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Introduction

The conflict between the demographic groups of Sunni Arabs and the Shia Arabs in the nation of Iraq has been going on for a prolonged time, dating back to over 1400 years since the two groups have split. However, this conflict does not remain as history. In fact, this dispute has been growing more violently, up to the point where terrorism has gotten involved. The ISIS terrorist group has risen from the previous Al-Qaeda group, attacking Iraq and its citizens with bombings, explosions, and unwarned attacks. These attacks have grown worse over the years, up to the point where international involvement has been observed. The United States has been responding most actively to the ISIS and its activities, and the European Union has also gotten involved. In order to mitigate the negative effects of the ISIS and other demographic groups or terrorist groups, and to protect the safety and human rights of the citizens of Iraq, the current Situation in Iraq must be strictly observed.

Background

The terrorist group ISIS dates back to the 1980s. During this time, Al-Qaeda, a global terrorist group, was founded. This group has performed many attacks worldwide, but it is most famous for being responsible for the 9.11 attack that occurred in 2001.

In 2003, Iraq was led by Saddam Hussein, who was known for being a brutal leader who misused his power. Not only did he suppress any objection to his governance, Hussein proceeded to abusing citizens' human rights in the country. Moreover, Hussein refused to cooperate on an international level, which later contributed to the Iraq War. The Iraq War was led by the United States, and it took place for nearly 8 years from 2003 to 2011. Apart from being



The Al-Qaeda in Iraq Gathered

internationally uncooperative, Iraq was suspected of possessing weapons that can cause mass



destructions, such as nuclear weapons. This suspect turned out to be false, however. After the war, Hussein was overthrown from the rule of Iraq, which caused much chaos and confusion of ruling power in the country.

This is where Al-Qaeda steps in. In 2004, Iraq joins Al-Qaeda when Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi, a militant who carried out brutal attacks in Iraq, forms an alliance with the organization. From then on, The Al-Qaeda in Iraq performed numerous attacks in the country, aiming mostly at the Shia population. However, another massive change happens when al-Zarqawi was killed by forces in the United States in 2006. Since then, although the Al-Qaeda still existed in Iraq, it faced much opposition locally.

To regain its active presence, the Al-Qaeda in Iraq partnered with more local organizations in the country, renaming itself as the Islamic State of Iraq, or the ISIS. After much conflict with the Sunni and United States, the ISIS regained its influence near 2013. As the ISIS gained widened its regime with militants coming from Syria, it renamed itself again as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). This terrorist group is still carrying out attacks and other means of influence in Iraq, placing many innocent citizens in imminent danger.

Problems Raised

Sectarian Disputes and the Government

As the ISIS are mostly comprised of Sunni, it can be inferred that the conflict between Sunni and Shia aided the rise of the ISIS. In other words, the ISIS plays a role in standing up for Sunni's voice and right to have power. In March of 2023, men armed with guns hid near the area of Diyala and killed nearly 20 citizens nearby. This violence was said to be counterattack by the Shias against the Sunni, with a possibility that the ISIS attacked. Although Iraq has mostly moved on from violence since the Iraq War, according to political analyst Mohanad Adnan, some areas are still under great risk of attack and violence.



Cleaning up Remains and Ruins after Violence in Diyala

In January of 2024, the ISIS was claimed to kill nearly 100 citizens and wound 284

citizens, some of which were young children. This happened because of two explosions, specifically explosive belts, during a 4th anniversary memorial of a prominent Shia commander, Qassem Soleimani. It is likely that part of the Sunni population carried out this attack to voice their outrage against praising a Shia individual with much influence.



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Displacement and Destruction

The ISIS has historically acted upon areas where civilians lived, and their attacks are still threatening the lives of millions of Iraq people. Since 2017, citizens have begun to leave their homes and help fight the war against ISIS. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, nearly 1.4 million Iraq people fled to help with the war. However, some of these citizens have had to stay in camp for a long time before returning home, as the post-war conditions meant ruined houses or the lack of proper healthcare. Surprisingly, some citizens are still residing in camp since 2014— 60% of Sinjar citizens are displaced in war camps. To the people who have fought the war, a camp that provides food regularly and a shelter was better than going back to the ruins of what was their home before. The remaining citizens who are displaced left their homes to flee from the ISIS, who continues to impose significant threat against innocent citizens with unwarmed attacks.

The impacts of this long-fought war still remain, even when it has been over 20 years. The damaged infrastructure from the war prevents citizens from receiving access to healthcare, proper education, and even homes to live in. Reconstruction is not taking place effectively, and the government did not fully compensate for the loss of businesses or houses.

International Actions

Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS

In 2014, 87 countries and institutions have agreed to defeat the ISIS and eliminate their negative impact in Iraq, especially towards citizens. Nations in Africa, the Americas, the Asia Pacific, Europe,



Nations Gather for the Coalition to Defeat ISIS

Middle East, and other institutions such as the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) have signed and committed to helping Iraq. Specifically, the coalition aims to weaken the infrastructure of the ISIS and closely monitor to prevent any terrorist movement across borders. They also have worked to minimize any propaganda and restore infrastructure and essential services to citizens. Moreover, the coalition's goal is to weaken the military powers and financial abilities of the ISIS. Rather than directly aiding the citizens, this organization is aiming to weaken the ISIS's power as much as possible.

Continued Support from the European Union

The European Union is known for providing much support in the impact of the ISIS in Iraq. Apart from providing humanitarian aid, such as donating for adequate nutrition and shelter for citizens, and giving them access to healthcare and education, the European Union is also taking measures against the ISIS, similar to what the Global Coalition is doing. On April of 2023, The European Union added two more individuals connected with the ISIS on their list of individuals who must be restricted against their activity in such groups. Since these two new additions, 15 people are on this list, who are restricted from traveling and utilizing assets. In addition, the European Union has also been giving assistance to citizens who are displaced or fleeing their homes. By providing citizens with basic needs such as food and water, the citizens are facing less burden from being away from their homes.

Key Players

The United States

As can be seen prominently in the background of this issue, the United States has undoubtedly impacted the actions of the ISIS and how they impacted Iraq. Not only did the United States lead the Iraq War, but it was against the ISIS and the Sunni's actions in general. Shifting towards international actions, the United States acted as a leader of the Global Coalition, taking initiative to step forward and lead the activities against the ISIS. Moreover, the nation has also aided the Iraq government, especially the military forces, by providing support with airstrikes and security forces. The main reason the United States felt strongly about this terrorist group is because of its impact on an international level. As the ISIS originated from Al-Qaeda, an international terrorist group, the United States has tried and is still trying to minimize impacts in Iraq that may, if it grows stronger, lead to international impact.

Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF)

Consisting of the Shia population, the PMF was a major counter force against the ISIS. As the Sunni and Shia population in Iraq have had and still have a negative relationship, this can be seen evidently in the interactions between the ISIS and the PMF. The PMF was created in June of 2014, consisting of 50 to 70 different militias, which is over 60,000 individuals.



Popular Mobilization Forces Fully Armed



Since its creation, the organization helped with liberating many towns in Iraq after the Iraq War. However, it is unclear whether the PMF brought net benefit or harm to reducing the impact of the ISIS in Iraq. Some journals and reports have argued that the organization committed war crimes and other actions that are not correspondent to the Iraq law. In addition, because the organization is not government-affiliated or official, the PMF gaining too much power may impact the country's future prospects. Therefore, while it is evident that the PMF is very against the ISIS, it is unclear whether the organization effectively reduced their harm on citizens and the country in general or created their own injustice.

Possible Solutions

Reinforcing the Security

One of the most important steps in mitigating the power of the ISIS and terrorist groups in general is to strengthen security forces within the country. The Iraq Security Forces (ISF) consists of the Iraq



Iraq Security Forces Receiving Professional Training

Army, Iraq Police, and National Police. Training individuals in these forces with workshops for anti-terrorism, citizen safety, and other special supplements for terrorism-specific situations. While it is crucial to educate and strengthen the forces, it is also important to keep these individuals safe. In July of 2024, four individuals of the Iraq army had died in Diyala from the ISIS members. As terrorist groups such as ISIS can appear anywhere in the country

unwarned, ensuring that security forces are safely armed and have the apparatus to respond to any unexpected situations.

National Conciliation and Government Involvement

The continued violent conflicts between demographic groups in Iraq, especially the Sunni Arabs and Shia Arabs, have not only put the country in instability but have also put citizens in danger. Although it has been mostly the Sunni and Shia that have been involved with violence, there is no guarantee that Kurds and other ethnic minorities will remain unactive. In fact, some groups have been having tensions with regional governments—there has been continued tension between the Kurds in the north and the government in Baghdad. As demographic groups and regional government have had internal conflict, official forces from the central government should intervene and contain the violence and counterattacks between demographic groups, putting special focus on the Sunni and Shia groups. The Federal



Government of Iraq must set firm standards to mitigate conflict between these groups and their impact on citizens.

Glossary

Militia

A military force that is raised from the civil population to supplement a regular army in an emergency



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