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Al-Bayan Center for Planning and Studies



# The Roots of Evil

Abdullah Abdul Amir

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[www.bayancenter.org](http://www.bayancenter.org)

[info@bayancenter.org](mailto:info@bayancenter.org)

# The Roots of Evil

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Abdullah Abdul Amir \*

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## Introduction

The Baath regime, which ruled Iraq through 1968-2003, wasn't one that was known to have embraced Islam as an ideology or take it as an important source for its values. The regime has most often been described as a secular one of a singular directive approach to establish a totalitarian regime that adopts centralisation and cruelty in power. But it is apparent that the nineties of the last century witnessed the ruling regime moving towards the integration of some Islamic ideas within its control instruments and command tactics exerted by the Baath Party to prove its isolated rule from the Iraqi society. Regardless of the reasons that prompted the regime to adopt such a strategy, which was centered on the so-called "major national faith campaign", the effects of this campaign and the repercussions of its effects are still fastened until this day in Iraq and the region. With the growth of what is known as the "Islamic awakening" and by observing the evolution of the Baath Party's political practices during the 1980s and 1990s, it seems that the regime sought to control religious segments of society by crystalising influential Islamic topics expressed over the trends, frameworks and methods of the Baath Party especially with the decline of national thought. The party seized control over the expanse of the religious awakening in Iraq to a position from which it can entrench sectarian reality in the Iraqi arena, so as long it can prove through national thought its stance in the previous period.

In studying the policies pursued by the Baath Party during the late period of the Iran-Iraq war, and post the first Gulf War; both which resulted in a weak

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\* A researcher at Al-Bayan Center for Planning and Studies

regime that tried to empower itself through methods and practices based on oppression and torture, and through policies that attempted to harmonise with the general religious sense and benefit from it in order to add legitimacy for its stay in power. Additionally, the sectarian dimension was deepening in a political system came to be implemented over a long period of time.

The so-called “major national faith campaign” strategy advanced in culmination of those practices that were moving through systematic steps for quite some time, to act as a serious transition in the party’s policies toward airing more extremism and violence in Iraqi society. According to a lot of the evidence relating to the performance of faith campaign launched by the head of the former regime, it represents an important seed for the emergence of extremist organisations which revealed Islamic slogans to its identity after the fall of the regime; especially groups like al Qaeda, the Naqshbandi Army, The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and others. It seems that the faith campaign formed a serious infrastructure of the terror that prevails today in Iraq and the region; in terms of men, thought and methodology. It is not unlikely that this faith campaign, that worked though almost a decade of time and under poor circumstances that Iraq experienced, is one of the driving reasons and core to the presence of extremist organizations of harshest approaches that adopts uproots of the Baath Party and its totalitarian and systematic methods to eradicate those who disagree with them. These groups are led by some of the party’s leaders and those who bear its ideology, but under Salafi and religious extremist labels to legitimize the continuity of its existence and motivations.

### **The Baath Party and Islam**

Michel Aflaq, Baath Party intellectual, perceives Islam as the religion of Arab nationalism. According to Aflaq, Islam poses Arab Nationalist thinking that can serve as its national ideology and constitute as its motive and drive. As Aflaq demonstrated “Islam is what preserved Arabism and the nation’s character... And it will always be a key strength of the national struggle and the national movement”. Aflaq’s perspective of religion, which is an elastic and gelatinous to an extent, drafted the Baath Party’s framework in dealing with religion and Islam. It illustrates that this view reflects the approach of the Baath Party, not solely about

religion but also with most of the issues and challenges that require a clear stance in society and the state. Furthermore, this perspective acted as a sustenance that the Baath Party leaned on in dealing with fluctuations experienced by it in terms of principles, political discourse, conduct and dealing manner, and even the style of governance, and foreign relations. It seems that this view is identified as the ideology and the party's policies in Iraq.

The definition of religion for Michel Aflaq and the Baath Party is very broad and unspecified as it expands in its characterization by its ideology as “religious revolution in Europe is in our duties”<sup>1</sup>. Thus a new definition of religion that moves on the horizon of metaphorical interpretation is consistent both with the Baath Party and in accordance to the thinking of its political movement. Amidst the Iran-Iraq war in 1980, the Baath Party emerged with another definition for Islam. Michel Aflaq stated in an interview with the Iraqi Revolution newspaper a new definition of Islam overlapping the Baath Party definition as “faith, the spiritual experience in the life of the Arabs which is Islam, and the spirit of our time; rationality.”<sup>2</sup> And that Islam is nothing but “a culture of unified nation for the Arabs of different religions and sects.”<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, in terms of thought and ideology, the Baath Party perspective of Islam was one of recognition of a fait accompli, yet at the same time the party was working on adapting the way that religion works and is in line with the political interests of the party and in accordance with the circumstances. The Baath party presented itself as the secular alternative to the communist movement of the 1950's, adopting “standing against atheism”. Thus the party tried to gain a foothold in the Iraqi society; that was experiencing a state of rapid development and living contradictions of modernity and conservatism and amidst a regional environment fueled with political conflicts due to the ignition of the Cold War.

But it seems that the conflict of the Baath Party with the Islamists in the 1970's and 1980's drove the party to reconsider its stances and impose its political discourse toward Islam. The party and according to its stark secular policies was adopting non-religious and extirpation policies against the Islamists,

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1. Michel Aflaq, ‘On the Way of Resurrection’.

2. Michel Aflaq, in an interview with the Iraqi Republic newspaper, 27.04.1980.

3. Michel Aflaq, during the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Baath Party, 04.07.1987

highlighting the state as one of a real struggle with Islam, religious commitment and religious values in society.

Some sources refer to the Baath Party's state discussing its 'Islamic' image in 1986<sup>4</sup>. Saddam Hussein, in a secret meeting of the national leadership of the Baath Party at the time, discussed developing a strategy of reconciliation and even the establishment of a secret alliance with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Sudan; contrary to what was assumed about the Baath Party as in a state of conflict with Islamic forces. In additional policies of the Baath Party it seems that this started to move on the horizon of sectarian polarization, this time under Islamic headings especially as the regime time was involved in a strenuous war with Iran. But the Baath Party was reaching out to the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria in 1982, solely for tactical reasons to weaken the sworn enemy, Hafez al-Assad's regime. It appears that the two parties did not reach an agreement on the establishment of a united front against the Syrian regime, primarily due to their differences on some ideological criteria's, notably about the role of religion in life and society. The meeting in 1986 indicates that the Baath Party decided to demand from members of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood Saeed Hawa and Adnan Saad Eddin, to head to Egypt and Sudan to persuade the group there that Michel Aflaq, was not an atheist as it was presumed, and that the Baath party that believes in Islam as a heavenly religion, and that its leaders, including Aflaq and Saddam Hussein believe in Islam<sup>5</sup>.

The Baath Party regime adopted repressive policies against religious trends in Iraqi society, mostly of a sectarian nature. In 1977 the regime suppressed a major Shiite uprising, which could have potentially expanded to pose a real threat to the regime. Radically secularized policies of the party emerged as a basis to strike any Islamist trend spreading in society. The purpose was mainly directed to strike the Shiite movement at the time. But the fear of the party dividing along sectarian lines, the party was to a certain extent also involved in conflict with Sunni Islamists too. The party tried to link any religious movement in the society

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4. Amatzia Baram, From Secularism to Islamism: The Iraqi Naath Regime 1968-2003, October 2011.

5. Amatzia Baram, From Secularism to Islamism: The Iraqi Naath Regime 1968-2003, October 2011.

as one linked to external forces and countries from outside Iraq. From Saddam Hussein's talk with members of his party in 1977, we see some confusion in dealing with religion in Iraqi society, which had cast a shadow over the party and his policy thinking, as Hussein questioned<sup>6</sup>:

*“Which methods apply to the issue of religious and sectarian intolerance at this stage? Are we supposed to fulfill the role of those who pose questions of religion and its rituals in tenacious propositions? Or erroneously avoid interfering with them and converge «temporarily» with the concepts and methods in order to affect them and change their convictions .. and thus divert them onto the right direction.. or distinguish (ourselves) by presenting our principle perceptions forward (as) the core in starting points and goals and tactics?»*

To which he responded:

*“Some oppositional powers exploit religion for political ends. You mustn't use religion for political aspires, and not collide with them directly in conventional methods. Some reactionary circles when they behave in provocative actions against the revolution under the cover of religious rites and motivated by colonialism, intend to drag the revolution and its agencies to intervene in religious affairs by imbalanced methods and approaches; which popularizes such movements that is part of the general movement for revolution and its interests are a portion of the interests of the revolution”.*

*“What is required of us is that we stand against the politicization of religion by the state and society, and against the storming of the revolution in religious matter, and return to the origin of our faith, and cherish religion without politicizing religion. Because when you make yourself a preacher or a religious mentor and demand, from an official position or party representation, request people to perform their religious rituals, you have to guide them how to perform these rituals, and the consequent dependence of the obligations. If such details aren't clarified to the people inevitably problems and complications will arise, as the differences begin to emerge in accordance with the jurisprudence of Islamic doctrines. Getting involving in lost politics via one of its most dangerous passages is unreasonable,*

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6.Saddam Hussein, a look at the religion and heritage, during his talk at a meeting of the Information Office, 08.11.1977

*at a time when you can win it via a different approach.”*

Therefore it seems that the party, was experiencing complexities in dealing with religion and its threat in society after the uprising Safar in 1977. Thus, Saddam Hussein was taking a step forward and a step back in dealing with religion in Iraqi society in various ways, especially with forces that were consistent of Islamist political trends. Prominent traits such populism, retro, deviation, correlation foreign colonization, were segments that the Baath Party was trying to associate with religion and religious practices in society, in an attempt to criminalize them from one side and, legitimize their prosecution in another. In general, whenever the Baath Party sensed threat to its direction or fear in the community it exploited religion for political bargaining, albeit to a lesser policy than it did in the nineties of the last century.

Despite the secular approach of the system, which did not deal with religion in an overt or positive manner, yet the telegram sent by the US Embassy in Baghdad in 1977<sup>7</sup> revealed a different approach adopted then by the Baath Party in dealing with religion in public affairs. Saddam Hussein, who was described by the telegraph as “the most powerful man in power”, went on an official visit to the holy shrines of Imam Ali and Hussein, performing prayers during his religious visit, accompanied by Izzat Al-Douri who was the Interior Minister at the time and described by the telegraph as “the closest political ally of Saddam”. It appears that this is the first time that a leading Baathist officially visits holy shrines and performs prayers. The telegram considered the events as turning point by the secular party in dealing with the state and society that sternly separated between religious practices and party practices. In addition to the speech delivered that declared “Imam Ali and Imam Hussein, two of Saddam’s guide who are also are the leaders of Islam”. The telegraph indicated that Saddam and his party were seeking by the visit to “calming the Shiite majority, after the regime banned Shia rituals earlier in the same year”. The telegraph reported that the appearance of Saddam and members of the party in a religious time and place indicate that the party began to distance itself from the concept of extreme separation of state and religion as “it is the first appearance of a great political figure of the regime in religious practice”. This illustrates acting in a manner of interest and sly approach

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7. Confidential. BAGHDAD 2208, subject: Saddam Hussein Woos the Shia.

of the Party with religion. The Baath is radically secular in times of control, but moderately religious at times of weaker states, and extremely religious if the circumstances reach a peak by political rules and oblige it to change its colors. It is noteworthy that this restorative step, which the Baath Party attempted in late 1977 toward the Shiites, was also due to the intense pressure that was exposed to the regime in its war against the Kurds at the time.

But winds were changing the preferred direction of sail for the Baath, with the victory of the Islamic revolution against the Shah in Iran stimulated the start of what was known then as the “Islamic awakening” in the region, something that the regime could not overcome by the threat this imposed on it. The outbreak of the Iraq-Iran war is perhaps one of the most important reasons for the Baath Party regime seeking to neutralize the influence of the Islamic Awakening and according to the practiced regional cooperation at the time.

Following a year after his speech to members of his own party, the Aleph Baa Journal published an article in 1987 interesting by Saddam Hussein titled ‘Political and religious movements and the movements covered by the label of religion’. It appears that this article was trying to openly popularize Saddam’s outlook in dealing with the Sunni Islamic movements in the Arab world from 1986 that was secretly striding in the party’s internal angles. The article seemed to contradict Saddam’s approach in 1977; which was of conciliatory language, and calm tone, and apologetic in some parts to Islamic political movements. While illustrating that nationalism is the foundation on which resistance and liberation move in the Arab world, yet criticized the Shah of Iran for adopting approaches far from the nature of Iranian society which made him “singular in his opinion and behavior of Western nature sectioned from his peoples”. Numerous factors toppled the Shah, and not solely a religious movement. In his article, establishment of a religious government has been suggested, as stated:

*“Thus, when a religious state is established, and spreads to what extends of peoples and nations, those peoples and nations will be in a better in humanitarian, social, cultural, economic, and political terms. Prior to this, but also and above this, in terms of certainty and guided to the right path after loss and disbelief, the world, and the Arab world has not experienced a religious state that incubated various*

*nations by the will of its people and under the influence of these concepts”.*

However, he indicated that deviation of a governor cannot be alone a condition to accept a system of “one state for the people”; meaning here the Islamic system<sup>8</sup>.

A restorative tone emerged regarding Islamist political trends excluding certain movements such as the “populist”. It is well known that the Baath Party regime meant the Shiites when referring to the “populist” movements when he stated:

*“Although it is unfair to say that all who are involved within this framework are distant from religion, we have to clearly say based on a deep certainty, this trend stems from elsewhere of perpetrators of sins especially populist movements of submersible purposes covered by religious cloak whose connection to religion does not exceed a temporary one according to its relevance in their cynical interests; to reach their political goals of overthrowing political systems or certain regimes..”<sup>9</sup>*

### **Major National Faith Campaign**

It seems that Saddam Hussein, following successive defeats he inflicted on Iraq in the 1990's, began searching for ways to maintain his regime from collapse, and reiterate some of its lost legitimacy but in different mechanisms and frameworks than before. The uprising in 1991, formed militarily and politically serious challenge that may have ousted the regime were it not for the regional balances at the time. With the erosion of the joints of the state and society under siege and totalitarianism, and the weakness of the government's authority, the regime turned to adopt the religious wave and the consolidation of its position on religious grounds. It sought in some parts to make a sectarian change in the Iraqi society, relying on some Iraqi and non-Iraqi expertise. It appears Saddam Hussein reconsidered his strategy but in a wider and more systematic approach this time. It appears that the pragmatic principle of the Baath party took on a new title harmonious with local and regional changes. As long as the community

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8. Saddam Hussein, ‘Political and religious movements and the movements covered by the cover of religion’, Aleph Baa Journal, 05/13/1987.

9. Same source.

wants religion, the party will offer religion in its own way, and the party continues to rule. With the sectarian dimension the party and the regime had to stride along with the religious wave in light of regional and international conditions that had been expecting its downfall.

In 1989, the founder and prominent figure of the Baath Party Michel Aflaq passed away, who was remembered on more than one level as a person who did not believe in God. The death of Aflaq raised many reactions toward the Baath Party, especially due to the Party's announcement of Aflaq's belief in Islam after his death. Baath Party has attributed the reason for Aflaq not to announce his commitment to Islam during his life as "(He) did not want the matter vulnerable to political interpretations". According to Western diplomatic sources at the time, Aflaq's eldest son denied his father's commitment to Islam. It seems that Aflaq's death may have been advantageous to Saddam at the time, for it terminated the legacy left by Michel Aflaq's reputation as a person and party by his communication with large segments of the Sunni Arab Islamists and gaining their support during poor conditions at the time. The year 1989 witnessed a remarkable political event distant from Iraq, notably a coup led by Omar Hassan al-Bashir, and the planning of Hassan al-Turabi.

Early 1990's marked the beginning of direct communication and work between Saddam Hussein and some Islamic organizations, especially with Sudan, which became a state that implements Shariah Law and became a safe haven after the 1990's to a broad spectrum of Islamic movements, including Al-Qaeda's leader Osama Bin Laden. It seems that a special and strategic relationship between Saddam Hussein and Hassan al-Turabi was starting to take shape. Saddam Hussein was seeking by all means to find a political foothold in a world that was imposing a suffocating political and economic siege with him. Turabi was a strategic ally, able to pave channels of communication for Saddam with the Islamists, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood in the Arab world; who's social and political strain began to emerge at the time. Both saw their interests in this kind of cooperation. According to minutes of the Baath Party in 1991, Turabi had delivered a sermon in the presence of Saddam Hussein, in which it was suggested

that Iraq turns into an Islamic regime similar to the Sudanese model.<sup>10</sup> Regardless of the reasons, but Turabi's firm defense for Saddam Hussein, confirms that al-Turabi and other Islamist political figures became theorizing aids to Saddam Hussein for the sake of designing a new social form of the Iraqi society, benefiting from the conditions of poverty and destitution and the weakness of the regimes power to create a new arena for the Baath Party to exercise its previous policies under Islamic label this time, which was valid until the fall of the regime in 2003.

The major national faith campaign was launched in 1993. It moved intensely through the joints of the various government institutions; through legislation, the educational system, administrative system, the judiciary, the security and order, and economic aspects, even on personal levels of members of Iraqi society. It seems from analyzing methodological perspectives and methods of the campaign, that they were moving in line with a systematic method that covered all segments of society. This contributed to creating the foundation for religious extremism in Iraq, mixing between the violence stemming from the cruelty of the Baath Party and the extremist religious justifications in support for it. Carefully studied, the campaign seems to have focused on two issues; dissemination of learning and memorizing the Quran, and the application of certain Shariah limits. On one hand it seems that the aim was to target any opposition to the campaign that would appear to be opposing the Qur'an, and placing a firm line to justify the regime's cruelty and terror on society, all under a legitimized cover.

Baath Party media or party propaganda started using Islamic terms in the daily words of its leader, which used to glorify him. Expressions such as the "religious leader" was used to describe Saddam, and words such as 'struggle' and 'warrior' were replaced with 'Jihad' and 'Mujahid'. With the escalation of the rhythms of the campaign, drafted several pieces of legislation were drafted and intended to use some parts of Islamic legislative convergence acceptable to the people to influence the internal public opinion, and attract the support of Islamist groups in the Arab world, from Sudan through to Jordan. He with the words "Allahu Akbar" on the Iraqi flag, and he was on the way for the adoption of political Islam as an ideology direct to the Baath Party, but this hypothesis is

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10. Amatzia Baram, From Militant Secularism to Islamism, The Iraqi Baath Regime 1968-2003, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, October 2011.

marred by a lot of rush. Despite the steps taken by Saddam Hussein in spreading the religion according to his own reckonings in Iraqi society, they were merely a way to cross to the next phase of rule, during which the regime tried to achieve the following objectives:

- 1- Try to get the legitimacy to remain in power, after proving inability to protect the country's borders, the inability to provide basic services to citizens, most notably food, with the deterioration of security and the inability of the regimes security forces to confront the spread of crime, and above all the deterioration of his popularity internally and regionally.
- 2- The formulation of an atmosphere of sectarian character based on religion rather than political party slogans and its rank in politics and media. It seems that the 1991 uprising had alerted the regime to the importance of religion as a bargaining tool in defending the system from collapsing. Especially with the popular movement, it was obliged to embrace religious treatises as a solution to the crises the country.
- 3- Open channels of communication with the Islamist trends and movements in the Sunni Arab world. And turn it into support for him and his regimes formula in a battle for survival, and perhaps converted later to a pressurising policy tool on the countries where they were active.
- 4- Using religion as a cover in eliminating political opponents and every move that may represent a threat to the regime. It became easy eradicate opponents under elimination acts set by the system under various pretexts.
- 5- The status of religious institutions in Iraq to be gradually dominated by the Baath Party and these institutions directly under its guidance.

In September 1993, the Iraqi Interior Ministry launched a campaign in which more than half of the nightclubs in Baghdad were closed. Public alcohol consumption in all parts of Iraq was also prohibited.

Prior to that, in 1990, focus increased on establishing centrally governed

religious institutions, but at the same time exercising, teaching and spreading the culture of religion from a specific sectarian approach. During this time, religious institutions of the regime worked to attract young people to its campaign to memorise the Holy Quran. 60,000 students participated in summer courses that took place in mosques to memorise the Quran during the summer vacation in 1992 alone, under the supervision of imams and Quran reciters who were studying or graduated from specialized institutions of the regime. Although initial participations were voluntary, yet gradually it turned into a systematic way that the system run according to previous experiences. The Iraqi Ministry of Education was asked to test teachers to measure their knowledge of Islam and incorporate memorising and recitation of the Quran part of its curriculum for all stages. Bonuses were given to Islamic teachers of Quran and religion in schools thus alleviating their level among other teachers. The Ministry of Education Act, which was approved by the regime in 1998 under Article 2, states:

*Devotion to religious and moral education to ensure the teaching of the Islamic religion guided the Holy Quran and the Sunnah.*

The faith in the campaign rationale refers to this as “The turning point for the advancement of educational discussions during the years 1992 and 1993 under the auspices of Mr. President, the leader Saddam Hussein, by his educational and social governance guidance, which included applied frameworks to develop qualitative aspects of the educational process, led by major national faith campaign, which is the basis for the advancement of education, based on learning the Quran and correctly understand it according to an accurate and integrated curriculum”.<sup>11</sup>

But it seems that faith campaign embedded a situation the system turns a blind eye to for political and sectarian reasons. It created a situation, which began to spread with the knowledge of the regime, of religious extremism of Salafi orientation. Many newsletters and press releases indicated at the time to the spread of Wahhabism and Salafism among young people and in several areas of Iraq. These young people freely roamed with their short clothes and long beards and preached their Takfiri ideology in mosques which Saddam established and

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11. The Ministry of Education Act No. 34 of 1998.

developed. It appears that these situations were not convenient for a number of leaders of the regime at the time, including Uday Saddam and Barzan, Saddam's step brother. Uday published a letter of complaint in the Babel newspaper that represents him, of the seriousness of the spread of the Wahhabi movement in Iraq, exploiting religious openness and poverty and need in Iraqi society under siege. The publication indicated that Saudi Arabia had been pumping funds to spread Wahhabi ideology in Iraq<sup>12</sup> A memorandum sent by Barzani to Saddam Hussein warned the danger of the spread of religious extremism in Iraq, and the prospect of being able to overthrow the government by its effect<sup>13</sup> According to interviews with some of those who lived in the period in which the faith campaign bloomed, that some Salafist groups were paying the equivalent of US \$150 to join it, pray in its mosques, attending their seminars in Baghdad and other Iraqi areas<sup>14</sup> Under the deteriorating economic situation due to the embargo, since a report of the World Health Organization situation in Iraq reported that large segments of the Iraqis were living on the brink of starvation in 1997<sup>15</sup> it was decided that a large number of mosques to be built across Iraq as the regime has taken in thousands, according to former Iraqi Minister of Awqaf Abdel Moneim Ahmed Saleh.<sup>16</sup>

Um al-Maarik (Mother of Battles) mosque in Baghdad contained Saddam's private Quran, which was also said to have been written in his own blood by the famous calligrapher Abbas al-Baghdadi. The design of the Mother of Battles Mosque reflects the Baathi idea of Islam and religion. The minarets of the mosque take the form of Scud missiles, while others represented the Russian Kalashnikov rifles, and a lake in the mosque was designed to take shape of a map of the Arab world. Noticeably, designs blending the means of violence and destruction can be seen along with traces of nationality and thinking in a mosque where the faithful pray. It was decided that a huge mosque to be built in the al-Mansur area of Baghdad called the "Great Mosque of the state" to accommodate twenty thousand worshippers, but the fall of the regime in 2003 prevented the completion

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12. Babel newspaper, 07.19.1994.

13. Amatzia Baram, *From Militant Secularism to Islamism: The Baath Regime 1968-2003*, October 2011.

14. Private interviews.

15. Sheila Carapico, *The impact of sanctions in Iraq*, Middle east Report, Spring 1998.

16. Magdi Ahmed Hussein, *the growing religious tide in Iraq with a unique resilience in the face of the siege*, the People's Newspaper, 1999.

of this project.

As consecutive workshops in this campaign continued, the regime issued a number of laws, regulations and procedures, primarily to formulate his own image of Islam and take advantage of them to position his political status, as for example he deliberately released prisoners who memorized the Quran and issuing jurisprudence of transactions, which obliged under the law every person who wants to work in Iraq, to pass a trading test by Islamic banking according to the so-called “booklet jurisprudence of transactions” which was prepared by the Iraqi Ministry of Awqaf<sup>17</sup> Leniency in It has been lenient in applying provisions of the death penalty and body torturing including provisions in the amputation of hands for theft crimes<sup>18</sup> But extended to include chopping legs and ears in an expanded manner for all kinds of theft amidst dreadful economic circumstances the country was going through<sup>19</sup> Tattoos were strikingly marked between the eyebrows for those whos hands were cut, as precisely defined by law ‘by one passing centimetre of interlinked lines of one millimetre in width’<sup>20</sup> Implementation of the provisions of murder crimes by beheading by the sword. Given the nature of the security system, they have deliberately penetrated these religious ideas in the security and military apparatus system. Available information suggests that the number of the Saddam Fedayeen militia was between 10 thousand to 15 thousand members, of hardcore loyalists of the Baath regime<sup>21</sup> These militias were under the control of Saddam’s eldest son Uday, in the murder, and repression, torture of opponents in addition to smuggling. It was also used as death squads that carried out murders and executions outside the formal scope, and issued orders of beheadings. This brings to light the dangerous mentality that was dominating Iraq’s law in the 1990’s where the cruelty of the regime were mixed with the principles of the old Baath Party in extremist religious discourse to reach an image of legitimizing its work within a religious framework and adopted by the system. This vision and track has left serious consequences on Iraq brought to light after the fall of the regime. Post regime collapse indicates the establishment of the power of the

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17. Jurisprudence Transactions Law (63) in 2002.

18. Revolutionary Command Council resolution (59) in 1994.

19. Revolutionary Command Council resolution (92) in 1994.

20. Revolutionary Command Council Resolution (109) in 1994.

21. Sharon Otterman, Iraq, What is the Fedayeen Saddam?, Council on Foreign Relations, March 31, 2003.

Saddam Fedayeen law that required in its regulations to the “preservation of the meanings of honor guided by the true Islamic religion and the holy book of high values and models of good humanitarian advances for the glorious Arab nation”.<sup>22</sup>

### **The Campaign of Faith, Terrorism and Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)**

The regime managed by its faith campaign, which lasted a decade, in the formation of a new mentality in the Iraqi society, or parts of it. Although it is difficult to judge the impact of this campaign in the formation of the Iraqi mind, but it certainly created a new mentality for some Iraqis who adopted religious extremism and violence and a moderate religious, and to afloat understandings of religious texts. It seems that the expansion of memorizing the Quran curricula, and the Sunnah, and indoctrinate extremist and racist Baath Party principles with the pressures of the economic and security situation, and creating differentiations in the society on the basis of religiousness to the plans of faith campaign with loyalty to Saddam, and the exercised by the authority has created what might be called the new generation of extremism and violence in Iraq. Methods of extremist organizations which began exercising terrorist operations in Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime indicate to the same methodology used by the regimes security authorities. Many organizations that emerged after the fall, the Shura Mujahideen Council, Al-Qaeda, the Islamic Army in Iraq, the Naqshbandi Army, and ISIS all follow the same security mentality of the system in gathering information, the implementation of processes and management methods. According to many reports and studies specialised in the study of terrorism in Iraq most of the military leadership of Al-Qaeda in Iraq and ISIS are from the military and security approaches of the former regime and that these leaders are greatly influenced by the atmosphere of the faith campaign primarily aimed at Iraqis. They managed to construct a complex network based on security expertise. It seems that more than 100 Iraqi officers are leading and directing the current ISIS strategies, many of whom may well have worked as part of other extremist organisations since 2003. According to a report by the Associated Press, Taha Taher al-Ani, who was an officer in the rank of a major in the artillery school in the Iraqi army during the 1990’s was carrying extremist religious trends, and is now considered the most important military commanders in organizing ISIS<sup>23</sup> The investigative

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22. The establishment of the power of the Saddam Fedayeen Law (12) 1996.

23. HAMZA HENDAWI and QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA, IS top command dominated by ex-officers in Saddam’s army, AP, August 2015.

report published by the the German newspaper Der Spiegel, ISIS may offer great detail on former colonel in the air force intelligence and leader in ISIS Samir Khleifawi (Haji Bakar)'s thinking having obtained documents which illustrates his plans, having adopted methods of espionage, laying agents, methods of communication, organizational structure, and other things<sup>24</sup> Khleifawi joined in al Qaeda in 2003 turning out to be a leading member of al ISIS. According to some studies, Khleifawi is the mastermind behind the expansion of the ISIS organization in Syrian territory and the second man of the organization after "Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi," until he was killed in 2014. As for Saddam's religious institutes, that have been created in the stages of faith campaign work, has formed an important cadre of clerics who hold fundamentalist and Salafi beliefs with Baathist overtones. Ibrahim Awad Ibrahim (Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi) spent several years at Saddam University for Islamic Sciences for several years and holds a degree from it. The faith campaign formed a large number of clerics who were and are today an important part of the legislative and the steering system and recruitment for terrorist and extremist organizations as ISIS and others. But studying and analyzing the most prominent extremist character of religious organizations that emerged after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in terms of leadership that give clear indications about them. The Association of Muslim Scholars, for example, sponsors a number of armed extremist religious groups and is a Sunni-religious political institution. The Commission adopts a sectarian speech that stems from Um-Al Maarik Mosque 2003 described by a clergyman close to the regime before its fall as having "restored the previous status of Islam".<sup>25</sup>

Amidst the last days of Saddam Hussein's regime, specifically in April of 2003, a media phenomenon emerged called "Arab volunteers". Multiple sources have estimated their numbers at about 8,000 fighters from several Arab and Muslim countries.<sup>26</sup> They were being trained in camps of the former regime in several parts of Iraq. Some other sources have indicated that most of these fighters were holding religious extremism as an ideology, possibly in cooperation with elements of the regimes security and religious bodies that have formed the core of al-Qaida in Iraq in the first months that followed the fall of the regime with the rise of Mohammed Nazzal al-Khalayleh (Abu Musab al-Zarqawi), leader of

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24. Christoph Reuter, Secret Files Reveal the Structure of Islamic State, Der Spiegel, 4/18/2015

25. Hassan Jwani, Saddam Hussein chose to take refuge in Islam from extremism, stated by the Secretary General of the Islamic People's Congress, Middle East Online, 12/12/2002.

26. Tayseer Alouni, the tragedy of Arab volunteers in Iraq, 24/4/2004

the organization. These fighters were distributed in several areas in Baghdad and Karbala for example, on strategic sites that the regime worries of its collapse. The testimonies gathered by journalists about the fighters as carrying extremist religious thought, similar to the thoughts held by al-Qaeda or ISIS. In spite of the heavy losses incurred by these militias at the hands of US forces, a number of them had been able to withdraw and hide in some mosques in Baghdad. However, these volunteers began using explosives and suicide belts. One of the things that the world did not take notice of in that period was the number of statements declared by the so-called ‘leadership of the Mujahideen in Iraq’ with a media blackout to revealing such data of the number of statements by the group. In spite the difficulty of verifying the reliability of this data, yet, the language in which statements were used echoed expressions of extremist organizations, and information that was published, suggests that this configuration may be the first nucleus of al-Qaida in Iraq. The first statement is full of words such as “Mujahideen,” and “Prince” and “martyrdom operations”, in addition to the linguistic method that moves along the horizon of the old and hortatory language styles. But the fourth statement revealed some additional details. It was stated, “We are successfully integrated and properly equipped to enter Mourabiti Afghanistan and the Mujahideen of al-Qaeda into Mesopotamia as previously planned for”.<sup>27</sup> It is noted that when al-Qaida began to announce its activities in Iraq it used “Tawhid and Jihad” phrases in 2003 later turning into “Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia”. It is noted that the leadership of the Mujahideen ceased publishing its data, as it started to provide other data for organizations including the “Mujahideen command of the armed forces,” using a written style that is usually used by the Baath Party. This may be an indication for a split between the Baathists and extremist jihadists in the early period of the collapse of Saddam Hussein’s regime. At the same time, the emergence of al-Qaeda as a terrorist power, operative and dangerous in Iraq.

## Conclusion

Saddam Hussein’s faith campaign in the 1990’s took a dangerous turn. It significantly contributed to the establishment of an infrastructure of terrorism and extremism in Iraq and the region, and planted the seeds of sectarianism and

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27. Fourth statement from the leadership of the Mujahideen in Iraq, Al Shaab newspaper, 04/19/2003.

sectarian fighting with a heterogeneous mixture between the Baath Party and their perceptions ideas, and the ideas of extremist religious movements and its approaches. However, the former regime succeeded in producing a dangerous model combining the Baath Party and its systematic cruelty, and methods of administration and between extremism and the rigors of extremist organizations. Islamic discourse has been used to justify many of the regimes genocide and mass murder repressive methods. The campaign has led to the complete destruction of Iraq's infrastructure and the region, by providing elements of thought and propaganda represented by Saddam's religious institutes and clerics in spreading extremist ideology and people with extremist thought to be leaders and soldiers in the terrorist organizations, that began to multiply dramatically after the fall of the regime. The campaign coincided with the preparation of a training system for military and security and applied extremely harsh elements of the former regime. With ideological and military preparations, religious speech, which was adopted during the regime's faith campaign to extend the regime's relationship networks with organizations and countries that were adopting extremist and exclusionary interpretation of religious texts in the Arab and Islamic countries, which paved the way for the unprecedented entry of foreign fighters to Iraq who fought alongside such organizations, most of whom are suicide bombers. Despite the pressures of the siege, and wars, and the chaos that accompanied the fall of the regime, and the occupation, along with regional interferences in the internal affairs of Iraq, Iraq today - as is the case with neighboring countries - is from the consequences of that policy.

In addition, analysis of this ideological campaigns aspects does not give evidence of a rising trend that confirms the Baath regimes towards Islam within the last decade, nor its adoption of a substitute Islamic thought instead of its own thoughts it relied upon. Faith, however, was just another style, or a social engineering tactic by which the system incorporated into Iraqi society, and accorded the same methods it used, such as violence and cruelty, publicity, education, and centers of differing effects. The campaign was moving in accordance of laying a social, political and religious ground that delays or complicates the process of the system collapse.

Despite the supporters lended to the Baath regime by some writers in defending the campaign because they were trying to rearrange the Baath party for it to return as an Islamist party after its collapse<sup>28</sup>, or that the faith campaign was an attempt by the former regime to contain the phenomenon of extremism<sup>29</sup>; it can be said that the results indicate that faith-based campaign was the one that opened the door wide open for religious extremist movements to work in Iraq, and even encouraged it. As there is no indication that the Baath Party has been transformed into Islamic ideology instead of the autocratic totalitarian ideology that was adopted. The campaign was purely for political purposes.

It is of utmost importance that there be a deeper study of Saddam Husseins faith campaign in more than one direction, so as to understand and analyze the effects it left on the Iraqi society, and how to work to rid the Iraqi citizen of its consequences, whereby it seems that some of its components, methods and characteristics are still deeply present in the religious, educational and social and political environments in Iraq. Its effects can be felt in many aspects of the state and society. As for the terror suffered by Iraq today, and which carries a religious extremist characteristic, it still derives its viability in large part from the effects of the said campaign.

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28. Fadel al-Rubaie, the Algerian solution in Iraq and the delusions of the Baath return to power, 26/4/2009.

29. Ahmed Ali, the campaign of faith: the reasons and backgrounds, goals and dimensions.