and democracy in Iraq. Its declared posture of exporting democracy to Iraq is bound to fail. US pretended to promote stabilisation and democratisation in Iraq, but ramified sectarian divides at the end. Democracy appears poisonous in a milieu of bitter differences. It is politicized and regulated for the interests of outside forces. Immediately after the US army left Iraq, its Shiite-led government issued an arrest warrant against Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi, the country's highest ranking Sunni official, on terrorism charges. This is a reminder that the US left behind an Iraq still riven by sectarian division. A new battle field is at place including Kurds, Sunni, and Shiite. It is not clear whether the country is heading towards civil war. But the struggle to regain Iraq's independence has just begun.

Who knows America might pay this price. The wounds they did to Iraq keep increasing the number of deaths every day. The vapour of this human disaster will reach America some day. War has a dual character: in the short run it relieves; in the long run it pains. It is the judgment of history.

The writer is a Research Analyst, BIPSS.

What Iraqis think of the US withdrawal

An Iraqi journalist with the York Times in Babil, Iraq

A S American forces pulled out of Iraq, we asked Iraqis around the country three questions:

1. Will Iraq be better or worse off after American troops leave?
2. What did the Americans achieve in Iraq?
3. What have they personally lost or gained since the 2003 invasion?

Babil Province:
Babil, home to the ancient Mesopotamian city of Babylon, is the dividing line between the Sunni and Shiite provinces of Iraq.

The province was crushed along with the rest of the Shiite south after the uprising in 1991, and after the fall of Saddam Hussein, five large mass graves were found here. Dozens of people are missing because of three assassination attempts on Mr. Hussein, which led to the executions of many people in the province.

The entry of Polish and American troops in 2003 initiated a big change in the economic, social, political and religious fabric of the province. Economically, there was a new class of subcontractors.

Government employees, lawyers and everyone who spoke English worked with these forces, who had no idea about the nature of Iraqi society. Curiously, most of the people who worked for the overseas forces here were from well-known religious Shiite families that had histories of fighting occupiers and previous governments. They became very rich.

The negative side of the American existence was the destruction of the infrastructure, especially the roads because of the heavy vehicles. American forces gave contracts to incompetent contractors to repair these streets, and the existence of American troops, bases and offices inside the cities led to the closure of many of the streets and continuous bombings. Many families left their homes to go to safer neighborhoods.

The American withdrawal will leave confusion in

ning, and I think there will be a transition period from a mess into a better situation. We need to know who will fill the vacuum after the withdrawal. I think we must be concerned about Turkey more than Iran. They will be the next colonialists.

2. I don't think Americans gave anything to Iraq. They achieved what they came for, and I think the biggest winners are the countries that America hates Iran, Syria, North Korea and China. They achieved huge economic and strategic gains because of America's mistakes.

Dr. Huda Al-Attar, 42, University Professor

1. The US withdrawal will represent a danger in the future because the militias which are active in Iraq will wake up again, and there will be no one to monitor them.

2. I am concerned about the return of violations against women, it was important for America to push the Iraqi government hard on this issue.

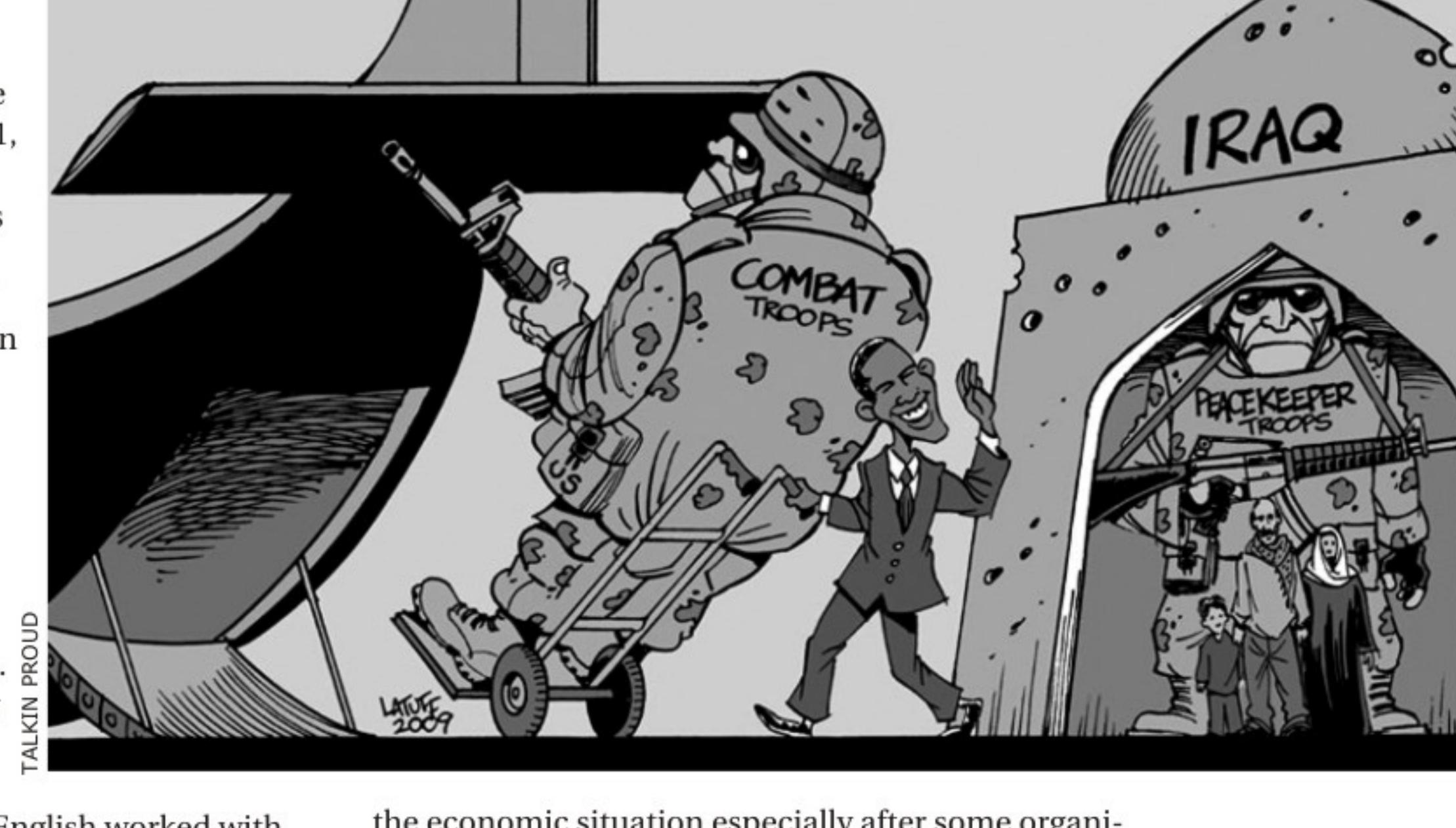
3. The Americans supported my organization, which was dedicated to reducing illiteracy.

Ahmed Jalil Al-Ghazi, 37, Journalist

1. We must be thankful to God for getting rid of the US occupier. Although there will remain some representatives and bases, I think we will close them down soon so that Iraq becomes as empty of them as it was before.

2. America achieved its goal of taking its share of our oil.

Source: atwar.blogs.nytimes.com



the economic situation especially after some organizations closed their offices. There is fear of unemployment. The withdrawal of the American troops also makes the people afraid of the Shiite militias, which represent a power above the law in Babil.

Haider Al-Mutairi, 34, Lawyer

1. The US withdrawal will create trouble at the begin-

pier. Although there will remain some representatives and bases, I think we will close them down soon so that Iraq becomes as empty of them as it was before.

2. America achieved its goal of taking its share of our oil.

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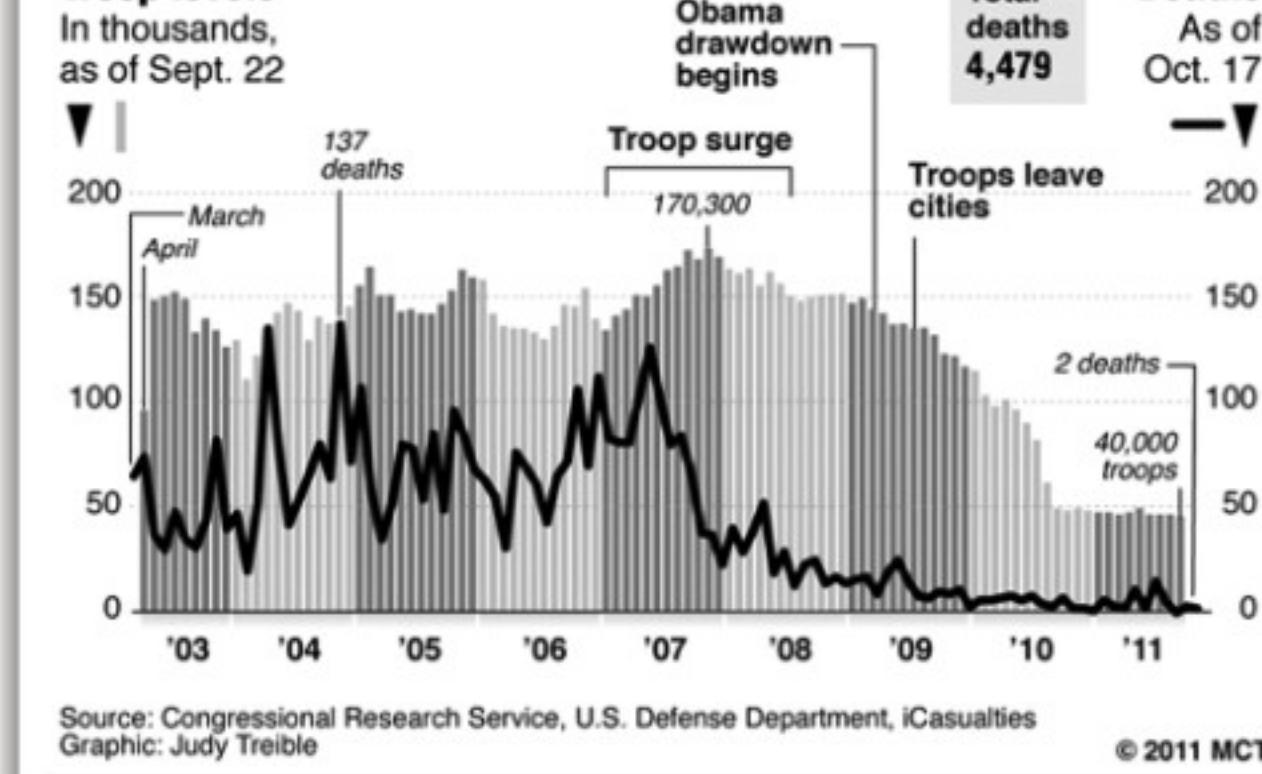
The Iraq war in numbers

- ❖ 3,187 Days the US has been in Iraq.
- ❖ 1,000,000,000 (one trillion) Cost in dollars of Iraq war.
- ❖ 1,500,000 Number of US citizens who have served in Iraq since beginning of the war.
- ❖ 170,000 Number of US troops in Iraq at peak in 2007.
- ❖ 4,485 Number of US military members killed in Iraq.
- ❖ 32,226 Number of US service members wounded in hostile action.
- ❖ 113,728 Number of Iraqi civilians killed in war.
- ❖ 180 Number of Iraqi civilians killed this month.
- ❖ 2.5 Percentage above the national average for unemployment among Iraq veterans.
- ❖ 1 Number of US Iraq or Afghanistan veterans who try to kill themselves every 80 minutes.

Source: dailymail.co.uk

U.S. troops in Iraq

President Barack Obama has ordered all U.S. troops out of Iraq by Dec. 31. Troop levels and deaths by month since the U.S. invasion in March.



Source: Congressional Research Service, U.S. Defense Department, iCasualties

Graphic: Judy Treble © 2011 MCT

Iraq at the crossroads

SIFAT UDDIN

THIS year is going to end with some remarkable changes across the Middle East and Africa. The 'Arab Spring' has been blowing throughout the year. Now, the US is withdrawing its army from Iraq. This decision has attracted mixed reactions from experts. Some praised the decision while others reproached. In the declaration ceremony Obama said that Iraq had become democratic and had an independent judicial system. This statement has surprised many Iraqis including me as a Bangladeshi. I wish the Iraqis had all these!

Scholars have produced innumerable articles regarding the US withdrawal from Iraq. Here I shall try to touch those untouched areas that are very much important. Occupation of Iraq is a continuation of classical norm of western imperialism. Initially western powers occupy a foreign land physically through waging wars. Then the occupier makes an opportune ambiance for their vernacular companies to do business. And finally, they leave it by substituting with a cow-tow leadership selected from the occupied country. Iraq was no

exception. Now, Nuri al-Maliki seems to be serving the exact purpose. Just after the last US convoy had left Iraq, Prime Minister Maliki issued an open invitation for US firms to help rebuild Iraq. Hailing a

nities for US firms. It seems that Iraq is going to suffer the neo-colonial occupation in this new chapter.

Now, let us look into socio-political aspects of Iraq. Iraqi people are divided

ment. Now Maliki, a Shiite, in power is going in the same direction. There is already an open rift between Maliki and Vice President Tareq al-Hashemi, a Sunni by origin. Iraqi government has issued a war-

tit-for-tat attacks in 2006-2007. Who knows what will happen next? My assumption is weighing on "two Iraq solution" as an imminent future of this country.

Since the declaration of the US withdrawal from Iraq, analysts have been claiming that the US is making a strategic shift from the Middle East to the Asia Pacific, focusing