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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

BROTHERS OR RIVALS?
IRAN AND THE SHI'A OF IRAQ

by

Robert C. Hunter

June 2006

Thesis Advisor: James R. Russell
Second Reader: Abbas Kadhim

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13. ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the loyalty of the Shi'a of Iraq. While some Sunni Arab leaders have recently accused the Shi'a of Iraq of pledging loyalty to Iran, in fact the Iraqi Shi'a are loyal to their own nation. The Shi'a have developed different identities in Iran and Iraq due to different historical legacies and patterns of conversion. Modern religious-based political activists in the two nations have responded to their different circumstances with different policies. Ba'athist Party programs that secularized Iraqi society collapsed in the wake of events in the 1908s and 1990s. Old sources of authority reemerged among the Iraqi Shi'i community in their wake. These sources, primarily religious and tribal leaders, asserted themselves after the American invasion overthrew Saddam Hussein. Shi'i leaders such as Sadr and Sistani have sought not to work in the interests of Iran, but in what they perceive as the interest of their own constituents. They share many interests with Iran, but have been willing to work with Americans. The thesis urges American leaders to see that Shi'a of Iraq as they are, not as Sunnis Arab leaders portray them, in order to avoid alienating the Shi'a and thus pushing them further toward Iran.

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BROTHERS OR RIVALS?
IRAN AND THE SHI'A OF IRAQ

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the loyalty of the Shi'a of Iraq. While some Sunni Arab leaders have recently accused the Shi'a of Iraq of pledging loyalty to Iran, in fact the Iraqi Shi'a are loyal to their own nation. Shi'a have developed different identities in Iran and Iraq due to different historical legacies and patterns of conversion. Modern religious-based political activists in the two nations have responded to their different circumstances with different policies. Ba'athist Party programs that secularized Iraqi society collapsed in the wake of events in the 1908s and 1990s. Old sources of authority reemerged among the Iraqi Shi'i community in their wake. These sources, primarily religious and tribal leaders, asserted themselves after the American invasion overthrew Saddam Hussein. Shi'i leaders such as Sadr and Sistani have sought not to work in the interests of Iran, but in what they perceive as the interest of their own constituents. They share many interests with Iran, but have been willing to work with Americans. The thesis urges American leaders to see that Shi'a of Iraq as they are, not as Sunnis Arab leaders portray them, in order to avoid alienating the Shi'a and thus pushing them further toward Iran.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION....1
A. BACKGROUND....1
1. The Shi'a of Iraq: The New Alqamis?....1
2. The Status of the Shi'a in Iraq....2
3. The Two Pillars of Shi'i Iraq: The United States and Iran....2
B. PURPOSE....3
C. RELEVANCE....3
1. Major Debates about the Issue....4
a. Arab Sunni Views of Shi'i Loyalty....5
b. Western Views of Iran's Influence in Iraq....6
2. Survey of Prior Work on the Question....7
D. RESEARCH QUESTIONS....10
1. Main Question....10
2. Subordinate Questions....10
E. MAIN ARGUMENT: IRAQI SHI'A ARE LOYAL TO IRAQ, NOT IRAN....10
F. METHODOLOGY....13
1. Case Study: The Development of Shi'i Identity in Iraq....13

II. THE ROOTS OF SHI'I ACTIVISM IN IRAQ AND IRAN....15
A. INTRODUCTION....15
B. SHI'ISM IN IRAQ: A BRIEF HISTORY....15
1. The Sunni-Shi'i Split....15
a. The Succession and Ali....15
b. The Martyrdom of Husayn....16
c. The Twelfth Imam....17
2. The Persian-Arab Struggle for Mesopotamia....19
3. The Pattern of Conversion in Iraq....20
C. SHI'A ACTIVISM IN IRAQ....23
1. First Incidents of Political Action....23
2. Period of Relative Quietism....26
a. The Rise of Qom and the Decline of Najaf....26
b. Shi'i Politics and Religion in the Modern Iraqi State....27
D. RESURGENT STIRRINGS OF SHI'I ACTIVISM....29
1. Mohammed Baqir Sadr, "The First Martyr" of the Sadr Movement; and the Roots of Hizb al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya....29
2. Khomeini and Shi'i Activism in Iran....32
E. CONCLUSION....33

III. THE RISE AND DECLINE OF SHI'I ACTIVISM IN IRAQ AND IRAN....35
A. INTRODUCTION....35
B. SHI'I ACTIVISM IN THE 1970S....36

1. The Death of Hakim and the Rise of Sadr 36
2. Khomeini and *Vilayat-i Faqih* 36
3. Ba'athist Repression of the Islamists 37
4. The Islamic Revolution in Iran 38
5. Sadr's Reaction to the Revolution 40

C. THE CULMINATING POINT: 1979 AND 1980 41
1. The Iraqi Shi'i Islamist Response to the Iranian Revolution 41
2. The Execution of Sadr and the Eradication of Iraqi Islamism 42

D. THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR AND SHI'I LOYALTY 43
1. Saddam's Motives 44
2. The Start of the War 44
3. Iran's Counteroffensive 46
4. War's End 47
5. The Formation of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq and the Badr Army 48
6. The Trial of Iraqi Shi'i Loyalty 50

E. THE WAR'S AFTERMATH 52
1. The Weakening of the Secular Socialist Iraqi State 52
2. Iran's Postwar Politics: Retreat from the Export of Revolution and the Death of Khomeini 54
3. Iraqi Islamists' Loss of Legitimacy 55

F. THE FRAGMENTATION OF *DAWA* 56

G. CONCLUSION 57

IV. THE PERSIAN GULF WAR TO OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM 59

A. INTRODUCTION 59

B. THE INVASION OF KUWAIT 60
1. The Road to War 60
2. The Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait and Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm 60
3. The Safwan Cease-Fire Talks 62

C. THE SHI'I INTIFADA 63
1. Roots of Rebellion 63
2. The *Intifada* Begins 63
3. The Regime Response 65
4. The "Great Betrayal" 67
5. No-Fly Zones and the Kurdish Safe Haven 69

D. THE DECLINE OF THE IRAQI STATE 69
1. Economic Challenges to the State 70
2. The Direct Solution: New Coercive Institutions 72
3. Tying Tribalism and Islam to the Ba'athist State 72
a. The Regime's Neo-Tribal Policies 73
b. The State and the People Turn to Religion 74
c. The Shi'i Religious Revival and the Sadr II Movement 74

E. THE ISOLATION OF THE EXILES 77

F. THE TRIAL OF REVOLUTIONARY FORCES IN IRAN 79

G. THE SECOND BUSH ADMINISTRATION 81
H. CONCLUSION 82

V. SHI'I ALLEGIANCES AFTER SADDAM 83
A. INTRODUCTION 83
B. THE U.S. INVASION AND THE FIGHT FOR SHI'I LOYALTY 84
1. American Assumptions and Plans 84
a. "Shiaphilia" and "Sunniphobia" 84
b. ORHA's Plans 85
c. Transformational War 86
2. The Shi'i Reception 86
3. Iranian Infiltration and SCIRI/Badr 87
4. Sadr's Power Play 87
C. THE STATE OF NATURE REVEALED 89
1. Initial Missteps by ORHA and the CPA 89
a. The Looting of Baghdad 89
b. The First Fight for Political Authority 90
2. The Resistance Begins in Earnest 91
a. Bremer's Orders 91
b. The Formal Declaration of Occupation 92
3. Alienating the Shia 92
a. Disregarding Resident Religious Figures 92
b. Cancelling Elections in the Shi'i South 94
c. Ignoring, Then Antagonizing Sadr 94
4. Ceding Its Role as Leviathan 95
a. Ignoring the Problem 95
b. Terror Bombings to Isolate the Occupation from Its Allies 96
5. A Confrontation with Sadr 97
D. THE SHI'I TAKE POWER 98
1. The Iraqi Governing Council 98
a. Najaf and Fallujah, Fall 2004 98
b. Zarqawi's War on the Shia 99
c. Abu Ghraib 99
2. The Transitional Government 99
a. The Formation of the United Iraqi Alliance under Sistani 99
b. The Shi'i Religious Parties Take Office 100
c. The New Government and Iran 100
d. Shi'i Factions Take Over the Security Services 101
E. SADR REBUILDS 104
F. THE TRIUMPH OF THE IRANIAN CONSERVATIVE HARD-LINERS 104
1. New Ties between Iran and Iraq 104
2. The Iranian Elections of July 2005 105
3. Iranian Attacks on American Targets 106
G. EMERGING ISSUES, LATE 2005 106
1. Writing the Constitution 106

2. Security Forces and Militias 109
3. Federalism and Regions 109
4. The Elections of December 2005....111
a. Sadr Joins the United Iraqi Alliance....111
b. The Election Results 112
H. POST-ELECTION POLITICS....113
1. The Sadr Movement's Philosophy and Base of Support....115
a. Sadr's Post-Election Diplomacy....116
b. Sadr and the Other Shi'i Factions 116
c. Sadr and the Sunnis....117
d. Sadr and Iran 119
2. Sistani's Goals and Methods....121
3. To the Brink....122
a. The Bombing of the al-Askari Mosque 122
b. Sadr and Sistani's Control Erodes? 123
c. Festering Civil Disorder and Economic Breakdown....123
4. New Activism from the *Hawza*....126
5. The Shi'a Turn Against America? 126
I. CONCLUSION 127
VI. CONCLUSION 131
A. INTRODUCTION....131
B. REVIEW OF THE SHI'A OF IRAQ....131
C. THE SITUATION FACING THE SHI'A TODAY....132
1. Waning U.S. Influence....132
2. Iran's Position 133
3. Future Trends....135
a. Whither the Hawza? 135
b. Rising Regional Conflict?....136
D. U.S. POLICY....136
1. Limitations....136
2. Goals....137
3. Recommended Actions 138
E. CONCLUSION 140
LIST OF REFERENCES....141
INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST....149

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Captain Ryan Beaupre, Captain Benjamin Sammis, and Captain James Edge; and in honor of all who have fought for a better Iraq.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND

1. The Shi'a of Iraq: The New Alqamis?

On 30 April 2003, the London Arab daily *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* published a letter from Saddam Hussein to the people of Iraq, the first such letter to be released following the American invasion. In the letter, Saddam compares the fall of Baghdad to the Americans to the Mongol conquest of the city in 1258.

> Just as Hulagu entered Baghdad, so did the criminal Bush enter Baghdad, with the help of [traitor from within] 'Alqami-indeed, even more than one 'Alqami.
>
> They did not vanquish you, you who refuse to accept occupation and humiliation, and you, who have Arabism and Islam in your hearts and minds, [they did not defeat you] except through treachery.[1]

By referencing the traitor 'Alqami, Saddam draws on Iraqis' "cultural memory"[2] of an ancient betrayal, implying that a similar betrayal aided the American invasion. The last Sunni Abbasid caliph, Al-Musta'sim, was allegedly betrayed by a Shi'i vizier, Mu'ayyad Al-Din Muhammad ibn Al-'Alqami, in a conspiracy to assist Hulagu Khan in his conquest, with disastrous consequences for the caliphate.[3] Thus the point of comparison between then and now is that the traitor(s) both then and now were Shi'a while the supreme rulers betrayed were both Sunnis. Saddam points by implication to the Shi'a as complicit in the toppling of his regime by foreign invaders who resemble the conquering hordes of Hulagu Khan. In the process, by specifying "indeed, even more than one 'Alqami," Saddam indicts all Shi'a: in their welcoming of the Americans, all are traitors.

---

1 Open Source Center, "Saddam Husayn Urges Iraqis to Rise Against 'Infidel Occupier,'" GMP20030430000037, 30 April 2003.

2 William Beeman distinguishes "cultural memory" from "scientific history": the former occurs when "events are 'remembered' in a way that creates a causal link between the present and the past, whether these memories are accurate or not…When they are widely believed," he continues, "such memories have the force of fact, and can be strong motivators for public action." William Beeman, "The U.S.-Shiite Relationship in a New Iraq: Better Than the British?" *Strategic Insights*, Volume III, Issue 5 (May 2004).

3 Michael S. Doran, "Intimate Enemies," *Washington Post*, 18 February 2004, A19.

In this instance, the foreign invaders referenced by Saddam referred were American. There is truth to Saddam's accusation: the United States did base its plans on its own perceptions of the Shi'i community and close cooperation with a very small number of sympathetic Shi'i actors. These perceptions soon proved misguided, however, and the collaborators proved to have very limited influence. Instead, other Shi'a rose to prominence, but they too have become objects of suspicion by both domestic and foreign observers, not for their ties to America, but for their connections with Iran. Particularly noteworthy have been the accusations from Sunni allies of America such as King Abdullah of Jordan, who has warned of a developing "Shi'a Crescent;" Prince Sultan of Saudi Arabia, who has said that U.S. policy is turning Iraqi over to Iran; and President Mubarak of Egypt, who has said that the Arab Shi'a are more loyal to Iran that to their own nations.

2. The Status of the Shi'a in Iraq

Roughly 60-65% of the 26 million citizens of Iraq are Shi'a,[4] but until 30 January 2005, they were denied the political power representative of their numbers. Ever since the final triumph of the Ottoman Empire over the Safavids in 1638, Sunnis had controlled their territory. Thus, while the recent conclusion of relatively free and fair elections marked an initial step toward a possible Iraqi democracy, it had far more concrete and immediate implications in terms of sectarian power. Vali Nasr terms this revolution the "Shi'a Revival": the Shi'i political awakening throughout Iraq and the greater Middle East.[5]

3. The Two Pillars of Shi'i Iraq: The United States and Iran

In his letter Saddam associates the Shi'a with only one source of their support, the American invaders. Two foreign sponsors, the United States and Iran, form the most important potential partners for the Shi'a of Iraq. America overthrew the Sunni regime and enabled the Shi'a to achieve power. Recently, however, the United States has sought to impose some limits on Shi'i ascendancy, and even threatened to withdraw support if certain conditions are not met. The Shi'a remember the American "betrayal" during their

4 Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook: Iraq*, 10 January 2006, http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/iz.html (accessed 12 June 2006).

5 Vali Nasr, "Regional Implications of Shi'a Revival in Iraq," *The Washington Quarterly*, Volume 27, Issue 3 (Summer 2004), 7.

1991 uprising against the Ba'ath regime, when America abandoned them to severe repression. Thus today, their leaders complain with rising stridency of current U.S. restraints which limit their ability to protect themselves. They are particularly critical of U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, an Afghan-American Sunni Muslim who they increasingly view as a partisan of his Iraqi co-religionists. Thus, more and more, the Shi'a question America's reliability.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is the other external supporter of the Iraqi Shi'a. Since 2003, the Iranians have sponsored a wide swath of the community, while remaining flexible enough to take advantage of emerging opportunities. Iranian representatives have met repeatedly with Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the most powerful figure in Shi'i Iraq, while Sistani has declined to meet with American officials,[6] or even to read a letter recently sent personally to him by President Bush.[7] Sistani refuses American visitors while receiving Iranian ones both because of religious tradition and to avoid legitimizing the American presence in Iraq. Shi'i Iraqi politicians of all factions have also traveled to Iran, and some have pledged to defend Iran from any outside attack. As America's influence seems to be on the wane in Iraq, Iran's appears to be on the rise.

B. PURPOSE

This research seeks to determine the primary loyalties of the Shi'a of Iraq. Because religious forces now dominate Shi'i Iraqi politics, this thesis examines the history of Shi'i religious authority in Iraq and Iran.[8] It studies the relationship between the Shi'i communities in Iraq and Iran both in the recent past and in the present. It then assesses possible future developments within and between the two countries and provides policy recommendations for U.S. decision makers.

C. RELEVANCE

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of developments in Iraq for U.S. foreign policy. The White House defines the war in Iraq as "the central front in the

6 Geoffrey Kemp, *Iran and Iraq: The Shia Connection, Soft Power, and the Nuclear Factor* Special Report No. 156, (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, November 2005), 1.

7 Qassim Abdul-Zahra, "Shiite Ayatollah Ignores Letter from Bush," Associated Press, 30 March 2006.

8 This thesis will use the term "Muslim" to refer to one who practices the religion of Islam and the word "Islamist" to refer to one who seeks to organize the state according to one interpretation of Islamic law.

global war on terror" and asserts "we will do everything it takes to win."[9] In the three years since Operation Iraqi Freedom, U.S. policymakers have been surprised by many events in Iraq, including the rise of armed resistance and the outbreak of sectarian violence. No result stands to upset the status quo in the Middle East more than the erosion of Sunni Arab political dominance. The effects of this transformation may rival or even eclipse the significance of the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement, the rise of Arab nationalism, the 1970s oil boom, and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the shaping of the Middle East.

If a Shi'i-led government comes to power permanently in Iraq, it will mark the first time that an Arab country has come under Shi'i rule.[10] Thus, political developments there may set an example for events in other nations with large Shi'a populations, such as Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, or even Iran. Arab states may be forced to confront demands for more communal rights, while Iran's leaders may have to contend with the demonstrative effect of popular elections and alternate religious leadership. It is possible that sectarian tensions could lead to a civil war in Iraq, and, consequently, regional sectarian war. Shi'i dominance in Iraq could also enable Iran to proceed with its nuclear weapons development without fear of outside interference. Iraq thus marks an important test case for Shi'a-Sunni relations, Arab-Iranian relations, and intra-Shi'a relations. To properly assess and prepare for future developments within Iraq and the greater Middle East, policy makers must examine the Shi'i communities within Iraq and Iran, consider their ties to one another, attempt to determine their likely political goals, and consider how they may influence one another.

1. Major Debates about the Issue

The major debate surrounding Iran's involvement in Shi'i Iraqi political affairs centers on whether the Shi'a of Iraq are most loyal to Iran or to their own country. Although this debate has been largely confined to the Arab world, events in Iraq may soon propel it to a wider audience.

---

9 National Security Council, *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq* (November 2005), http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/iraq/iraq_strategy_nov2005.html (accessed 12 June 2006).

10 Nasr, "Regional Implications of Shi'a Revival in Iraq," 16.

a. Arab Sunni Views of Shi'i Loyalty

Neighboring Sunni governments have questioned both the general loyalty of Arab Shi'a and the specific allegiances of Iraqi Shi'a. In December 2004, King Abdullah of Jordan articulated the greater concern when he expressed his fear of a "Shi'a Crescent" emerging in the aftermath of the Iraq War that would span from Lebanon to Pakistan, and center on the "horseshoe" of oil fields rimming the Persian Gulf.

> If Iraq goes Islamic Republic, then, yes, we've opened ourselves to a whole new set of problems that will not be limited to the borders of Iraq…Even Saudi Arabia is not immune from this. It would be a major problem. And then that would propel the possibility of a Shi'i-Sunni conflict even more, as you're taking it out of the borders of Iraq.[11]

Other prominent Sunnis echoed King Abdullah's concerns. President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt recently claimed in an interview on *al-Arabiya* television, for example, that "Shiites are mostly always loyal to Iran and not the countries where they live."[12]

Some Sunni Arabs focus more specifically on Iranian efforts in Iraq. In late September 2005, in address to the Council on Foreign Relations, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal warned that Iran was essentially taking power in Iraq:

> Now, the south is pretty much pacified. There is no conflict in there, because those who could cause conflicts, whether they're supporters of Iran or others, are happy with the situation that is happening. The Iranians now go in this pacified area that the American forces have pacified, and they go into every government of Iraq, pay money, install their own people, put their own—even establish police forces for them, arms and militias that are there and reinforce their presence in these areas. And they are being protected in doing this by the British and the American forces in the area.

11 Quoted in Robin Wright and Peter Baker, "Iraq, Jordan See Threat to Election from Iran; Leaders Warn Against Forming Religious State," *Washington Post*, 8 December 2004, A1.

12 Quoted in Edward Wong, "Iraqis Denounce Mubarak's Remarks on Strife," *New York Times*, 10 April 2006, A6.

> Now, this is—(laughs)—to us it seems out of this world that you do this. We fought a war together to keep Iran from occupying Iraq after Iraq was driven out of Kuwait. *Now we are handing the whole country over to Iran without reason.* [13] (Emphasis added)

Iraq's Sunni neighbors have varying reasons to be suspicious of Iranian activities in Iraq. The most extremist Salafi and Wahhabi jihadis see Shi'ism as an even greater threat to Muslims than Israel. While this is not the mainstream view within the Sunni community, it tends to spread as sectarian tensions increase. In addition, many Sunni-led Arab states, such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Bahrain, have large or even majority-Shi'i populations or regions. Those regimes fear the spillover effects of a growing Shi'i movement, particularly one allegedly loyal to Iran.

b. Western Views of Iran's Influence in Iraq

Western observers and officials also worry publicly about Iraqi Shi'i politics and Iranian influence within Iraq. Even before the invasion, Vice President Cheney voiced his concern about a potential "Iranian-style theocracy" in Iraq and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld echoed his concerns.[14] In April of 2004, American neoconservative Michael Rubin accused Moqtada al-Sadr of being supported by Iran shortly after Sadr began deploying his Mahdi Army.[15] Other conservatives such as William Safire, David Brooks, and Michael Ledeen soon repeated those allegations.[16] In a recent interview, Ambassador Khalilzad claimed that Iran is pursuing a two-track strategy in Iraq: "on the one hand in terms of state-to-state relations, Iran is supporting the government in Iraq, and on the other hand, part of the Iranian government, some of its institutions, are providing assistance to extremist groups, to militias, and are being unhelpful to Iraq in this difficult transition that the country is going through."[17]

---

13 Prince Saud al-Faisal, "The Fight against Extremism and the Search for Peace" (Speech at the Council on Foreign Relations, New York, New York, 20 September 2005), transcript available at http://www.cfr.org/publication/8908/fight_against_extremism_and_the_search_for_peace_rush_transcript_federal_news_service_inc.html (accessed 12 June 2006).

14 Beeman.

15 Michael Rubin, "Sadr Signs," *National Review Online*, 6 April 2004 http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/rubin200404060834.asp (accessed 12 June 2006).

16 Beeman.

17 Zalmay Khalizad, "Newsmaker: Zalmay Khalilzad," Interview by Gwen Ifill, *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer,* 21 February 2006.

2. Survey of Prior Work on the Question

The literature dealing with sectarian and political identities in Iraq and Iran is extensive and growing as the issues increase in relevance. Some studies focus on Iran's current influence in Iraq, while others detail the history and identity of Iraqi Shi'ism and its relationship to that of Iran.

Three recent short papers present a consensus of many informed observers regarding Iranian influence in Iraq: International Crisis Group's (ICG) *Iran in Iraq: How Much Influence?,* Geoffrey Kemp's *Iran and Iraq: The Shia Connection, Soft Power, and the Nuclear Factor*, and Kenneth Katzman's report to Congress, *Iran's Influence in Iraq.* These papers generally agree that Sunni Arab allegations of Iranian dominance among the Shi'a of Iraq oversimplify and exaggerate the situation. These reports identify the main interests that Iran seeks to promote in Iraq: the prevention of the fragmentation of Iraq into smaller entities, the promotion of a central government strong enough to enforce order but too weak to pose a threat to Iran, and the prevention of the encirclement of Iran by U.S. forces.[18] Katzman describes Iran's strategy in Iraq as an attempt "to engineer and perpetuate domination of Iraq's government by pro-Iranian Shi'i Islamist movements that would, in Iran's view, likely align Iraq's foreign policy with that of Iran."[19] The three reports then maintain that Iran is pursuing a strategy of "managed chaos" in Iraq by supporting a "diversified portfolio" of clients.[20] The reports also note that Iran has little margin for error in its strategy, as either violent chaos or a successful, prosperous democracy may reverberate negatively back onto the Iranian regime.[21] According to the reports, it is very difficult to quantify exactly how Iran is influencing events in Iraq, because the ambiguous nature of many actors, combined with the covert practices to which many of them adhere, obscures the situation.[22] According to Katzman, Iran works

18 International Crisis Group, *Iran in Iraq: How Much Influence? Crisis Group Middle East Report No. 38*, (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 21 March 2005), 10-11 and Kemp, 3.

19 Kenneth Katzman, *Iran's Influence in Iraq*, Congressional Research Service RS 22323, 15 November 2005, 2.

20 International Crisis Group, *Iran in Iraq: How Much Influence?*, 22 and Kemp, 2 and Katzman, *Iran's Influence in Iraq*, 6.

21 International Crisis Group, *Iran in Iraq: How Much Influence?*, 23 and Kemp, 5.

22 International Crisis Group, *Iran in Iraq: How Much Influence?*, 13 and Kemp, 5.

primarily through two client organizations, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq and the Dawa Party, and Iran enjoys less cooperation from Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani and Moqtada al-Sadr.[23]

The literature regarding the Iraqi Shi'i community and the history of its relations with Iran generally highlights the diversity of the community and the divisions between the Arab and the Persian Shi'a. As such, it suggests that Iraqis have not historically demonstrated primary loyalty to Iran. Even so, it also demonstrates that there are significant shared interests between the two communities and powerful actors from each side who support one another.

The scholarship on Iraqi Shi'ism is extensive and paints a portrait of a diverse community. Hanna Batatu notes in *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* that Iraqi national identity has always had difficulty incorporating the Shi'a.[24] He also notes in a chapter of Shi'ism and Social Protest that "Iraq's Shi'is are clearly more comfortable with their own kind and prefer that real leadership should be in the hands of the Shi'is who are Iraq."[25] Yitzak Nakash's *The Shi'is of Iraq* emphasizes the tribal Arab background of most Shi'i Iraqis and concludes that there are significant divisions between them and their Iranian counterparts.[26] Faleh A. Jabar's *The Shiite Movement in Iraq* likewise posits that, despite the close ties between Iraqi and Iranian Shi'i *ulama*, the communities themselves are quite different and have separate interests.[27] In *A History of Iraq*, Charles Tripp argues that in recent decades Saddam Hussein sought to divide the Iraqi and Iranian Shi'a by promoting factionalism and encouraging divisions within the Iraqi Shi'i community.[28] These divisions, Tripp believes, were most manifest in the 1991 rebellion in which underground Islamic parties and urban communities revolted against the Ba'athist regime, while some of the prominent Shi'i tribal sheiks

23 Katzman, *Iran's Influence in Iraq*, 2.

24 Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 36.

25 Hanna Batatu, "al Da'wah al-Islamiyah and al-Mujahidin," in *Shi'ism and Social Protest*, ed. Juan R.I. Cole and Nikkie Keddie (New Haven" Yale University Press, 1986), 199.

26 Yitzhak Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), xviii.

27 Faleh A. Jabar, *The Shi'ite Movement in Iraq* (London: Saqi Books, 2003), 13.

28 Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 245.

supported government forces.[29] *The Arab Shia*, by Graham Fuller and Rend Rahim Francke, argues that the Iraqi Shi'a are not monolithic, but rather are marked by serious divisions and are likely to become even more fractured in a democratic environment.[30] Joyce Wiley asserts in *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as* that the Shi'a of Iraq are not likely to advocate the break-up of the Iraqi state: because of their numbers, they enjoy a level of influence within Iraq that they would not have in any Iranian-led "greater-Shi'a" state.[31]

Several works published since the downfall of Saddam Hussein specifically address contemporary Iraqi Shi'i politics and relations with Iran. Most conclude that Iraq is not likely to be dominated by Iran. Larry Diamond, a former advisor to the Coalition Provisional Authority, asserts in his book *Squandered Victory*, that most Iraqi Shi'a want neither a political system based on the Iranian model of *vilayat al-faqih* (guardianship of the jurisconsult) nor direct domination by Iran. Diamond notes, however, that significant minorities currently do enjoy large Iranian sponsorship and also promote *vilayat al-faqih*.[32] Toby Dodge, in *Iraq's Future: The Aftermath of Regime Change*, argues that the three main elements of the Iraqi Shi'i community, the *ulama* (the religious establishment, especially the senior Ayatollahs), the urban middle class, and the merchant class are united by their strong Iraqi nationalism and their commitment to a strong Iraqi state.[33] At the same time, he says that Iran is pursuing a long-term strategy to influence events within Iraq and has developed a mechanism to destabilize Iraq if events proceed contrary to its interests. Dodge concludes that Iran's influence may currently be constraining Iraqi Shi'i leaders from pursuing policies they prefer but that may not be favored by Iran.[34]

Collectively, the literature suggests overall that the Shi'a of Iraq have their own identity and are loyal to their own nation. It also demonstrates, however, that there may

29 Tripp, 256.

30 Graham E. Fuller and Rend Rahim Francke, *The Arab Shi'a: The Forgotten Muslims* (New York: Palgrave, 1999), 116.

31 Joyce N. Wiley, *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as* (Boulder, Co.: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 1992), 151-2.

32 Larry Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005), 382.

33 Toby Dodge, *Iraq's Future: The Aftermath of Regime Change* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 48.

34 Ibid., 62.

be powerful actors who give priority to Iranian interests and who may be able to oppose the will of the majority, as some now do within Iran.

D. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Main Question

Are the Shi'a of Iraq most loyal to Iran, or to their own country?

2. Subordinate Questions

Who are the Shi'a of Iraq? How did their identity emerge? How did the emergence of Shi'i fundamentalism in the 1970s affect the political situation in Iran and Iraq, and the relations between Iranians and Iraqi Shi'a? How did the Iran-Iraq War demonstrate the loyalty the Shi'a of Iraq? What effect did the failed rebellion of 1991, the worsening economic conditions, and the resurgence of tribalism and religion in the 1990s have on the identity of the Shi'a of Iraq? How did events in the 1990s highlight the potential weaknesses of the Islamic Revolution in Iran? Which Shi'i actors took prominence after the 2003 U.S. invasion, and where do they stand today in regard to Iran? What political, economic, and religious barriers preclude Iranian dominance of the Shi'a of Iraq? What do the Shi'a of Iraq want from Iran, and what does it want from them? What does the answer portend for the developing dynamic between those two nations? How should the United States react to this dynamic?

E. MAIN ARGUMENT: IRAQI SHI'A ARE LOYAL TO IRAQ, NOT IRAN

This thesis argues that the Shi'a of Iraq are not primarily loyal to Iran. The Shi'a are loyal to Iraq, but under their own terms, not those of Sunnis or Kurds. The Shi'a are not part of any "Shi'a Crescent" loyal to Iran; there is no such entity. The Shi'a act in their own perceived interest.

Historically, members of the Iraqi Shi'i population have not defined themselves primarily by their sectarian affiliation. Current events on the ground seem to be unifying the community through an "ascribed identity" imposed both by actors external to the community and by political entrepreneurs within it who seek to build their power through sectarian strength. More specifically, SCIRI, the *Dawa* Party, and the Sadr movement have established control over the community through their mosque networks and are poised to take control of the permanent government.

Nonetheless, the Iranian government does influence the Iraqi Shi'i community. Indeed, its "soft power" is greater within Iraq than it has been for many years. Iran has historical, geographic, economic, ethnic, economic, religious, and political ties to Iraq and manipulates these ties positively or negatively according to its interests. Its former clients, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), form a large bloc in the ruling United Iraqi Alliance (UIA). SCIRI's militia, the Badr Organization, was formed and trained under the sponsorship of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Badr is now alleged to have heavily infiltrated the Interior Ministry and to have used this institution to propagate sectarian violence. Portions of another UIA faction, the *Dawa* party, also enjoy close ties with Tehran.

To date, Iran has pursued an ambiguous policy in Iraq, supporting almost all sides in an effort to hedge its bets. Its fear of a strong, pro-Western Iraq seems to have dissipated since the results of the December 2005 elections. Recently, Iran has proposed cooperation on an oil pipeline from Basra to Abadan and has offered to finance major new airports in Basra and Najaf.

Though certain circumstances unify the Iraqi Shi'i community and tie it to Iran, Iraqi allegiance to Iran is limited by linguistic, cultural, economic, political, and religious rivalries which become subsumed in periods of sectarian violence only to regain importance as security concerns diminish. Among the most powerful potential dynamics is the emergence of a possible rival Shi'i religious establishment centered on the Najaf *hawza* (the Shi'i institution of learning supervised by Ayatollah Sistani). Indeed, rather than accepting Iranian control, Iraqi Shi'i factions may eventually assert their own claim to the leadership of the global Shi'i community.

This thesis shows that Iraqi Shi'a have an identity that distinguishes them from Iranians and a concept of religious authority that bridges national boundaries at some levels, but in practice is subject to many of the same parochial interests and divisions that characterize Sunni Islam. Certainly Sunni-led countries have shown little interest in sectarian cooperation and have even experienced significant intra-Sunni conflict. There

is little reason to assume that any theoretical pan-Shi'i movement led by Iran and the Shi'a of Iraq would be any more successful in suppressing conflict among its constituents.

This thesis argues that in the long term Iran is pursuing a classical realist foreign policy; its goal is to overturn the regional status quo of U.S. and Sunni Arab hegemony. Ironically, the United States may have inadvertently given this effort an initial push by initiating the "Shi'a Revival" as one of the outcomes of Operation Iraqi Freedom. For the short term, however, a stable, Shi'a-led Iraqi state will satisfy Iran's basic policy goals; the specific composition of the Iraqi government is of much less relative importance.

This thesis offers five policy proposals for U.S. decision makers. First, to the greatest extent possible, the United States should avoid alienating the Iraqi Shi'i leadership. Most importantly, it should not push Shi'i actors into Iran's embrace by labeling them servants of Iran. Inadvertently or not, the United States facilitated the rise to power of these actors and should not allow Iran to reap the benefits. Thus, the second proposal is that the American officials find ways to cooperate, if only indirectly, with Sadr and Sistani to prevent the emergence of a Shi'i "super-region" in the southern provinces that could call into question the viability of the Iraqi state. This effort would also require corresponding diplomacy to discourage the Kurds from moving to virtual independence. Fourth, the United States should facilitate talks with Iraq's neighbors, including Iran and Syria, aimed at minimizing the chance of regional sectarian conflict. Such talks should encourage cross-sectarian dialogue, address the Sunni crisis of confidence, and reassure Sunni allies that America is not abandoning them or turning against them. In any such talks, the U.S. government should play a discrete role, rather than seeking to publicly dominate the discussion. Finally, the U.S. administration should consider a bold diplomatic outreach effort with Iran that addresses the full range of U.S.-Iranian challenges and opportunities. Iraq should form a major topic in any such move.

In adopting these policies, U.S. government officials should avoid a direct confrontation over Iran's plans for Iraq. Rather, by encouraging democratic institutions and actors who place Iraqi nationalism above sectarian identity, the United States will indirectly undermine Iran's aspirations in Iraq. Most of all, the United States must

recognize that Iraqi Shi'i cooperation with Iran is based largely on security concerns and that Iran has legitimate interests in Iraq. Accommodating those legitimate interests will build goodwill and may reveal potential U.S. allies in Iran. Ideally, the existence of a vibrant, diverse, and prosperous Shi'i community at the head of a just and representative Iraqi political system could produce repercussions within Iran itself and encourage the growth of an anti-regime movement in that country.

F. METHODOLOGY

1. Case Study: The Development of Shi'i Identity in Iraq

"To a searing degree [in Iraq], the feelings engendered by distant and more recent pasts live today; history and the present are intertwined." So writes journalist Anthony Shadid, one of the foremost western reporters in Iraq.[35] Accordingly, this thesis examines present developments in light of Iraqi history. For its case study, this thesis explores the history of Shi'ism in Iraq, emphasizing the development of Shi'i political activism from the 1970s to the present time, and the role of Iran in that development. Chapter II discusses the history of Shi'ism in Iraq and the roots of Shi'i fundamentalism. Chapter III examines Shi'i political activism in the 1970s and '80s, from the death of Grand Ayatollah Hakim to the start of the first Gulf War, and demonstrates that the networks of the "Shi'i International" in Iraq and Iran reached their zenith during Iran's Islamic Revolution. The chapter argues that the Iran-Iraq War is counter intuitively the weakest evidence of the separate identity of Iranian and Iraqi Shi'a, and that those who cite it as definitive evidence of their enmity risk confusing correlation with causation. Chapter IV reviews Iraqi political activism from the 1991Gulf War to the 2003 American invasion. It evaluates the decline of Iraq's middle class in the wake of international sanctions and the increasing influence of tribalism and other forms of identity politics, and compares Iraqi Shi'i exiles abroad with activists who remained in the country. The chapter argues that those who stayed, while suffering extreme persecution, acquired a popular legitimacy that would later pay off following the fall of Saddam. Chapter V examines events from the beginning of the American invasion to the present. It discusses U.S. misperceptions of the Shi'i Iraqi community and details the post-invasion power struggles between the various Shi'i factions, charting the evolution of the current power

35 Anthony Shadid, *Night Draws Near: Iraq's People in the Shadow of America's War* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005), 164.

structure. The chapter argues that the rise of figures such as Sistani and Sadr show that Iraqi Shi'a and their authority figures have not demonstrated primary allegiance to Iran. Chapter VI concludes the thesis, closing with recommendations for U.S. policy makers that urge them to accommodate the enduring interests of the people of Iraq while remaining aware that tensions between the Iran and the Shi'a of Iraq mean that the Shi'a are not a zero-sum prize for either the United States or Iran.

II. THE ROOTS OF SHI'I ACTIVISM IN IRAQ AND IRAN

A. INTRODUCTION

As the birthplace of Shi'ism, Iraq has always formed the frontier between the Shi'i and Sunni worlds. Current concerns over Shi'i loyalty in Iraq are based on a long history of interaction between Iraq and Iran, and on the broader history of Sunni-Shi'i tension.

This chapter discusses the origins of Shi'ism, stressing its Arab origins, its growth within both Iraq and Iran, its increasingly political tone in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the developing movements that were associated with the key figures of Shi'i activism: the Ayatollahs Mohammad Baqir Sadr in Iraq and Ruhollah Khomeini in Iran. These historical dynamics gave rise to very different manifestations of Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq and, in the modern era, different pathways to Shi'i activism. By examining this history, it will be apparent that the Shi'a of Iraq have a very different identity from their Persian neighbors, and have consistently demonstrated allegiance to their own community and nation.

B. SHI'ISM IN IRAQ: A BRIEF HISTORY

As far back as 993 C.E, Abu Bakr al-Khawarizmi jealously noted that the inhabitants of what is today Iraq were blessed, for "in their midst are the tomb-sanctuaries of the Commander of the Faithful…and of Husain, the lord of martyrs…and because Shi'ism is Iraqi."[36] Indeed, no country can claim more intimate attachment to the faith.

1. The Sunni-Shi'i Split

a. The Succession and Ali

As Muslims, the Shi'a believe in the message of the Prophet Mohammed, an Arab. They consider the Quran, delivered by God in Arabic, as their most holy text. The conflict between Sunni and Shi'i Muslims began as a struggle to determine who would lead the *umma* (community of the faithful) after the death of the Prophet Mohammed. The *Shi'at Ali* (partisans of Ali) believed that religious authority passed from Mohammed to his daughter Fatima and her husband Ali ibn Abi Talib, and their

[36] Quoted in Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, 39.

descendents. Thus, they held that the leader of the faithful must be of the family of the Prophet. The Shi'a supported Ali because of his personal merit and excellence, believing that he was infallible through divine guidance. Sunnis, however, supported a pattern of succession in which the leader was chosen by a representative segment of believers, as was the case for the first three caliphs, Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman.[37]

Many of the events that would shape Shi'ism took place in what is now Iraq. Foremost among these were the caliphate of Ali, the martyrdom of Husayn, and the occultation of the Twelfth Imam. When Ali succeeded Uthman as caliph in the year 656 C.E., he moved the Islamic capital from Medina to Kufa, near Najaf, in present-day Iraq. Kufa's central location was crucial to the consolidation and control of the expanding Islamic empire. Ali's rival Mu'awiya ibn Abi Sufyan, the governor of Syria, plotted against him and raised an army to oppose him. Though this threat was eventually defused through negotiations, some of Ali's supporters, the Kharijites, became disillusioned, and in 661 one of them murdered him. The Shi'a later deemed Ali to be the first Imam, an infallible leader subordinate only to Mohammed.[38] Unlike caliphs, who to Sunnis were merely first among equals in a strictly temporal sense, Imams to Shi'a were both the *Hujjat Allah* (Proof of God) and the *Ayat Allah* (Sign of God), demonstrating through their presence on Earth the existence of God.[39] Ali was the only Imam to have both religious and political authority: all of his heirs would all suffer persecution.[40]

b. The Martyrdom of Husayn

Ali's son Hasan, the Second Imam, assumed the caliphate after his father's death, but after only six months, he turned the office over to Mu'awiya, his father's

37 Frederick Matheson Denny, *An Introduction to Islam* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006), 82. Today, the three names are particularly relevant, as Sunnis named for these caliphs are often threatened or even killed on the basis of their sectarian identity. See Rick Jervis and Zaid Sabah, "Danger Attaches to Sunni Names," *USA Today*, 27 April 2006, 7. Some Shi'i Iraqis refer to Ambassador Khalilzad, as "Abu Omar" (Father of Omar) because of his alleged favoritism toward his fellow Sunnis. See Nibras Kazimi, "'Abu Omar' Versus the Shias," *New York Sun*, 21 April 2006. Sunnis, especially Salafis, also insult Shi'a, calling them *Rafida* (the Rejectors), a reference to the Shi'i rejection of Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and other companions of the Prophet who opposed Ali. See Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 73.

38 Denny, 79-81.

39 Momen, 150.

40 Wiley, 120.

former rival. Mu'awiya then established the Umayyad dynasty.[41] As Mu'awiya consolidated his rule, Hasan's brother Husayn attempted to reclaim the caliphate for his family. Mu'awiya died in 680 C.E. and was succeeded by his son Yazid. That same year, as Husayn journeyed toward Kufa to meet with potential supporters, he was ambushed at Karbala. On the 10th day of the month of *Muharram*, a date known thereafter as *Ashura*,[42] Yazid's forces attacked Husayn and his followers, killing them all and taking the women and children as captives. That slaughter marked the beginning of Shi'ism, imbuing the movement with a strong sense of martyrdom, sacrifice, and tragedy,[43] and causing the name Yazid to be associated ever after with unjust rulers.[44]

The Shi'i movement drew on the symbolism of the Karbala martyrdom, attracting many new adherents. It also benefited from the general belief that the Umayyads, the Arab dictators, ruled non-Arabs as oppressed peoples. Shi'ism represented a chance to regain the egalitarianism of the early Muslims, who, under Mohammed, lived in relative equality.[45]

c. The Twelfth Imam

While most Shi'a believed in Twelve Imams, some sects branched off to follow intermediate Imams. The *Ithan Ashari* (Twelver) Shi'a, the most popular sect, believed that the Eleventh Imam, who died in 873 C.E., apparently without leaving an heir, had in fact secretly had a son,[46] Muhammad Ibn Hasan, the Twelfth Imam, born in Samarra in 870 C.E. The Shi'a believed that he went into "occultation" in 873 C.E. in Samarra to escape execution.[47] According to this doctrine, he did not die, but was merely hidden from human sight. Believers hold that God will reveal the Twelfth Imam shortly before the Day of Judgment, when he will return to Kufa as the *Mahdi* (the Rightly-

41 Denny, 79-81.

42 Momen, 30.

43 Denny, 84.

44 Said Amir Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 100.

45 Denny, 85.

46 Wiley, 120.

47 Momen, 161.

Guided One) to lead the righteous against the evil in an apocalyptic struggle.[48] Thus Iraq holds tremendous significance for the future of Shi'ism, much as it has hosted its history.

From 873 to 941 C.E., a period termed the Era of the Lesser Occultation, the Mahdi continued to contact believers through designated agents. In 941 C.E., the last of his agents informed believers that he would have no more successors, thus beginning the Greater Occultation. This epoch, which continues today, is notable in that religious authority no longer rests in defunct agents of the Hidden Imam, but rather in the *ulama.*[49] In general, the *ulama* recognize the political authority of Sunni leaders, though they have not reached consensus on what constitutes truly desirable political leadership in the absence of the Hidden Imam.[50] Even while ceding most political authority, however, at various points in history the Shi'i *ulama* have used their station as representatives of the Hidden Imam to intervene in politics in order to oppose unjust rulers.[51] This tradition continues to this day.

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48 Momen, 165-6.

49 Although they acknowledge their own faults as individuals, the *ulama* view their corporate decisions to be without error. Each Shi'i believer is obligated to follow one *mujtahid*. *Mujtahid*s determine their relative position based on their numbers of followers. Those with large numbers of followers are deemed *marji* and are called "ayatollahs." Emulators of a *mujtahid* practice *taqlid* (imitation), and the *mujtahid* they follow is thus labeled a *marja' at-taqlid* (reference point for emulation). See Momen, I204. Lesser-ranking clerics compete to be most faithful to the decisions of their *marj*i. Marji al-Taqlid Murtada Ansari centralized the leadership of the clerics in the middle of the nineteenth century, advocating that even *maraji* follow one individual deemed "most learned." The methods for determining who is "most learned" are informal, and consensus usually forms around a single leader only when popularity among the laity designates one over the others. See Wiley, 122. This makes both leader and follower dependent on one another, with the *mujtahid* providing the desired guidance and the follower increasing the power and prestige of the *mujtahid* in a semi-democratic fashion. See Nakash, 209.

Clerics are educated at *madrassas* (religious colleges), and they pursue three possible levels of knowledge. *Muqaddamat* (the primary level) emphasizes over the course of three to five years the study of Arabic, as well as logic and rhetoric. It is generally taught by senior students. The next level, *As-Sutuh* (the externals), takes from three to six years and focuses on *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and *usul al-fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence). Recently designated *mujtahid*s conduct most courses. Few students make it to the highest level *Dars al-Kharij* (graduation classes), taught by senior *mujtahids*. The curriculum at this level depends on the individual *mujtahid*, but typically revolves around *mas'ala-sazi* (constructing hypothetical examples) that test the students ability to argue in support of their knowledge. See Momen, 200-202.

The triumph of *Usuli* (rationalist) school of jurisprudence in the eighteenth century over the *Akhbari* (traditionalist) movement created the current structure of Shi'ism. The advocates of the *Usuli* school supported four sources of religious authority: quranic and traditional laws, *ijma* (consensus), and *aql* (reason). They believed that *mujtahid*s could discern religious law through their own reason, and urged believers to emulate living *mujtahids*. The Usulis supported *itjihad* (independent legal interpretation), leading to an ongoing evolution in jurisprudence not see in the Sunni world. See Wiley, 121.

50 Ibid., 121.

51 Momen, 171.

2. The Persian-Arab Struggle for Mesopotamia

Iraq also hosted centuries of conflict between Sunnis and Shi'a, conflict easily recalled today. In 750, the Abbasids defeated the Umayyads and Abu al-'Abbas became the first Abbasid caliph. Four years later, Abbas' older brother Abu Jafar took the throne. He established the new capital city of Baghdad in 758. The Abbasid period is the most celebrated period of Islam, marked by advances in jurisprudence, theology, Arabic grammar and rhetoric, philosophy, literature, and medicine.[52]

As Saddam's letter recalls, Hulagu's conquest in 1258 brought the Abbasid caliphate to a disastrous end. The office of caliphate was then transferred to Cairo, but drifted into obscurity until it was revived in 1517 by the Ottomans,[53] who would soon come into conflict with the Safavids of Iran. Isma'il, the first Safavid ruler, established Twelver Shi'ism as the state religion in 1501, at the same time he announced himself as the Safavid *shah* (king). Lacking an indigenous Shi'i religious establishment, Isma'il imported clerics from Arab lands, particularly Lebanon. Shi'ism became embedded within the Iranian populace and began to constitute a perceived threat to the Sunni Ottomans. The tensions between the Sunni and Shi'i states increased sectarian tensions throughout the *umma*.[54]

Shah Isma'il occupied Baghdad in 1508, and the Safavids held the city until the Ottoman Sultan Murat IV reconquered it in 1638. During that period, the two states vied for control of what is now Iraq, much of which was under Safavid control when Isma'il proclaimed Twelver Shi'ism as the state religion. Sunni mosques in Iraq were subsequently destroyed or converted to Shi'i institutions, which offended the Ottomans, the champions of Sunni Islam; and in 1534 their leader Suleyman the Magnificent re-took Baghdad. When Isma'il died in 1524, the Safavid Empire went into decline under pressure from the Turks in the east and the Ottomans in the west. It experienced renewed power with the ascension of Shah Abbas in 1587, but then slowly declined again until it was subdued in 1722 by Afghan invaders. Shah Abbas conquered Baghdad for the

52 Denny, 86-87.

53 William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004), 41.

54 Ibid., 52-53.

Safavids in 1624, slaughtering many Sunnis in the aftermath. In 1638, after an unsuccessful series of sieges, Sultan Murat IV reclaimed Baghdad once again for the Ottomans, who then held the city until the British invasion in 1917.[55] Sunnis would rule Iraq until 2003.

3. The Pattern of Conversion in Iraq

Iran became predominantly Shi'i several centuries before the rise of Shi'ism in Iraq, which remained predominantly Sunni. Those Iraqis who would become Shi'i would not convert for several more centuries. Their eventual conversion had a very different pattern and resulted in a much different identity not dependent on Iran.

Despite the predominance of Sunnis, as the birthplace of Shi'ism, Iraq enjoyed a strong presence of Shi'i *ulama* and benefited from the robust pilgrimage and burial trades. The majority of the population remained Sunni, however, until the threat of Wahhabi invaders in the early nineteenth century motivated the *ulama* to convert more followers for their own protection.[56] After twice laying siege to Najaf, the Wahhabis conquered Karbala in 1801. Believing shrines to be against the monotheism of Islam, they ransacked the Shrines of Imam Husayn and Abbas, taking all the gold and valuables.[57] The threat from the Wahhabis did not diminish until 1811, when Muhammad Ali began to exert pressure on them from Egypt.[58] This is the historical background of the current strife between the Wahhabi/Salafi insurgents and the Shi'i militias. Not surprisingly, events such as the bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra on 22 February 2006 viscerally evoke this memory among the Shi'a.

The Iraqi shrine cities developed an economy based on religious donations and the pilgrimage and burial trades, financial support that came mainly from Iranian *bazaari* class. This economic structure empowered the *mujtahids* (those clerics authorized to practice independent legal reasoning) to build patronage networks to serve their interests,

55 Cleveland, 52-54.

56 The Wahhabi movement began when Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, from the Najd region of Arabia, aligned with ibn Sa'ud. Empowered by their Saudi allies, Wahhabis practiced an extreme form of Sunni Islam that opposed all "innovations" not practiced by Mohammed. Wahhabis viewed Shi'i practices such as shrine pilgrimage and the veneration of imams as idolatrous, and repressed the Shi'a violently. See Denny, 319-320.

57 Momen, 143.

58 Nakash, 28.

but left them vulnerable when any interruptions in contact with foreign nations, particularly Iran, broke the necessary flow of commerce.[59]

With the establishment of the Safavid state in 1501 C.E. and the conversion of the Iranian people to Shi'ism, Ali's tomb in Najaf became a major pilgrimage site.[60] It also served as the focal point for the *hawza*. [61] The first *madrasa* (religious college) was established there in 1056 C.E. by Abu Ja'far Muhammad al-Tusi.[62] Shi'a sought to be buried at the nearby cemetery, the *Wadi al-Salam* (Valley of Peace), to be close to Ali[63]

In the centuries-long struggle between the Ottomans and Iran, Iraq became a frontier zone, with diffuse and ambiguous sources of authority.[64] Najaf in particular enjoyed considerable independence under the Ottomans.[65] By 1919, an estimated 80,000 Iranians lived in Iraq. Like many foreign populations in Ottoman territories, Iranians were not subject to local laws, and instead fell under Iranian jurisdiction.[66] Iranians were particularly drawn to Karbala in part for its association with the martyrdom of Husayn, martyrdom being a recurring theme in Iranian religiosity. Thus, Husayn's shrine became another popular pilgrimage and burial site. [67]

Following the destruction of Karbala and the assaults on Najaf by the Wahhbis, the *ulama* became determined to raise a tribal army for defense. Converting local tribes potentially offered both security and economic benefits. Instead of interfering with pilgrims from Iran and other nations, tribal Shi'a could be expected to perform pilgrimages themselves and thus to contribute to the mosque networks.[68]

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59 Nakash, 205.

60 Ibid., 163.

61 Denny, 79-81. The *Hawza* consists of the *mutjahids* who control the Iraqi religious establishment. *Mujtiahds* are those who possess an *ijza* (authorization) to practice *itjihad*.

62 Nakash, 239. Current students see themselves as the inheritors of the tradition founded by Tusi.

63 Ibid., 191. Again, this practice developed on a large scale only after the rise of the Safavids, and gained further popularity with the conversion of Iraqi tribes in the eighteenth century.

64 Ibid., 14.

65 Ibid., 19.

66 Ibid., 17.

67 Ibid., 21.

68 Ibid., 29.

Iraq's configuration of tribes solidified in the nineteenth century, as tribes fled north from Arabia in fear of the Wahhabis. These relative latecomers to Iraq would form the majority of the subsequent Shi'i population after their conversion.[69] In the end, the *ulama* converted only those tribes who were willing to give up nomadic life and settle in accordance with Ottoman policy, particularly its Land Code of 1869. The tribes that refused settlement and remained in the desert mostly remain Sunni to this day.[70] Tribes that settled chose areas near Najaf and Karbala which had reliable water sources for farming.[71]

Because settlement destroyed much of their traditional way of life, the tribes looked to Shi'ism in their search for a new collective identity.[72] Even under the new Shi'i way of life, genealogy remained of the highest importance to the tribes and tribal law superseded religious law.[73] The agents of conversion conformed Shi'i rituals to fit traditional Arab values, particularly those that revolved around *muruwwa* (manhood): valor, pride, honor, and chivalry. Rituals incorporated tribal practices such as, for example, the *hosa*, which celebrated proficiency on horseback and the discharging of rifles into the air. In concert with the tribal emphasis on *muruwwa*, emissaries emphasized the bravery, simplicity, and integrity of both Ali and his son Abbas, the half-brother of Husayn. Tribal descriptions of Abbas emphasized his physical prowess and personal heroism, rather than his religious devotion.[74] The tribes also celebrated their roots by the way they performed the commemoration plays of the battle of Karbala. In Iran, the plays stressed dialogue and celebrated martyrdom; in Iraq the actors used theatricality to focus on themes of manhood.[75]

It is the tribal character of Shi'ism in Iraq that distinguishes it most from Iranian Shi'ism. In Iran, the influence of Sufism gave Shi'ism a mystical quality that it lacked in

69 Nakash, 26.

70 Ibid., p. 32-33.

71 Ibid., 269.

72 Ibid., 45-46.

73 Ibid., 45-46.

74 Ibid., 144.

75 Ibid., 146-147.

Iraq.[76] Iranian believers dwelled throughout the year on the martyrdom of Husayn, while in Iraq discussions of martyrdom generally occurred only around *Ashura*.[77]

Even with the effort that the *mujtahids* put into conversion during the nineteenth century, the Shi'a did not make up the majority of the population in Iraq until well into the twentieth century. As late as 1919, Shi'a constituted a bare majority of 53 percent, increasing only to 56 percent by 1932.[78] Generally, the Sunni-Shi'i religious division also marked an economic division, with the Shi'a confined to the lower classes.[79]

C. SHI'A ACTIVISM IN IRAQ

1. First Incidents of Political Action

Having built a more substantial base of support, the Shi'i *ulama* were then better prepared to take an active role in political life. They first exercised this ability during the 1891-92 crisis over the Tobacco Concession in Iran. A mass movement led by Muhammad Hasan Shirazi, the main *marja'at-taqlid*, resisted this concession to the British. In December 1891, Shirazai circulated a fatwa forbidding tobacco use, thereby personifying the political aspirations of the *ulama*.[80] Although based in Samarra, Shirazi was powerful because of his close connections with and support from the Iranian bazaar.[81] With tobacco effectively boycotted by the entire Iranian population, the British concession became worthless and was rescinded by the Shah. The *ulama* thus realized the extent of their power.[82]

By the time of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911, this new political activism on the part of Shi'i *ulama* became institutionalized. Up to this point, the *mujtahids* had lacked a coherent political philosophy to guide their actions, but now their leadership in political events became unremarkable.[83] A political vision emerged

76 Nakash, 177.

77 Ibid., 159

78 Ibid., 25.

79 Batatu, The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq, 45.

80 Nakash, 49.

81 Ibid., 210.

82 Momen, 142.

83 Nakash, 49.

during the revolution when the Second Amendment to the Iranian Constitution dictated that a supervising council of five *mujtahids* review legislation and assure its compatibility with the *shari'a*.

The events of the Revolution damaged relations between religious students and the *mujtahids*, and in retrospect formed a high water mark for political activism. The *mutjahids* largely supported the interests of the Iranian business class, but when the businessmen had achieved their objectives they reduced their contributions to the holy cities. Ottoman officials were also wary of the connections between the *mujtahids* and Iranian factions and suspicious of Persian influence, and so sought to undermine the ulama by restricting pilgrimage, *madrassa* students, and other sources of support.[84]

The Iranian Constitutional era left a legacy of political debate and activism in the Iraqi shrine cities, though the debate was largely confined to the Iranian expatriate community.[85] A majority of the Arab Shi'a considered the Iranian Constitutional Revolution an internal matter to Iran, and took little inspiration from it. They did not become more active until after the Young Turk Revolution, which opened up political space and exposed Iraqis to ideas from Islamic modernists and other thinkers.[86]

Britain occupied Iraq during World War One, and refused to allow a local delegation to represent Iraq at the Versailles Peace Conference of 1919. A secret society, the Independence Guard, formed to protest this denial. The Guard demanded independence for Iraq, which it defined as the three Ottoman provinces. It was composed of both military and civilians, and drew from a relatively broad swath of society. Because of its diverse nature, the Independence Guard brought together both Sunni and Shi'i activists to oppose British plans for Iraq.[87] The majority of members were Shiite, however, and it was led by Muhammad al-Sadr, son of the senior *mujtahid* Ayatollah Hasan al-Sadr of al-Kazimiyya. The organization was also closely linked with Mirza Muhammad Rida, and his father, the *mujjtahid* Ayatollah Muhammad Taqi al-Shirazi.[88]

84 Nakash, 247.

85 Ibid., 51.

86 Ibid., 52.

87 Tripp, 41.

88 Ibid., 40.

Iraqi Shi'i political activism reached its peak during the Revolt of 1920. The *mujtahids* instigated the rebellion in response to British policies in both Iraq and Iran that to their minds threatened their status and economic well-being. In Iran, the British sought economic concessions that called into question the independence of the Iranian government and jeopardized the interests of the Iranian *bazaari* class that was vital to the welfare of the *mujtahids*. In Iraq, the British sought to control the pilgrimages and the burial trade, significantly reducing the independence of the *mujtahids*. Underlying all these motives was the *mujtahids'* perception of the occupation of Iraq by the Christian British as an indication of the decline of the Islamic civilization.[89] As part of a pattern of cooperation between the Shi'i religious establishment and the Sunni Sharifians, the senior *mujtahid,* Shirazi, successfully united Sunni and Shi'i elements of the population.[90] The Revolt thus galvanized feeling of Iraqi national unity to an unprecedented degree.[91] Through the Revolt the *mujtahids* sought to create an independent Islamic government.[92] The Revolt was crushed by the British within several months, however, and there was a sharp decline in the *ulama*'s power. Instead of gaining political supremacy, the *ulama* began an eighty year slide into relative obscurity.[93]

After the trauma of the 1920 Revolt, the British decided to install the Hashemite Faysal as king, and on the first anniversary of the outbreak of the Revolt he left his family home in Mecca to take his new throne in Baghdad.[94] As Faysal consolidated power in the early 1920s, he feared the power of the *mujtahids* and sought to contain them.[95] He changed the Law of Immigration on 9 June 1923 in a move to expose the largely Iranian clerical class to potential legal jeopardy. On 25 June, senior cleric Mahdi al-Khalisi was arrested and deported to Aden. The nine most prominent Iranian members of the *ulama* departed Iraq for Iran in protest on 2 July and proceeded to Qom. After a period of

89 Nakash, 66-67.

90 Ibid., 65·

91 Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq,* 23.

92 Nakash, 68.

93 Ibid., 72.

94 Amal Vinogradov, "The 1920 Revolt in Iraq Reconsidered: The Role of Tribes in National Politics," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 3, no. 2 (April 1972), 139.

95 Nakash, 77.

embarrassing negotiations, they returned in April of 1924, on the condition of political submission to Faysal.[96] The king recognized the importance of the Shi'i community, and actively promoted a strong Shi'i presence in the civil service.[97]

The League of Nations mandatory period and the monarchy that followed resulted in key reductions of Iran's influence in Iraq, as Iranians there now fell under the Iraqi legal jurisdiction, without the rights granted formerly under the Ottomans.[98] Among the Iraqi government's efforts to limit the influence of Iranians within Iraq were the 1924 Iraqi Nationality Law, which automatically made Iranian residents Iraqi nationals unless they renounced that nationality by a given date; a 1927 law prohibiting the employment of foreigners in government positions; a 1929 law regulating civil and religious judges; and the Holy Shrine Regulations 25 and 42 of 1948 and1950, respectively, which regulated the management of shrines. [99] The effectiveness of these and other such measures can be seen in the fact that while in the early 1900s, Iranians composed 75 percent of the population of Karbala, by 1957 they constituted only 12 per cent.[100]

2. Period of Relative Quietism

a. The Rise of Qom and the Decline of Najaf

The Iranian city of Qom, the site of the shrine of Ma'sumeh, sister of the eighth Imam, had been a main center of Shi'i learning from the tenth century, but after the Afghan invasion of Iran in the sixteenth century it declined in importance. It was then eclipsed by Najaf and Karbala. Qom became noted once again as center of education, however, with the arrival of Shaykh Abdul-Karim Ha'iri-Yazdi, who journeyed there on pilgrimage in 1921 and was personally welcomed by Ahmad Shah, the last Qajar king, who invited him to stay and teach.[101] As relations between the two countries deteriorated in the 1920s, the pilgrimage from Iran to Iraq diminished substantially, furthering the

96 Nakash, 82-83.

97 Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, 26.

98 Nakash, 103.

99 Ibid., 101-102.

100 Ibid., 104.

101 Baqer Moin, "Khomeini's Search for Perfection: Theory and Reality," in Ali Rahnema (ed.) , *Pioneers of the Islamic Revival* (London: Zed Books, 1994), 68.

decline of Najaf and the rise of Qom.[102] Qom also benefited from the diversion of funds which had previously flowed to Najaf and Karbala.[103] As it assumed its place as a leading center of learning, Qom differed from Najaf in its homogenous student population, quite different from the international diversity seen in Najaf.[104] Among the many students in the newly revitalized city was the young Ruhollah Khomeini, who earned his certificate as a *mujtahid* in the early 1930s.[105] Qom's student population grew from 1,000 in 1937 to 5,000 in the 1950s.[106]

When Hairi-Yazdi died in 1937, his role in promoting Qom was assumed by Ayatollahs Sayyid Muhammad Taqi Khwansari, Sayyid Ali Hujjat, and Sayyid Sadru'd-Din Sadr.[107] After the death of Abu al-Hasan Isfahani in 1946 and the rise of Husayn Burujirdi as *marja al-taqlid*, the *marja'iyya* (religious leadership) shifted decisively from Najaf to Qom.[108]

Meanwhile, the Iraqi religious establishment suffered. Its scholars had dropped in number from 12,000 in the early 1900s to 1,954 in 1957, only 326 of whom were actually Iraqis.[109] Among the Iraq-based *ulama*, only Mushin al-Hakim and Abu al-Qasim Khu'i continued to enjoy funding after 1950 from the Iranian bazaar, but even they had to keep most of their funds outside Iraq.[110]

b. Shi'i Politics and Religion in the Modern Iraqi State

As the Shi'i religious establishment in Iraq declined, leaders of the modern Iraqi state successfully separated the Shi'i tribal leaders from the *ulama*. This further reduced the ability of these elites to coordinate action on behalf of the Shi'i community.[111]

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102 Nakash, 168.

103 Ibid., 258.

104 Ibid., 272.

105 Moin, 68.

106 Nakash, 259.

107 Momen, 247.

108 Nakash, 88.

109 Wiley, 74.

110 Nakash, 230.

111 Ibid., 88.

In the 1920s many southern Iraqis flocked to Baghdad, a wave of migration that continued throughout the monarchy. The migrants fled the countryside because of the lack of development inherent in the land tenure system and sought the growing economic opportunities of the capital. This wave of migration made Shi'a the majority in Baghdad: their percentage in the metropolitan area went from 20 percent in 1940 to more than 50 percent in 1958.[112]

While phenomena such as new water management schemes and the exodus of the Jewish mercantile class enriched some Shi'a by the middle of the twentieth century, the vast majority remained in extreme poverty.[113] They were thus ripe for a revolutionary movement.

The Shi'i Iraqis saw pan-Arabism as a movement that excluded them and favored Sunnis; thus they promoted Iraqi nationalism instead.[114] For example, they protested a government academic curriculum that excluded any mention of the 1920 Revolt as a key episode of Sunni-Shi'i cooperation and instead presented it as a Sunni initiative.[115] Pan-Arab politicians tried to reduce the power of the religious forces by promoting Shi'i actors within the secular education system and attacking the objections of the *mujtahids* to secular and female education.[116] The Sunni-Shi'i tension in this period was largely due to a usually unsuccessful quest by many Shi'a for government employment.[117] Traditionally, Shi'i religious leaders had disapproved of service in a Sunni government such as that of the Ottoman Empire.[118] With the decline of the *ulama's* influence, however, the Shi'a were more inclined to attain government service, Sunni or not.

With the forces of Islam in decline and opportunities through pan-Arabism seemingly denied them, many Shi'a turned to communism. Most members of the Iraqi

112 Nakash, 96.

113 Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, 49.

114 Nakash, 136.

115 Ibid., 113

116 Ibid., 251.

117 Ibid., 109.

118 Ibid., 110.

Communist Party were Shi'i, and, among senior officials in the party, Shi'i representation grew from 21 percent in 1949 to 47 percent in 1955. [119] Shi'a also dominated the lower ranks of the party.[120]

D. RESURGENT STIRRINGS OF SHI'I ACTIVISM

1. Mohammed Baqir Sadr, "The First Martyr" of the Sadr Movement; and the Roots of Hizb al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya

Shi'i fundamentalism in Iraq dates to 1958, when a military coup overthrew the monarchy. In the aftermath, the new president, Abd al-Karim Qasim, used Communist networks to oppose his Arab nationalist rivals. Soon, the Communists dominated the political scene, infiltrating even the Shi'i holy cities, Najaf, Karbala, and Kadhimiyya. The Shi'i religious establishment realized that it had to act swiftly and decisively if it was to survive the tide of atheism seemingly sweeping the nation.[121]

At the time, the *ulama* were divided between those who sought to avoid politics altogether until the return of the *Mahdi* and more activists clerics who saw a need to take a stand and therefore formed the *Jama'at al-Ulama* (Association of Religious Scholars) in Najaf as part of their effort. [122] As communism became a growing presence in Iraq, particularly among the young, Shi'i activists founded the *Hizb al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya* (Islamic Call Party).[123]

Over time, Islam replaced communism as the favored Shi'i ideology.[124] The Islamist movement based its support in two constituencies: the young lay intellectuals and the urban poor.[125] Because Islamic activists often had far more impressive

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119 Nakash, 133.

120 Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, 704.

121 T.M. Aziz, "The Role of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr in Shi'i Political Activism in Iraq from 1958 to 1980," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25, No. 2. (May, 1993), 208. Three clerical families led the rise of Shi'i Islamist groups: the al-Sadrs of Kazymiya, the al-Hakims of Najaf, and the Shirazis of Karbala. These families remain a tight group, connected through intermarriage and devoted to promoting Najaf specifically and Iraq generally as the center of Shi'ism. They have historically united in support of a single leader in the interest of maintaining Arab leadership of the clergy. See Wiley, 84.

122 Aziz, 208.

123 Wiley, 31. According to Wiley, the concept of *dawa* has both religious and political implications, as it enjoins humans to both believe in Islam and to promote its cause.

124 Nakash, 136.

125 Wiley, 85-89.

educations than the ruling officials of the Ba'athist government,[126] they were often frustrated at the lack of economic opportunities open to them. While the large numbers of educational institutions meant a greater concentration of young people who could be mobilized, the increasing urbanization meant an increase in the number of urban poor.[127]

One main figure, Mohammad Baqir Sadr, came to personify the intellectual movement that swept through Najaf from the 1950s to the 1980s. [128] Sadr was born in the early 1930s in the holy city of Kazimiya, but in 1945, his family moved to Najaf, where he spent the rest of his life.[129] His publication in 1959 of *Falsafatuna* (Our Philosophy) and in 1961 of *Iqtidaduna* (Our Economics) made him the leading figure of the Islamic intelligentsia.[130] Ultimately, he would become "the mastermind behind a program that aimed to establish an Islamic state not only in Iraq, but throughout the Islamic world:"[131] a program that has been amazingly successful in revolutionary Iran, but was quickly crushed in Iraq. As one sign of Sadr's great popularity, before the obliteration of the program, he was seen by his followers as the "future Khomeini" of Iraq.[132]

As he gained stature, Sadr found himself caught in the middle of appealing but conflicting ideologies: drawn to the traditional religious culture of the shrine cities, but also influenced by communism's stand and appeal for social justice.[133] In an attempt to combine these influences, Sadr became active in the Da'wa Party and, in time, became its leader and faqih al-hizb (supreme jurisconsult). He promoted a party vision that sponsored revolutionaries and called for overthrow of the Iraqi regime, the formation of

126 Wiley, 106.

127 Ibid., 108.

128 Chilbi Millat, "Muhammad Baqer as-Sadr" in *Pioneers of the Islamic Revival*, ed. Ali Rahnema (London: Zed Books, 1994), 252.

129 Millat, 259. His family name, Sadr, means "person holding the highest position in a given area." Notable relatives included: Sayyid Hasan al-Sadr, the chief religious leader in Kazimiya at the time of the British invasion of 1917; and his son Muhammad, a leader of the 1920 revolt. Sadr's maternal grandfather, father, uncles and brother were all mujtahids. He eventually married his cousin Fatima, the sister of Lebanese Shi'i leader Imam Musa al-Sadr. See Wiley, 76.

130 Millat, 253-4.

131 Aziz, 207.

132 Ibid., 207.

133 Millat, 259.

an Islamic state, and the promotion of Islamic revolution around the world. To begin this process and facilitate clandestine operations, Sadr restructured the party into a cellular organization.[134]

At the same time that Sadr promoted political action through his leadership of the *Da'wa* party, he also improved his religious stature, becoming a leading *mujtahid* in Najaf. Senior clerics in the *hawza*, who determined the future leaders, did not want to attract government scrutiny by promoting an activist and political party member. Thus Sadr was forced to abandon his personal affiliation with *Da'wa*, although he retained close ties with its members. Once he committed to the *hawza*, he attempted to reform it, proposing new textbooks and study methods that reflected modern academia.[135]

On 8 February 1963, Arab nationalists in the army joined members of the Ba'ath Party in a successful coup against President Qasim.[136] Even though the Ba'ath Party had a large if not majority of Shi'a in its leadership and membership,[137] Shi'i Communist strongholds in Baghdad fought fiercely against the Ba'athists, despite but were overcome.[138] The Arab nationalists then ousted the Ba'athists in November 1963, and installed Abd al-Salam Arif as the new head of government.[139] From 1964 to 1968, Shi'i political actors in Iraq enjoyed a "golden age". Under the sponsorship of the Arif regime, which appreciated their help in overthrowing Qasim, and with the help of anti-Communist *ulama*, Shi'i politicians enjoyed a brief period of political open space. The *Da'wa* Party in particular prospered in this new environment.[140]

This period came to an end, however, when the Ba'athists regained power on 17 July 1968. The new Ba'athist regime perceived the Shi'i religious establishment as an unacceptable alternative to its leadership and took tentative steps to restrict its power. It closed some educational institutions and publishing houses, expelled foreigners from the

134 Aziz, 209.

135 Ibid., 210.

136 Wiley, 39-40.

137 Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, 1132.

138 Ibid., 704.

139 Wiley, 39-40.

140 Aziz, 211.

Najaf *hawza*, and forced *hawza* students to join the military.[141] The Ba'ath Party was dominated by Sunnis by this point, having lost the sense of Sunni-Shi'i unity that it had possessed prior to 1963.[142]

In April of 1969, Ba'athist President Ahmed Hasan al-Bakr appealed to Ayatollah Mushin al-Hakim, the senior *mujtahid*, for support in a disagreement with Iran over the Shatt al-'Arab, the waterway that separates Iraq and Iran in the south. When Hakim declined to cooperate, Bakr retaliated against the *ulama*. In the context of dealing with the so-called "Iranian threat," Bakr deported Iranian religious students and an estimated 20,000 others of Iranian descent. He also shut down Kufa University, which had operated independent of government oversight.[143]

In June of 1969, Ayatollah Mushin al-Hakim marched from Najaf to Baghdad drawing thousands of supporters to his side along the way. Frightened by that show of strength, the regime arrested his son, Sayyid Mahdi al-Hakim, and accused him of spying for Israel. The government also arrested prominent *ulama* and stopped religious broadcasts and instruction.[144] Sheikh abd al-Aziz al-Badri, a Sunni cleric who had preached in defense of Mahdi al-Hakim, was tortured and killed in an attempt to prevent Sunni-Shi'i cooperation, thus becoming the first modern Islamic martyr in Iraq.[145] Mahdi al-Hakim escaped abroad, and the clergy settled into political silence, which would be broken only when Sadr promoted overt political action in the 1970s.[146]

2. Khomeini and Shi'i Activism in Iran

Despite repression under the Pahlavi shah, in the latter half of the twentieth century religious forces increased in Iran, largely due to increasing urbanization. Between 1956 and 1976, the urban population increased threefold, while the rural

141 Aziz., 211-212

142 Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, 1078.

143 Tripp, 202.

144 Ibid., 203.

145 Wiley, 46.

146 Aziz, 211-212

population grew by only a third. Religious forces grew particularly strong in two constituencies; the lower middle class *bazaaris*, and recent arrivals from the countryside.[147]

Having completed his studies in Qom, Khomeini practiced religion in relative obscurity until 1962 when he became one of the leading figures in Iran to oppose the Shah's "White Revolution." He led major public demonstrations, but the Shah not only effectively repressed his followers, nut also jailed and then exiled Khomeini himself. Throughout 1964 Khomeini found refuge in Turkey. In 1965, the Arif regime invited Khomeini to come to Najaf.[148]

Once in Iraq, Khomeini tried to pressure the *ulama* into active opposition to the Shah, but was rebuffed by Ayatollah al-Hakim. Under Hakim's leadership, the *ulama* of Najaf remained convinced that peaceful and gradual change would be accomplished through education and individual action.[149] Beginning in 1970, Khomeini would speak out firmly in favor of a much more active role for the *ulama*.

E. CONCLUSION

An examination of Shi'i history in Iraq and Iran reveals many insights into the differences in Shi'ism in the two countries. The story of Iraqi Shi'ism is the history of an Arab, tribal, and distinctly Iraqi identity. Iranian Shi'i history, meanwhile, revolves around the religion of the state and uniquely Persian themes. Early Shi'i history was largely Arab, as important events took place in what is now Iraq, not Iran. Historical regional sectarian struggles also occurred mostly in Iraq, leaving a bitter legacy often evoked by the current conflict. The different pattern of conversion in Iraq and Iran led to different religious practices and themes and rival religious centers. Around the turn of the twentieth century, Shi'i activists based in Iraq instigated actions in both Iran and Iraq, but were then effectively suppressed for many years. After several decades, modern Islamist leadership emerged from the two countries, but again in separate ways. Khomeini developed his movement in opposition to the Shah, while Sadr sought to oppose communism and then to promote Islam within the diverse context of Iraq. The

147 Arjomand, 91-92.

148 Wiley, 41.

149 Ibid.

implications of these all differences became manifest in the 1970s with the success of Shi’i activism in Iran and its failure in Iraq.

III. THE RISE AND DECLINE OF SHI'I ACTIVISM IN IRAQ AND IRAN

A. INTRODUCTION

Current critics of Shi'i loyalty in Iraq fear the triumph of a transnational Shi'i identity that would upset the balance of power in the Middle East. In the 1970s, the apex of the Left in the Middle East, such religious activism seemed to go against the secular and modern spirit of the age. In the early 1970s the Ba'athist regime firmly held power throughout Iraq and so on the surface at least had little to fear from the Shi'i religious establishment. No one could foresee that within ten years adherents of a reactionary ideology harkening back to one thousand years of religious tradition would seize power. Even so, at the end of the decade the Islamists overthrew the Shah of Iran. They consolidated their Islamic state in the fight against secular Arab nationalists, most notably Iraq's Saddam Hussein, but in doing so would strengthen Iraqi nationalism.

These events came to a head in 1980, when, with Saddam Hussein's execution of Mohammed Baqir Sadr and invasion of Iran, fundamentalism began to decline. As he moved against the revolutionary mullahs in Tehran, Saddam counted on the support of the Arab inhabitants of the Iranian province of Khuzestan and paid heavily for that miscalculation. Instead of falling apart, the Iranian mullahs used the war to consolidate their power at the expense of the secular nationalists and other rivals. They too made a dangerous mistake, however, as they plunged into a reckless counter-invasion of Iraq. Instead of rallying to support their Iranian co-religionists, Iraqi Shi'a fought strongly against them. Ironically, however, even as the war seemed to reveal the strength of Iraqi nationalism, it broke down the secular, statist model of governance promoted by the Ba'athist regime. In Iran, meanwhile, after Khomeini's death the succession process called into question the religious basis of the Islamic government. In retrospect, while the experience of Shi'i activism during the 1970s and '80s demonstrated the close interaction between the Islamists of both nations, it also brought into sharp relief the importance of national identity.

The two decades have specific relevance for contemporary Iraqi politics. The organizations now vying for power within the Shi'i United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) all trace

their origins back to movements that reached prominence with the rise of Shi'i fundamentalism in the 1970s, were formed during that period, or emerged in its immediate aftermath. The *Dawa* party reached its maximum power in the 1970s. The current Sadr movement has inherited the legacy and reconstituted the networks that Mohammed Baqir al-Sadr developed in the 1970s. The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) was formed in Iran in 1982 as an organization of Shi'i exiles who had escaped the repression of the Ba'athist regime in Iraq. Thus virtually all of the prominent actors in contemporary Shi'i Iraqi politics trace their origins back to this period.

B. SHI'I ACTIVISM IN THE 1970S

1. The Death of Hakim and the Rise of Sadr

Grand Ayatollah Mushin al-Hakim died in the summer of 1970, clearing the way for more activist *ulama* to take the lead. Many of Hakim's followers transferred their loyalty to Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al-Sadr, allowing him to take a more bold leadership role. Even as a newly designated *marja***,** Sadr was opposed by much of the religious establishment because of what they perceived as his extreme ideas, but he enjoyed tremendous popular support. The new chief *mujtahid,* Grand Ayatollah Abu al Qasim al-Kho'i, remained a quietest, however, and also enjoyed widespread support.[150] Within several years of his rise to the highest ranks of the *ulama*, Sadr was generally acknowledged as the likely successor to Kho'i.[151]

2. Khomeini and *Vilayat-i Faqih*

In early 1970, while still in exile in Najaf, Ayatollah Khomeini delivered several lectures describing his concept of Islamic governance, which centered on his theory of *vilayat-i faqih* (Mandate of the Jurist). The lectures advocated the establishment of an Islamic state, rejected the separation of religion from politics, and argued that political power should be wielded by qualified Shi'i clerics.[152] This theory marked a radical innovation in traditional Shi'i doctrine. The Iraqi government tolerated such rhetoric because Khomeini focused his ire on the Shah of his native Iran. His ideas reverberated within Iraq as well, however, as they articulated a means for defending Islam, especially

150 Tripp, 203-4.

151 Aziz, 213

152 Arjomand, 98-99.

Shi'ism, against the secular, Sunni-led Ba'athist regime.[153] Khomeini was not close to the Iraq *ulama*, however; despite living in the same city for fourteen years, for instance, he never met with Sadr.[154]

3. Ba'athist Repression of the Islamists

In early 1970, the regime announced the discovery of an allegedly Iranian-inspired plot to overthrow the government. As they had in the past, the Ba'athists raised the specter of an "Iranian threat," and the security services arrested and executed many suspected regime opponents and expelled many "Iranians."[155]

Having quieted the *hawza* with the arrest and expulsion of Mahdi al-Hakim, the Ba'athists then turned to the *Dawa* Party. In 1972, they rounded up many *Dawa* members and sentenced them to prison terms of up to five years. The regime also arrested Sadr briefly in 1972, and worked to undermine Shi'i communal identity and loyalty by establishing patronage networks independent of traditional loyalties.[156]

In 1974, after riots at a protest held during the traditional procession from Najaf to Karbala commemorating Imam Husayn's martyrdom, the regime arrested seventy-five members of the *Dawa* party and sentenced five to death, including three members of the *ulama*.[157] To avoid any further precedents of executing clergy, Sadr prohibited the *ulama* from party membership. He was again arrested, but was soon released.[158] Amid the turmoil, the *hawza* sank deeper into decline. In the years immediately prior to the Iranian revolution, the number of students at Iraqi seminaries dropped from 3,000 to 600.[159]

In 1977, when the Ba'athist regime attempted to prevent the Muharram procession altogether, riots broke out in Najaf and tens of thousands began to march. The regime responded with military force, killing and imprisoning hundreds. A Special

153 Tripp, 204.

154 Sama Hadad, *The Development of Shi'i Islamic Political Theory*, (Baghdad: Baghdad Institute for Public Policy Research, October 2005), 4.

155 Tripp, 203.

156 Aziz, 212.

157 Momen, 263.

158 Aziz, 212-213.

159 Arjomand, 86.

Revolutionary Court was formed, which sentenced seven to death and fifteen others, including Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, to life in prison. Sadr was arrested and sent to Baghdad, but had to be released to prevent more rioting.[160]

In October 1978, at the urging of the Shah, the Ba'athist regime expelled Khomeini from Najaf. The Iraqis honored the Shah's request in part because they feared Khomeini's influence over dissident Shi'a. Khomeini's expulsion backfired, however, as once he was in the West Khomeini had access to the global media, which would eventually play a significant role in enabling his triumphant return to Iran.[161]

4. The Islamic Revolution in Iran

The Iranian revolution succeeded in the manner and time that it did not so much because of the strength of the revolutionaries, particularly the Islamists, but because of the weakness and indecision of the Shah. In its aftermath, however, the Islamists claimed its success as an indicator of the righteousness and inevitable victory of their cause. In doing so, they minimized the role of nationalism in the revolution and so failed to see that their success could not be reproduced, particularly in the dissimilar political context of Iraq. The Islamists failed to differentiate the nationalist sentiments that united the Iranian revolutionaries from the ethnic and sectarian cleavages used by Iraqi political leaders to divide and rule. They also failed to distinguish the Shah's hesitancy and passivity from Saddam's brutality and ruthless determination. These misperceptions would lead them to encourage Iraqi Islamists to follow their example, with disastrous consequences.

Resistance to the Shah developed in the latter half of the 1970s due to increasing economic setbacks and a lack of political and economic liberalization. The opposition groups benefited from the Carter Administration's human right policies and the fact that the Shah knew he was dying of cancer.[162] Opposition grew throughout 1977 and 1978. The Shah declared martial law on 8 September 1978, but vacillated between harsh repression and political liberalization.[163] By the end of November 1978, the Islamists controlled Qom and Mashad and announced the formation of an Islamic republic. The

160 Aziz, 214.

161 Tripp, 220.

162 Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 214-215.

163 Arjomand, 114.

Shah refused to employ the army to put down the massive demonstrations on 10 and 11 December 1978, which that year marked the eve and anniversary (*Tasu'a* and *Ashura*) of Husayn's martyrdom, in the religiously significant month of Moharram 1399. [164] The success of those protests spelled the end of the Shah's rule. The demonstration on 11 December effectively spread that political reality to the rest of the country, and, by the end of the month, the Islamists exercised some control over Isfahan, Khorramshahr, and Tabriz. In the last few days of the year, the Shah announced his imminent departure from the country.[165]

On 12 January 1979, Khomeini established a Council of Islamic Revolution for the purpose of planning a new government.[166] He returned to Iran on 1 February 1979. The revolutionary committees consolidated their power throughout February, combining Islamist and secular forces.[167] Despite their later losses, non-religious forces, particularly leftist guerrillas, played a key role in overthrowing the Shah.[168] To avoid alarming these actors, Khomeini and his followers downplayed the idea of *vilayat-i faqih*, suppressed the publication of his lectures on the subject, and emphasized that *ulama* would not hold direct power in the new government.[169]

Throughout the rest of 1979, Khomeini developed the Islamist faction at the expense of other revolutionaries. This effort culminated in the seizure of the American Embassy in Tehran by Islamic "Students Following the Line of the Imam" on 4 November 1979, which led to the fall of the secular revolutionary government and its replacement by the Islamist Revolutionary Council. The country united in anti-Americanism, and on 2 December approved by referendum the new constitution, thereby instituting a theocracy and what was termed "the Second Islamic Revolution."[170] This

164 Arjomand, 121.

165 Ibid.

166 Ibid., 134.

167 Ibid., 135.

168 Keddie, 238.

169 Keddie, 240.

170 Arjomand, 139.

began a four-year process to remove all secular revolutionary elements from the government, which received an additional boost from the need for national unity during the Iran-Iraq War.[171]

As Khomeini moved to implement his theory of *vilayat-i faqih*, many Shi'i clerics including Grand Ayatollahs Kho'i, Qomi, and Shari'at-madri, and Ayatollahs Baha al-Din Mahallati, Sadeq Ruhani, Ahmad Zanjani, Ali Tehrani, and Mortaza Haeri Yazdi voiced doctrinal objections. They cited two basic reasons for rejecting Khomeini's plan: first, that the authority of Shi'i clerics does not extend to political issues, but is instead restricted to religious affairs; and second, that religious authority is to be shared among the entire clerical class, not focused in a single supreme leader. Several of these clerics were close associates or students of Khomeini, making their criticism particularly biting.[172]

5. Sadr's Reaction to the Revolution

The Iranian Revolution inspired Islamists throughout the world; Sadr was one of the first to celebrate it. He issued statements of support, sent emissaries to the revolutionaries, and asked the Arab Iranians in Khuzestan to set aside their ethnicity and support the Islamic Republic. In response to questions from Lebanese *ulama* about the construction of an Islamic state, Sadr also published six essays on Islamic governance, later entitled *al-Islam Yaqud al-Hayat* (Islam Governs Life). The essays profoundly influenced the writers of the new Iranian constitution, who incorporated his ideas about the structure and function of the Islamic state and the responsibilities and absolute authority of the *marja*.[173] He also began to promote his concept of *vilayat-i ummah* (rule of the people), which would contrast with Khomeini's ideas on Islamic governance.[174] Sadr's ideas on Islamic governance combined Western-style elections of a president and parliament with a special place for *mujtahids* charged with defending Islamic law.[175] Sadr's would support democratic elections until his death.[176] While Ayatollah

171 Keddie, 241.

172 Arjomand, 155-156.

173 Aziz, 215.

174 Hadad, 4.

175 Millat, 266-267.

176 Hadad, 6.

Khomeini's 1970 series of lectures on *vilayat-i faqih* lacked a conceptual concreteness that could lead to execution, some of Sadr's ideas were incorporated directly into Chapter Seven, "Leadership," of the new Iranian Constitution.[177]

Despite his support for the revolution in Iran, however, Sadr did not support its duplication in Iraq. He did not believe that conditions there favored revolutionaries. Eventually, however, his hand would be forced by both Khomeini and other Islamists within Iraq, all of whom misread the situation and promoted action prematurely.[178]

C. THE CULMINATING POINT: 1979 AND 1980

1. The Iraqi Shi'i Islamist Response to the Iranian Revolution

In the beginning, the Iraqi regime greeted the new Islamic republic with overtures of friendship. Instead of taking advantage of the chaos of the early revolutionary period, Saddam invited Iran to join the Non-Aligned Movement. His regime even praised the revolutionaries for acting in support of the "deep historical relations" between the two countries. Khomeini was allowed to broadcast his messages on Iraqi radio and to meet with potential Iraqi confederates. While Khomeini enjoyed Ba'athist resources, however, their use did not endear the regime to him and the friendly gestures soon proved naïve.[179]

The Islamic Revolution's success in Iran inspired *Dawa* and other Iraqi Shi'i movements, which began a small-scale campaign of resistance. The Ba'athist regime, now fearful of suffering the Shah's fate, quickly responded with overwhelming force. In June 1979, Sadr was placed under house arrest. Major demonstrations resulted, rippling through Najaf, Karbala, Kufa, and Madinat al-Thawra (Revolutionary City, later called Saddam City, and now known as Sadr City). For a time the regime lost complete control of Madinat al-Thawra. Eventually, the security services arrested nearly 5,000 people, including prominent Shi'i and even Sunni clergy. Many prisoners were executed, while others were expelled. Sadr's supporters circumvented his house arrest by circulating tapes of his antiregime sermons.[180]

177 Millat, 266-267.

178 Aziz, 218-219.

179 Ibid., 13.

180 Tripp, 221.

This context combined with other domestic and foreign threats to prompt Saddam Hussein to seize power in July of 1979.[181] As he consolidated his control, Saddam sought to unify the country with an identity centered on his person, and so he suppressed other forms of identity, especially ethnic or religious ones. In his search for historical legitimacy, he traced his heritage back to the Abbasid caliphs, and even further back to the kings of Mesopotamia.[182]

2. The Execution of Sadr and the Eradication of Iraqi Islamism

In October of 1979, the *Jama'at al-Ulama* endorsed a call for violent resistance from *Dawa* and other Islamist groups, such as *Jund al-Imam* and the Islamic Task Organization. Meanwhile, Sadr greatly increased his personal exposure to danger by forbidding Muslims to join the Ba'ath Party. In messages heard by millions, Khomeini, Iran's new leader, encouraged Sadr to stay in Iraq despite government persecution, in effect goading him into action.[183] Khomeini essentially refused to shelter Sadr, and called him by the dismissive title *Hujjat al-Islam*, even as Sadr referred to him as *Ayatollah*.[184] Thus pressured, Sadr proclaimed that he intended to remain and fight. When demonstrations subsequently broke out throughout Iraq in support of Khomeini and Sadr, Sadr sought to dampen them to minimize his supporters' exposure to repression. Saddam's security forces then arrested him, along with hundreds of *Dawa* members. This sparked even larger demonstrations, instigated by Sadr's sister, Bint al-Huda, and riots erupted all over the country.[185]

The popular response to Sadr's imprisonment made his influence clear to the regime, which now became convinced that he constituted an unacceptable threat. The Ba'athists could no longer blame Islamist revolutionary activities solely on Iranian elements. They had deported some 130,000 Iraqis with Iranian roots, but Sadr came from a prominent Iraqi family. Unable, therefore, to simply export the Islamic militancy problem, the regime determined to eliminate it altogether. It redoubled its repression of

181 Tripp, 222.

182 Ibid., 225.

183 Aziz, 216.

184 Hadad, 4.

185 Aziz, 216.

Dawa, of its associates, and of all Shi'i leaders. It kept Sadr under house arrest, where he soon became convinced that martyrdom was eminent.[186]

On 1 April 1980**,** a member of the Islamic Task Organization failed in an attempt to assassinate the Ba'athist Deputy Prime Minister, Tariq Aziz.[187] The Ba'ath Party responded by sentencing all past and present members of *Dawa* to death. On 5 April, the security services arrested Sadr and his troublesome sister Bint al-Huda. They were both tortured, and three days later his body was given to his cousin Mohammed Sadiq Sadr.[188] The next several weeks saw another failed assassination attempt, this time on the Iraqi Minister of Information, Latif Nesseif al-Jasim, and an Islamist bombing campaign that ultimately killed twenty Iraqi government officers.[189]

By killing such a prominent religious figure as Sadr, an act unprecedented in Iraqi history, the regime served notice of its determination to subdue the Shi'i resistance. Ayatollah al-Kho'i was placed under de facto house arrest, and throughout 1980 up to 40,000 more "Iranians" were deported. As he suppressed the traditional leaders of the Shi'i community, Saddam created new patronage networks in an effort to develop a new class of leaders loyal to him.[190]

D. THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR AND SHI'I LOYALTY

The eight-year war between Iran and Iraq was the most traumatic interaction between the two populations in modern history. It exposed the limitations of transnational Islamism. Most importantly, it showed the folly of the Iranian leadership's discounting of nationalism in their own revolution and their failure to recognize the political context of Iraq, similar to their error in helping instigate the revolutionary violence that culminated in Sadr's execution.

186 Aziz, 216-217.

187 Tripp, 229.

188 Millat, 217-218.

189 Efraim Karsh, *The Iran-Iraq War 1980-1988* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002), 13.

190 Tripp, 221.

1. Saddam's Motives

Saddam viewed the suppression of Iraqi sectarian identities as crucial to his maintenance of power. Repression of the Shi'a antagonized Iran, however, particularly as the Islamic Revolution consolidated. The Iranian leaders depicted Saddam as the personification of the forces of secularism and socialism that their revolution sought to obliterate. For his part, Saddam perceived the Iranians' position as a confirmation of his fears regarding the Shi'a of Iraq.[191] His confrontation with Iran also confirmed Saddam's credentials as a leading figure in the Arab world and evoked loyalty from Iraq's Sunni population.[192]

Nevertheless, Saddam was hesitant to take action, knowing that any conflict was likely to jeopardize Iraq's new-found prosperity, a result of the oil boom of the 1970s. Iraqi oil revenues had risen sharply over the decade, from $1 billion in 1972 to $21 billion in 1979 and $26 billion in 1980. The funds allowed the regime to generously increase social spending, which led to a rise in the standard of living for almost all Iraqis.

Even in the face of such risks, however, Saddam viewed the revolutionary government in Tehran as increasingly extreme and uncompromising, and thus an unprecedented threat.[193] In its official rationale for the attack on Iran in September 1980, the Iraqi government claimed to be retaliating for "terrorist acts and sabotage by infiltrators who came in from Iran, by Iranian residents in Iraq, and by other people of Iranian origin, who set about committing a large number of murders and injuries from explosions."[194]

2. The Start of the War

Tensions between the two nations increased throughout 1980, as Saddam pressed for complete sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab, and clashes erupted along the border. On 17 September 1980, Iraq disavowed the 1975 treaty demarcating the border along the

191 Tripp, 230.

192 Ibid., 231.

193 Karsh, 14.

194 Wiley, 1.

Shatt al-Arab, and claimed full control of the waterway. On 22 September, Iraqi Air Force units conducted strikes on Iranian air bases and Iraqi ground forces commenced an invasion. [195]

Saddam's military objective was apparently to win rapid and decisive battlefield victories that would force the Iranian government to sue for peace and agree to territorial concessions. This plan, however, failed to take into account both the limitations of the Iraqi military and the tenacity of the Iranian defenders. The Iranian regime was able to use the invasion to mobilize the Iranian public and to consolidate the rule of the mullahs.[196] Meanwhile, Saddam's ambitious gamble to achieve only limited ends failed spectacularly. Most disappointing, his hopes that the Arabs of Khuzestan would rise up against the Iranian government quickly proved unfounded,[197] suggesting that ethnic or sectarian factions may not be as amenable to separatist tendencies as outsiders may assume.

The main effort of the Iraqi attack focused on Khuzestan, in an attempt to carve out an enclave to protect Iraq's possession of the Shatt al-Arab. Iraqi forces soon besieged the Iranian cities of Khorramshar and Abadan.[198] As he sought only limited objectives, Saddam did not push his forces to achieve maximum gains. Instead, he halted their advance after less than a week of offensive operations, declaring that he was ready for negotiations.[199]

The Iranians quickly struck back, and did so in a manner that clearly indicated their unwillingness to discuss compromises. On 24 September 1980, their naval forces destroyed two oil terminals near Fao, seriously disrupting Iraq's ability to export oil, and then pressed on to attack Basra. They targeted Baghdad repeatedly, conducting eight air

195 Tripp, 233.

196 Tripp, 233.

197 Karsh, 27.

198 Ibid., 22.

199 Ibid., 28.

raids there by 1 October 1980.[200] They defended Khorramshar so tenaciously that it did not fall to Iraq until 24 October 1980.[201]

When Khorramshar finally fell to the Iraqis both sides ceased offensive operations for eight months. Iran consolidated its positions and embarked upon a crash program to rebuild its military. It formed the youth movement, *Basji e-Mustazafin* (Mobilization of the Deprived), which would later conduct famous human-wave attacks. Iraq set a defense, and on 7 December 1980 Saddam announced that Iraq would not initiate any further attacks. [202]

In the spring of 1981, Iran began the slow process of driving Iraq from its territory. When its forces finally expelled the Iraqis from Khorramshar in late May 1982, taking 12,000 prisoners in the process, Saddam realized that he needed to withdraw altogether if he was to save any of his army. In June, without Saddam's approval, the Iraqi military command and the Ba'ath Party's regional and national commands proposed a cease-fire agreement to the Iranians. Ayatollah Khomeini dismissed the offer, however, thereby greatly strengthening support for Saddam in Iraq. Instead of pursuing a reckless military adventure, Iraq's armed forces, including its many Shi'i members, were now seen as simply protecting their homeland against the Iranian counterattack. [203] On 20 June, Saddam announced the withdrawal of the Iraqi military.

3. Iran's Counteroffensive

Saddam's announcement did not satisfy the Iranian leadership any more than had the proposal from the Iraqi military and the Ba'ath Party. Iran pressed home its advantage by demanding not only Saddam's ouster, but also reparations totaling $US 150 billion and the return to Iraq of 100,000 Shi'a thrown out before the war. The day after Saddam's withdrawal announcement, Ayatollah Khomeini hinted that he would invade Iraq. The day after that, Iranian Chief of Staff Shirazi vowed to "continue the war until

200 Karsh, 29.

201 Ibid., 27.

202 Karsh, 30-32.

203 Tripp, 234-237.

Saddam Hussein is overthrown so that we can pray at Karbala and Jerusalem." The Iranians attacked on 13 July 1982, pushing toward Basra.[204]

A revitalized Iraqi army repelled five human-wave assaults throughout the summer of 1982, turning back an Iranian force of roughly 100,000 troops. Iraq also began to experiment with the use of tear gas, setting a precedent for future chemical weapons use. The Iranian army leaders sought to end the offensive at this point, but were rebuffed by the more aggressive mullahs, led by the Speaker of parliament, Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani. The mullahs forced the army to stage two more attacks in the fall of 1982, but these efforts came too little as well.[205]

Iraq turned back a particularly strong Iranian offensive toward Basra in late spring 1984 only through extreme measures, including the use of mustard gas and Sarin nerve agent.[206] In 1985, Iran's Operation Badr caused heavy Iraqi casualties and temporarily cut the Basra-Baghdad highway. In response to that major threat, Saddam ordered the heaviest use yet of chemical weapons and attacked thirty Iranian towns and cities. He also heavily targeted the oil facilities on Kharq Island, conducting almost sixty air strikes in a campaign viewed by Iran as more of a strategic threat than any potential Iraqi offensive. Once again the war settled into stalemate.[207]

Iran broke the stalemate on 9 February 1986, when its Operation Dawn 8 managed to capture the Fao Peninsula. Iraq unsuccessfully attempted to retake the peninsula, pouring forces into the area and expending vast amounts of ordnance in the effort. The Iranians then pushed north from Fao to Umm Qasr, threatening to cut off Iraq's access to the Persian Gulf, but ultimately failed in the attack.[208]

4. War's End

As Iran continued to press its assault on Iraq, the Iraqi army leaders challenged Saddam, demanding the authority to prosecute the war in accordance with professional

204 Tripp, 36-37.

205 Tripp, 37-38.

206 Ibid., 41-42.

207 Karsh, 47.

208 Ibid., 48.

military standards and their own professional expertise. When Saddam acceded to their demands, the Iraqi situation began to improve. [209]

By early 1988, the Iranian war effort seemed to be in serious decline, with support at home waning. In February of that year, Saddam began the fifth and most brutal series of strikes on Iranian cities, launching more than two hundred surface-to-surface missiles over two months. This effort finally pushed the Iranians to their limit. Civilians and government officials fled Tehran, and the Iranian military lost its morale. In a forty-eight hour campaign in mid-April, Iraq retook the Fao Peninsula. It quickly capitalized on this success by attacking along other fronts. In concert with a large American presence in the Persian Gulf, which ultimately led to the shooting down of an Iranian airliner on 3 June 1998, the Iraqi offensives placed unbearable pressure on Iran.

The shoot down incident proved to be the excuse the Iranian leadership needed to accept a ceasefire, providing them with a narrative of martyrdom at the hands of a brutal and overwhelming aggressor. On 17 July 1988, President Khameini accepted the U.N. proposal for a cease-fire.[210]

5. The Formation of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq and the Badr Army

In its fight against the Ba'athist state, the Iranian regime sought to exploit the capabilities of the many Iraqi exiles in Iran. This effort came to fruition with the founding of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq. While SCIRI would serve Iranian interests, however, its close connection with the mullahs discredited it among many other Iraqi groups. After escaping persecution in Iraq, Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim sought refuge in Iran. He soon led the *Jama'at al-Ulama al-Mujahidin fil Iraq* (Society of Militant *Ulama* in Iraq), and then *Maktab al-Thawra al-Islamiya fil Iraq* (The Bureau of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq), but enjoyed only limited success.[211] Hakim founded SCIRI in Tehran on 17 November 1982. The organization fulfilled Iran's desire for an Iraqi body to oppose Saddam's regime and to fill the political vacuum created by

209 Karsh, 53-55.

210 Karsh, 57-61.

211 Jabar, 236.

the martyrdom of Mohammed Baqir Sadr. [212] Sayyid Ali Khamenei, Khomeini's representative in the higher Defense Council and the leader of Friday prayers in Tehran, played a key role in developing SCIRI from its origins in the *Maktab*. Hakim and Mahmud al-Hashimi, two followers among the four or five *ulama* chosen by Sadr as his *al-qiyada al-na'iba* (vice leadership), became speaker and president respectively of SCIRI.[213] Hakim lacked deep roots in the Iraqi exile community, however, and his rise to prominence in Iran was due largely to his sponsors in the regime.[214]

SCIRI was established in part to exploit Iran's success in the war with Iraq. By April 1982, the Iraqi army had been driven from Iran, and the Iranians were finalizing plans to invade Iraq. If they were able to seize Basra, they hoped to establish there an Iraqi Islamic regime.[215] Because of the larger context of the Iran-Iraq War and the fact that its material resources came from Iran, SCIRI naturally assumed a direct role in the war effort.[216]

In its first iteration, SCIRI represented an Iranian effort to unite the divided Iraqi Shi'i Islamist expatriate factions.[217] In time, it attempted to draw in Sunnis and Kurdish factions as well.[218] While SCIRI boasted an assembly that purported to represent its members, authority actually rested in an executive committee tightly controlled by Hakim. This made SCIRI a tool both for Iranian influence and for political patronage for Hakim.[219] SCIRI marked the first attempt by Iraqi Islamist groups to institutionalize an effort to achieve an Islamic state in Iraq based Khomeini's vision of *vilayat-i faqih*.[220] Other Shi'i groups disagreed with that doctrine, and thus viewed SCIRI with suspicion. The close ties between SCIRI and the Iranian government heightened their concerns. [221]

212 Jabar, 235.

213 Ibid., 237.

214 Ibid., 238.

215 Jabar, 238.

216 Ibid., 252

217 Ibid., 239

218 Ibid., 240.

219 Ibid., 241.

220 Ibid., 249.

221 Tripp, 246-247.

Iran judged all Iraqi exile groups on the basis of their adherence to *vilayat-i faqih*, banning groups that opposed the doctrine and sponsoring groups like SCIRI that advocated it.[222]

The Faylaq Badr, or Badr Army, was named after a battle fought by Mohammed and his followers against their opponents from Mecca and was composed of Iraqi exiles and Iraqi POW volunteers. The POWs had to be granted amnesty by Hakim or another religious figure before they could be admitted. Badr was, in reality, a branch of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and was organized, trained, equipped, and employed by Iran.[223]

Badr grew out of an initial organization of two hundred recruits into "The Forces of Imam al-Sadr." Between 1979 and 1983, this organization trained several thousand volunteers. With the establishment of SCIRI in 1982, the volunteers were redesignated "Liwa al-Sadr" (The al-Sadr Regiment) and, later, Regiment Badr Nine. In 1987, the IRGC expanded Regiment Badr Nine into a division-level unit composed of several thousand members. Badr was commanded by an Iranian colonel, which undermined SCIRI's promotion of it as an Iraqi organization, even though Iraqis occupied crucial posts on its general staff.[224]

Faced with this new challenge to his regime, in the spring of 1983 Saddam arrested ninety members of the Hakim family, and executed six of them. He sent a message to the exiled Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, warning him that there would be more executions if insurgent attacks did not stop. Two years later Saddam killed ten more members of the Hakim family.[225] Nonetheless, SCIRI pressed on with its operations throughout the Iran-Iraq war.

6. The Trial of Iraqi Shi'i Loyalty

The Iraqi Army was composed largely of Shi'i conscripts. The regime was determined to prevent their developing ties with their Iranian Shia opponents, but Saddam had to act carefully in his treatment of Iraq's Shi'i citizens. The Iraqi

222 Hadad, 7.

223 Jabar, 253.

224 Ibid.

225 Karsh, 70.

government sought to rally the Shi'i community while, at the same time, Iran stressed its Shi'i identity and thereby its commonality with Shi'i Iraqis. In an attempt to prevent such common traits from leading to tangible bonds, the Iraqi government stepped up its efforts to separate Iraqi and Iranian identities, and to draw attention to differences within the Iraqi Shi'i community.[226]

In 1981, the Iraqi government began a campaign to encourage Iraqi men with so-called "Iranian" wives to divorce them. The wives were typically the relatives of individuals already exiled in Iran. The regime also began to seek direct control of Shi'i clerical activities: approving sermons, promoting religious figures, making clerics employees of the state, and physically monitoring mosques and other religious facilities.[227]

The regime generated propaganda that appealed to the loyalty of Shi'i soldiers by emphasizing Iraqi unity, the Arab heritage of Iraq's Shia, and the alleged lineage of Saddam Hussein, which was said to be traceable directly to Ali. Regime propaganda also promoted historical symbols such as the battle of Qadisiyya in 637 C.E, in which Arabs defeated Persians.[228] While it is difficult to judge the effectiveness of such propaganda, the Iraqi Shi'i did fight courageously and effectively for throughout the war.[229]

During this period, there were also several Shi'i-led assassination attempts and military conspiracies against Saddam Hussein.[230] Though Saddam's threats against the Hakims failed to stop isolated terrorist incidents, the Shi'i population as a whole demonstrated its loyalty to the Iraqi nation throughout the war. Saddam reciprocated by ensuring that 40 percent of the Iraqi parliament was Shi'i, that Shi'i living standards were improved, and that Shi'i shrines, particularly the Tomb of Ali in Najaf, were renovated.[231] The Iraqi Army had always been dominated by its Sunni officer corps, but

226 Tripp, 246.

227 Tripp, 234.

228 Momem, 263-264.

229 Tripp, 247.

230 Ibid., 248.

231 Karsh, 70.

as the war progressed, more and more Shi'a were promoted to important positions. Through their performance, they demonstrated their allegiance to the nation.

E. THE WAR'S AFTERMATH

1. The Weakening of the Secular Socialist Iraqi State

The war destroyed the economic achievements of the Ba'athists. Most Iraqis now saw the 1970s as an economic golden age, recalled later with the saw nostalgia as the Abbasid era. Oil revenues had jumped from $476 million in 1968 to $26 billion in 1980. Political oppression increased, but economic progress was real and its benefits widespread.[232]

In keeping with his optimistic, short-term focus, Saddam at first sought to protect the Iraqi people from the cost of the war. Social spending rose during the early years of the conflict, increasing from $21 billion in 1980 to $29.5 billion in 1982. The Iraqi populace continued to enjoy imported consumer goods, ongoing public works projects, a steady food supply, and new opportunities for women in the workforce, as well as expatriate labor to replace men at the front. These measures could not hide the casualties, estimated at twelve hundred a month, but they could reduce their impact on the stability of the regime.[233]

After the Iraqi reversal in 1982, Saddam was forced to abandon the subsidies to the civilian economy. Mounting military expenditures, a global oversupply of oil, and the loss of a pipeline through Iranian-allied Syria combined to devastate the Iraqi treasury. Its foreign reserves went from $35 billion before the war to $3 billion in 1983, prompting severe spending reductions.[234]

Despite these setbacks, however, once the war moved onto Iraqi soil Saddam began to enjoy increased public support. He constructed a heroic narrative, positing himself as the defender, not merely of the nation, but of the entire Arab world. The Iranians complemented the story by their continuous rejections of Saddam's calls for peace. [235]

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232 Shadid, 21.

233 Karsh, 67

234 Ibid., 68.

235 Ibid., 69-70.

The cosmopolitan, modern nature of society, particularly within Baghdad, changed over the course of the war. In its place, the values of the *rif* (countryside), of hard and brutal places such as Tikrit and Fallujah became predominant.[236] The war was seen by many as changing the *akhlaq* (morality) of the nation. One Baghdadi argued that "War makes people change. Really. The killing, blood, it makes people different. It changes their psychology. The war gives them an excuse to do anything."[237]

By the time the war ended, Iraq was devastated and in need of serious reconstruction. Two hundred thousand Iraqis had been killed, 400,000 wounded, and 70,000 captured. Iraq in 1988 held $80 billion in debt, an amount equal to twice its annual gross national product. Such debt also made foreign creditors extremely hesitant to lend money for Iraq's reconstruction[238] and left Saddam unable to play the regional leadership role that he so coveted. [239]

Estimated costs for the reconstruction of Iraq totaled $230 billion. In a best-case scenario, devoting all its available oil revenue solely to such costs would still have resulted in a twenty-year effort. In fact, the regime continued its deficit spending, importing $12 billion in civilian goods and $5 billion in military hardware, paying only $5 billion against its debts, and funding $1 billion in salary remittances for expatriate labor. Meanwhile, Iraq's oil revenues totaled only $13 billion.[240]

These economic consequences of the war thus left the regime's patronage and subsidy-based power structure unable to function effectively. [241] The dire economic conditions posed a clear threat to Saddam's rule. In February 1990, Saddam asked King Hussein of Jordan and President Mubarak of Egypt to notify Iraq's Arab creditors that Iraq was now demanding complete loan forgiveness and a cash donation of $30 billion. "Let the Gulf regimes know," he told the two leaders, "that if they will not give this

236 Shadid, 27.

237 Quoted in Shadid, 28

238 Karsh, 89.

239 Tripp, 252.

240 Karsh, 89.

241 Tripp, 252.

money to me, I will know how to get it."[242] After failing to convince the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the Gulf states to raise oil prices and to forgive Iraq's debt, Hussein began to consider other options.[243]

2. Iran's Postwar Politics: Retreat from the Export of Revolution and the Death of Khomeini

The war also brought Iran's revolutionary mission into question. It failed to overturn the secular Ba'athists, and the Iranian revolutionary model was soon rejected by most Sunni Islamists. By war's end, Iran was forced to give up its dream of transforming the Middle East and accept the status quo established during the reign of the hated Shah.[244]

Iran's postwar domestic political scene also brought the revolution's Islamic credentials into question. In January 1988, Khomeini turned the clerical world on its head with his shocking claim that the priorities of the Islamic state took precedence over Islamic jurisprudence. In that same year, Ayatollah Montazeri, who had been selected as Khomeini's successor in 1985 by the Assembly of Experts, lost favor when he objected to the execution of thousands of political prisoners and declared that Iran should no longer seek to export its revolution. In February, Khomeini dismissed Montazeri, who was eventually put under house arrest in Qom.[245]

In April 1989, at the direction of Khomeini, Khameini changed the constitution to reduce the required religious qualifications of the *faqih*, recognizing that no current grand ayatollahs completely accepted *vilayat-i faqih*. The political authority of the *faqih* was made more explicit, an acknowledgement that Khomeini's successor would not enjoy the same informal authority as he had.[246]

The negative effects of Khomeini's politicization of the Iranian religious establishment became appear in the succession process following his death.[247] Khomeini

242 Karsh, 90.

243 Tripp, 252.

244 Karsh, 85-86.

245 Keddie, 260.

246 Ibid., 261.

247 Hadad, 18.

died on 3 June 1989. Two days later, the Assembly of Experts declared Khameini the new *faqih*. He was quickly designated as an *ayatollah*, despite his relatively weak religious credentials. Tacitly acknowledging his tenuous religious authority, Khamieini focused his efforts on expanding his political power base in the IRGC and the Foundation of the Dispossessed. In any case, the new constitution gave him the power to ignore the decisions of more senior clerics. Rafsanjani was named to replace him as president.[248] By tying religious authority to political expediency, Khomeini inadvertently brought into question the structure of the religious establishment. Thus, though the Islamic revolution outlived Khomeini, its chief proponent, much of its legitimacy died with him.

3. Iraqi Islamists' Loss of Legitimacy

By collaborating with the Iranians in their war with Iraq, Iraqi Islamists forfeited some of their claim to nationalist legitimacy. They failed to recognize the important role that nationalism had played in the Iranian Revolution, and did not acknowledge the relevance of the nationalist credentials that Ayatollah Khomeini had developed over the decades in his opposition to the United States.

Iranian Islamism was a primarily nationalist cause with a secondary effort in the international arena; whereas Iraqi Islamism appealed first to an international movement, placing nationalism second. Particularly after the Iranians had pursued the Iraqi aggressors back into their own territory, the Islamists made a conscious choice to place sect above nation.[249] They miscalculated in assuming that their perceived religious legitimacy would outweigh their anti-Iraqi actions in the minds of the Shi'a of Iraq. Mohammed Baqir Hakim, for example, refused to use terms such as *watan* (homeland), believing them to be un-Islamic.[250] Even while working against the Iraqi state, however, most Islamists remained conscious of the nation-state as the basic unit of political life.[251] This suggested that they sought an Islamic Iraq rather than a new pan-Shi'i state.

Within Iraq, meanwhile, traces of the Islamist movement remained, and members who stayed in the country functioned as best they could. Before he was executed,

248 Keddie, 261.

249 Jabar, 254.

250 Ibid., 267.

251 Ibid., 254.

Mohammed Baqir al-Sadr had helped his cousin Mohammed Sadiq al-Sadr (Sadr II) to become a respected Islamic scholar. In 1977, Sadr II received his credentials as independent scholar of legal reasoning.[252] He was apparently "appointed" by the government as a *marja* after his cousin's death. The regime saw his promotion as a way to accentuate ethnic differences within the religious establishment and to diminish the stature of the "Persians", al-Khoei and, later, Sistani. Throughout the 1980s, Sadr II built a network of emulators and assistants, an effort that at first did not seem to constitute a threat to the government.[253] In fact, it seemed in keeping with the increasing role of religion in the state and society during the Iran-Iraq War.[254] In the 1990s, however, Sadr II would come to constitute a perceived threat to the Ba'athist state.

F. THE FRAGMENTATION OF *DAWA*

Over the course of the 1970s and '80s, *Dawa* fragmented into four splinter groups. The *Jund Imam* faction broke away in 1971-72, believing that the struggle should focus not on achieving an Islamic state, but on preparing for the return of the Twelfth Imam. A second faction, *Dawa Islamiya*, broke away in 1980-82 in protest against the legitimacy of organizational elections. The Iraqi branch of this new faction established close ties with Iran and SCIRI. A third splinter group was led by the *faqih* of the party, Kazim Hai'ri, who advocated a lead role for the *ulama* in the Islamist movement and argued that Iran should be recognized as the leader of the transnational Shi'i community. These two positions allowed him to enjoy increased authority and patronage from his Iranian sponsors, but resulted in his expulsion from the main *Dawa* party. He subsequently founded the *Dawa* Party (Jurisprudent Council). A final division, the most important split, occurred in 1990. A group of leading intellectuals expressed frustration with the close ties between Iran and the Iraq expatriate groups in Iran, and advocated a movement that promoted Iraqi nationalism. Their effort became *Kawadir Hizb Dawa* (The *Dawa* Party Cadres), which then operated out of Damascus.[255]

252 Mahan Abedin, "Dossier: The Sadrist Movement," *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin* 5, No. 6 (July 2003).

253 Jabar, 183.

254 Jabar, 272.

255 Jabar, 257-259

Dawa members in London built in Sadr's concept of Islamic democracy by publishing *Barnamajuna* (Our Program). Perhaps motivated by negative experiences in Tehran, these activists turned firmly against *vilayat-i faqih* and other bastions of the Iranian revolution. *Dawa* leaders expressed a desire to accommodate popular will in the implementation of Islamic governance, believing it un-Islamic to force measures that the public did not approve.[256]

G. CONCLUSION

The Islamists gathered political power throughout the 1970s, an effort that reached a crescendo during the Iranian Revolution. Within Iraq, however, the burgeoning Islamist movement was quickly seen as a threat by the Ba'athist regime, and was suppressed with increasing ruthlessness. The Iranian revolution succeeded based on local conditions, but its example led to a series of miscalculations by both Islamists and their opponents that were to shape the 1980s, primarily through the Iran-Iraq War. Islamists rose in revolt in Iraq, but were thoroughly crushed for their failure to understand their environment. Saddam launched a self-destructive war to pre-empt the threat from revolutionary Iran, but wound up with a devastated economy and a weakened power base. The war strengthened the revolutionary regime in Iran, but not enough to preserve its religious legitimacy after Khomeini's death.

Throughout the 1990s, Islamic forces would rebuild quietly within Iraq, independently of Iran. At the same time, within Iran struggles increased between those who sought to maintain the iron grip of the revolutionary religious establishment and those who sought to broaden the political arena.

256 Hadad, 8.

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IV. THE PERSIAN GULF WAR TO OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

A. INTRODUCTION

By 1990, Islamism had been effectively suppressed in Iraq and had diminished legitimacy in Iran. During the 1990s, this trend continued, as a Shiite rebellion was crushed in Iraq and new political voices threatened the power of the mullahs in Iran. Growing beneath the surface, however, in both countries, were seeds that would come to fruition in the reemergence of sectarian religious activism. Thus, the current relations between the two nations are rooted in the changing circumstances in Iraq and Iran in the 1990s.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the 1990–91 Gulf War in Kuwait and its aftermath. It argues that the resulting Shi'i *intifada* failed for three main reasons: the divisiveness and disorganization within the rebellion itself, the effectiveness of the Saddamists' evolving survival and resistance strategies, and the lack of American support. The chapter details how the postwar economic sanctions and other circumstances weakened Iraq's central authority, destroyed the modern, more secular Iraqi society, and caused people to turn to sectarian and tribal identities. As the Iraqi economic situation deteriorated, the social structure fractured and central authority declined, forcing the population to find a sense of order and stability in its diverse tribal and religious identities. These phenomena set the stage for the eventual rise of sectarian and tribal forces to fill the sociological vacuum following the 2003 overthrow of the Saddam regime.

The chapter also shows how, in Iran, the political developments held out a promise of democracy that, once quelled, led to a more concentrated repression of the forces of reform. In Iran, meanwhile, relatively minor, but promising, economic and political changes initially roused the hopes of reformers. But that possibility of new opportunities soon faded as, in the end, the reformers were unable to dislodge the ruling mullahs from power. And, having survived that challenge to their power, Iran's conservative rulers were now free to spread their influence into post-Saddam Iraq in support of their SCIRI and Dawa allies. Isolated from both societies, the United States'

failure to fully appreciate the changing dynamics in Iraq and Iran put it at a distinct disadvantage in the burgeoning competition for authority in Iraq.

B. THE INVASION OF KUWAIT

1. The Road to War

By 1990, the Iraqi economy had been devastated, primarily by the overwhelming costs and losses of the Iraq–Iran War, and Iraq desperately needed to increase its oil revenues. In February, the Iraqi oil minister requested that Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the other Gulf states stop exceeding the oil-sale quotas set for its members by the OPEC, thereby greatly reducing the states' oil revenues. Still refusing to honor either Iraq's request of the OPEC quotas, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates instead greatly exceeded them.[257]

In July, Iraq made a second series of demands on Kuwait, this time buttressed by military maneuvers along their common border. Kuwait, ignoring Saddam's threatening maneuvers, even stood its troops down from alert on 19 July. Although both the Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak, and the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie, received assurances from Saddam that Iraq would not conduct military operations, those soon proved to be empty promises.[258]

2. The Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait and Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm

On 2 August 1990, Saddam ordered Iraqi forces to invade Kuwait. The invasion was abrupt and fast, taking only one day, but Iraq failed to anticipate the regional and international reactions to what was perceived by the international community as an unprovoked act of aggression. The United Nations Security Council reacted quickly, passing UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 660, condemning the invasion and demanding the withdrawal of Iraqi forces.[259] Saddam was trapped: he could not stay in Kuwait and he feared his regime would not survive if he voluntarily withdrew.[260] Over

257 Karsh, 90-91.

258 Alistair Finlan, *The Gulf War 1991* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2003), 25-26.

259 Ibid., 29.

260 Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield, *The Future of Iraq: Dictatorship, Democracy, or Division* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004),86.

the next several months, the Security Council passed Resolution 661, imposing an economic embargo on Iraq, and 678, setting a deadline of January 15, 1991 for Iraqi withdrawal.[261]

> When the deadline passed with Iraqi troops still in Kuwait, U.S.-led coalition forces began an air campaign and, on 24 February, a ground attack. Although the allied attack at first appeared decisive, it stopped short of unconditional victory. The main allied thrust from the west was poorly synchronized with the drive into Kuwait, and coalition leaders failed to extend the offensive until it had surrounded Basra, thus allowing a substantial number of Iraqi forces with heavy weapons to escape the planned entrapment.[262]

More than ten years later, in the wake of the 2003 American invasion of Iraq, in a statement full of irony, former national security advisor, Brent Scowcroft, and the first President Bush outlined the reasons the First Gulf War allies had not continued the attack by further invading Iraq:

> We would have been forced to occupy Baghdad and, in effect, rule Iraq. Had we gone the invasion route, the United States could conceivably still be an occupying power in a bitterly hostile land.[263]

Later, in their memoirs, both the commander of the 1990-91 Gulf war, General Norman Schwarzkopf, [264] and the then-chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell,[265] expressed their agreement with the Bush–Scowcroft statement. The U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Charles Freeman, also argued at the time that it was "not in our interest to destroy Iraq or weaken it to the point that Iran and/or Syria are not constrained by it."[266]

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261 Finlan, 29.

262 Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The General's War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), 432.

263 Quoted in George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 489.

264 H. Norman Schwarzkopf, *It Doesn't Take a Hero* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 497-498.

265 Colin Powell, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1998), 526.

266 Quoted in Ibid., 527.

3. The Safwan Cease-Fire Talks

The coalition may have weakened Saddam's position as a national leader, but it did not eliminate Iraq as a threat to Iran. While Saddam's personal survival seemed in jeopardy for a time, American cease fire concessions enabled him to regain supremacy, at least over his own people.

With no guidance from Washington for the cease-fire talks, Schwarzkopf perceived them as solely a military matter.[267] As he entered the meeting room at Safwan Airfield, he told Tom Brokaw, "This isn't a negotiation. I don't plan to give them anything. I'm here to tell them exactly what we expect them to do."[268] The Iraqi delegate, General Ahmad, without seeking advice or permission from Baghdad, simply agreed to all the American demands.[269] When invited to discuss or question issues, Ahmad asked for only one concession. "You might know very well know the situation of the roads and bridges and communications. We would like to agree that helicopter flights sometimes are needed to carry some of the officials, government officials, or any member that is needed to be transported from one place to another because the roads and bridges are out." General Schwarzkopf, foreseeing no threat to coalition forces from the Iraqi helicopters, agreed. When Ahmad expressed his surprise, Schwarzkopf again responded positively.[270]

The concession that seemed only a token gesture to the Americans, but in the end proved to be a dreadful weapon in the hands of the Iraqi regime. It would use the helicopters, not to carry officials here and there, but to destroy the Iraqis who dared to rise in protest against them. Strangely, considering the stakes, the U.S. military negotiators seemed almost uninterested in the events taking place at the time and soon after in Iraq.[271]

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267 Schwarzkopf, 480.

268 Quoted in Ibid., 483.

269 Ibid., 485.

270 Quoted in Ibid., 489.

271 Gordon and Trainor, *The General's War*, 446-447.

C. THE SHI'I INTIFADA

1. Roots of Rebellion

On February 15, the final day set by the UN for Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait, President Bush, in a televised address, urged "the Iraqi military and the Iraqi people to take matters into their own hands and force Saddam Hussein, the dictator, to step aside." While this may have been intended to provoke a military coup, it was taken by many in the Iraqi army to mean that the United States would support and assist an uprising and popular revolt against the Saddam Hussein regime.[272]

The allied bombing and electronic warfare efforts had destroyed the regime's ability to jam international radio broadcasts, and so Iraqis heard Bush's call for regime change and descriptions of the Iraqi military defeat. It thus seemed an opportune moment for rebellion.[273] As the president announced the cease-fire negotiations, he once again directly addressed the Iraqi citizenry: "The Iraqi people should put him [Saddam] aside and that would facilitate the resolution of all these problems that exist, and certainly would facilitate the acceptance of Iraq back into the family of peace-loving nations."[274]

When the people responded, erupting in rebellion after the Iraqi defeat in Kuwait, it placed extreme stress on the regime. The Shi'i rebellion failed all too soon, due to a combination of factors-the insurgents' own lack of focus, Saddam's overwhelming brutality, and American indifference. The *intifada* would shape Iraq, however, providing Saddam with the impetus to transform his ideology and his instruments of coercion, and leaving the Shi'a with a lingering bitterness toward the United States. It is likely that the *intifada* was less an expression of sectarian identity than a rebellion against the dominant Sunni-led political structure and the historical legacy of its Sunni predecessors.[275]

2. The *Intifada* Begins

The uprising began in earnest on the last day of February, as Iraqi tanks fleeing Kuwait stopped in Sa'ad Square in Basra, in front of a giant portrait of Saddam. The lead tank commander, rising from the hatch and yelled at the image: "What has befallen us of

272 Anderson and Stansfield, 87.

273 Gordon and Trainor, *The General's War*, 435.

274 Quoted in Ibid., 443.

275 Anderson and Stansfield, 110.

defeat, shame, and humiliation, Saddam, is the result of your follies, your miscalculations, and your irresponsible actions!" As a crowd gathered, he fired the tank's main cannon again and again at the portrait. Authority began to break down very quickly throughout the south after this affront to Saddam.[276]

On 1 March, the *intifada* reached Basra; on 2 March, Suq al-Shuyukh; on 4 March, Nasiriya and Najaf; and on 7 March Karbala. From there it spread to Amara, Hillah, Kut, and other locations throughout the south.[277] The outbreaks of violence seemed mostly spontaneous, driven largely, but not solely, by local Islamist leaders from parties such as *Dawa*[278]

Many southern Shi'i tribes joined as well, motivated by traditional resentment of the Sunni-dominated political structure and anger over the economic neglect of the south or purely local issues involving specific tribes. Some tribes were ambivalent, unable to commit one way or the other. Some were concerned that the uprising took place at the beginning of harvest season. Other tribes continued to support Saddam, responding perhaps to regime appeals that evoked their common Arab heritage. Such propaganda was unintentionally reinforced by the infiltration of thousands of Badr militia members from Iran, most of them exiled Iraqis returning to their homeland. Still other regime supporters were ensnared in long-term patronage networks developed by the regime, and their leaders sought to avoid jeopardizing their favored status. Even passive tribal support made it easier for the regime to crush the *intifada*. As it was increasingly and brutally suppressed, large numbers of Iraqis abandoned their neutrality or reversed sides to support the regime.[279]

The various factions among the rebels shared neither a coherent strategy and structure of command and control nor common goals. Indeed, they alienated each other, with SCIRI propaganda playing especially poorly because of its prominent featuring of

276 Kanan Makiya, *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1989), xix.

277 Jabar, 269.

278 Tripp, 255-256.

279 Amatzia Baram, "Neo-Tribalism in Iraq," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29, No. 1 (February 1997), 8-10.

images of Khomeini.[280] SCIRI ordered that "all Iraqi forces should submit to and obey SCIRI orders," adding that "no idea except the rightful Islamic ones should be disseminated." This bid for leadership may well have doomed the southern uprising by making it unacceptable to the United States, which feared SCIRI's Iranian sponsorship.[281]

In the midst of the strife, Ayatollah al-Kho'i approved the formation of a committee to preserve order and security, but the rebellion continued to lack leadership and a common focus.[282] At most locations, retreating soldiers, joined by urban insurgents, targeted local Ba'ath party headquarters, secret police buildings, prisons, and other regime facilities.[283] One rebel operating out of Najaf described the unfocused nature of the uprising: "At first we were a little crazy…we believed that even the traffic lights represented Saddam Hussein, so we wrecked them."[284]

3. The Regime Response

As the southern Shia rebelled, so did the Kurds in the north. At their height the twin rebellions would control sixteen of Iraq's eighteen provinces.[285] For three days after the war over Kuwait ended, the rebels met little government opposition. Soon, however, the regime once again organized its forces. Much of its army field headquarters had survived intact, allowing for sufficient command and control to organize a coherent response.[286] With insufficient force to put down both the Shi'i and the Kurdish rebellions at the same time, the government forces prioritized by countering the Shi'a first.[287] Ba'athist security services allegedly intercepted communications between Shi'i rebels and the Americans. In response to the Shi'a plea for help, the Americans were said to respond, "We are not going to support you because you are Shia and are collaborating

280 Jabar, 270.

281 Anderson and Stansfield, 88-9.

282 Tripp, 256.

283 Jabar, 269-270.

284 Quoted in Anderson and Stansfield, 88.

285 Ibid., 88.

286 Gordon and Trainor, *The General's War*, 448.

287 Ibid., 435.

with Iran."[288] Hearing this renewed the Ba'athists confidence that they could safely confront the Shi'a without fear of American intervention.

Because the Republican Guard was designed to counter such uprisings, Guard units were quickly dispatched to the affected areas.[289] On 8 March Iraqi forces staged a combined arms attack, using armor, attack helicopters, and artillery fire, against insurgents in Karbala armed only with light weapons and rocket-propelled grenades.[290] In a sign of the regime's fear, Iraqi Mi-8 helicopters deployed twelve to thirty-two munitions containing Sarin nerve agent, a risky move given the proximity of U.S. forces. The chemical bombs apparently malfunctioned and the incident was not reported to the Americans.[291] In any case, resistance was soon crushed, and thousands fled the city.[292]

On 9 March, government forces assaulted Najaf, the city that served as the base of much of the resistance and its various leaders. They too were soon overwhelmed, and the survivors fled south, seeking the shelter and support of the victorious allies. American troops posted along Highway Eight between An Nasiriyah and Basra treated many Iraq civilians who told horrific stories of the deliberate targeting of noncombatants and of attacks on mosques serving as shelter for those seeking to escape the fighting. The Americans wanted nothing to do with the rebellion, however. Instead of giving captured stocks of Iraqi arms to the insurgents, they destroyed them.[293] On 21 March Grand Ayatollah Kho'i was forced to appear on television with Saddam, pledging his support for the regime and calling for the rebellion to end.[294]

Though the *Intifada* illustrated the lack of central leadership among the Shia, it also demonstrated the dangers that appeared to await the Sunnis in the event of Saddam's

288 Quoted in Anderson and Stanfield, 89.

289 Tripp, 256.

290 Gordon and Trainor, *The General's War*, 449.

291 Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006), 55 and 65.

292 Gordon and Trainor, *The General's War*, 449.

293 Ibid.

294 Jabar, 271.

fall.[295] Some military experts see the Shi'i *intifada* as the formative influence on Saddam's survival strategy throughout the rest of the 1990s.[296]

4. The "Great Betrayal"

For some of the survivors, the negotiating site at Safwan became a refugee camp, sheltering 11,500 Iraqis who pleaded for American shelter and appeared before numerous international news organizations then on the site. In public interviews, many of them, like Shi'i refugee Mehdy Nathil, asked: "Bush told us to revolt against Saddam. We revolt against Saddam. But where is Bush? Where is he?"[297] Such pleas for help were all the more remarkable considering that, before the revolt, the rebels had also suffered under the six-week allied bombing campaign. They were now begging for assistance from the same forces that had attacked their communities. Thus began the narrative of America's "Great Betrayal," a narrative that would shape future interaction between the United States and the Shi'a of Iraq.

The Iraqi helicopter flights provoked sustained controversy. On 13 March, President Bush publicly denounced them as a violation of the cease-fire, only to be corrected by his advisors. Though Scowcroft disapproved of Schwarzkopf's concession permitting the Iraqis to fly helicopters, he was alarmed by the possibility that the Shi'i rebels might succeed. He therefore argued against supporting them on the grounds of what he would later termed "geopolitics."[298] To Scowcroft and his colleagues, Iraq was a check on Iranian power: "My view was that there was a real danger in the first few days that the country would fall apart and I was fundamentally not interested in seeing that. But I did not want to see the converse: that the Iraqis should be able to go after the Shiites."[299] The Administration finally decided to shelve any efforts to support the Shiites or to deny Iraqi helicopter overflights, telling the press that such efforts would offend the United States' Arab and Turkish allies. In fact, Turkish President Turqut Ozal supported efforts to aid the Shi'a, as did the Saudis.[300]

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295 Anderson and Stansfield, 100.

296 Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 55.

297 Gordon and Trainor, *The General's War*, 450.

298 Ibid., 455.

299 Ibid., 456.

300 Ibid.

In their memoirs, both Bush and Scowcroft claimed that they never promised to assist any uprising by the Iraqi people and voiced concerns about such support:

> We were concerned about the long-term balance of power at the head of the Gulf. Breaking up the Iraqi state would pose its own destabilization problems…However admirable self-determination for the Kurds or Shi'ites might have been in principle, the practical aspects of this particular situation dictated this policy. For these reasons alone, the uprisings distressed us, but they also offered Saddam an opportunity to reassert himself and rally his army. Instead of toppling him as the cause of its humiliating defeat, the Iraqi military was put to work to suppress the rebellions. It was a serious disappointment.[301]

Colin Powell, in commenting on both the Shi'i revolt in the south and the Kurdish one in the north, later wrote:

> Neither revolt had a chance. Nor, frankly, was their success a goal of our policy. President Bush's rhetoric urging the Iraqis to overthrow Saddam, however, may have given encouragement to the rebels. But our practical intention was to leave Baghdad enough power to survive as a threat to an Iran that remained bitterly hostile toward the United States.[302]

In a later interview by ABC News anchor Peter Jennings, Scowcroft was asked: "Do I state it correctly when you say that having seen the rebellion [in southern and northern Iraq] develop, you would have preferred a coup?" Scowcroft replied, "Oh yes. Yes, we clearly would have preferred a coup. There's no question of that."[303]

Politicians and foreign policy decision makers must often make hard choices based on the best interests of their constituents. Reasonable analysis could conclude that a successful Shi'i uprising was not in the interests of the American people. Nonetheless, the failure of the *intifada* ensured an outcome not in the interests of Americans: the bitterness of the southern Shi'a. In any case, the desired policy outcome, a military coup, was probably unrealistic. Considerable evidence available at the time suggested that the regime was in fact "coup-proof" as a result of its ironclad security apparatus.[304]

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301 Quoted in Bush and Scowcroft, 489.

302 Quoted in Powell, 531.

303 Makiya, xx.

304 Makiya, xx-xxi.

5. No-Fly Zones and the Kurdish Safe Haven

The Iraqi regime successfully subdued the Shia, and then turned to the Kurds.[305] In April 1991, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 688, demanding that Iraq cease its internal campaigns of repression. The resolution led to the creation of a "safe haven" north of the 36th parallel and a "no-fly zone" above this line, where Iraqi aircraft were prohibited. These were the first actions of outside powers in support of either the Shi'i or Kurdish rebellions. [306] In May, the Bush Administration declared that economic sanctions against Iraq would remain until Saddam was no longer in power.[307]

D. THE DECLINE OF THE IRAQI STATE

Max Weber defined the modern state as "a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory."[308] By this definition, with the creation of the Kurdish safe haven in 1991 Iraq arguably ceased to be a state.[309] While ceding the monopoly of force altogether in the north, the regime also began to lose power in other places and in other ways. Its security apparatus had been weakened two major wars and multiple rebellions over the last twenty years. The Ba'ath regime, which governed through fear, personalized its reign of terror by demanding that hundreds of thousands of its citizens collaborate in it.[310] The regime's coercive power had for twenty years appeared all-knowing and all-powerful. After the Gulf War, however, some Iraqis said that "the barrier of fear was broken."[311] "Under such conditions," Kanan Makiya later wrote, "it was neither effective nor possible to shoot and torture everybody."[312] New economic challenges would further erode the regime's direct coercive power.

The regime was thus forced to reform its ideology and to employ new agents of coercion. Its new ideology would more fully embrace Islam and tribal values; its new

305 Gordon and Trainor, *The General's War*, 457.

306 Tripp, 258.

307 Gordon and Trainor, *The General's War*, 457.

308 Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *Essential Readings in Comparative Politics*, ed. Patrick O'Neil and Ronald Rogowski (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2004), 34.

309 Anderson and Stansfield, 109.

310 Makiya, xi.

311 Ibid., xiv.

312 Ibid., xv.

instruments of coercion would be found in the tribal sheiks and the *Fedayeen Saddam*. The changes this would cause in Iraqi society would eventually lead to new sources of power in post-Saddam Iraq, sources not answerable to Iran or other sponsors. Because the country had been so isolated throughout the 1990s, it was difficult for outsiders to predict their emergence.

1. Economic Challenges to the State

After its retreat from Kuwait, Iraq found itself in a truly dire economic situation. Six weeks of allied bombing had done more damage to the national infrastructure than eight years of war with Iran,[313] destroying most of the military and civilian achievements built by the Ba'ath Party over the preceding twenty years.[314] Iraq was now burdened not only its pre-war debt, but also with the new burden of reparations for its invasion of Kuwait, while sanctions slashed Iraqi exports by 90 percent and cut off international loans.[315] In addition, technology-transfer concerns over "dual-use" items severely limited imports,[316] and basic foodstuffs such as meat, flour, and sugar became increasingly scarce. Disease rates grew in the absence of clean water and electricity,[317] and infant mortality rates grew to the highest rates seen in forty years.[318] Virtually the entire society sank into poverty.

The Iraqi regime turned quickly toward rebuilding at least some of its damaged infrastructure. The electrical grid, for instance, was rebuilt much faster than Western estimates predicted. Rebuilding the Al Hartha power plant near Basra, for example, took only 270 days, instead of the three-year estimated repair period.[319] The Iraqi people would later contrast such results with the pace of reconstruction under the Americans.

The country suffered economic sanctions for thirteen years. In 1980, the per capita income in Iraq had been $4,083. In the 1990s per capita income declined to $300 a year, as more than sixty percent of the population sank into poverty. Hyperinflation

313 Tripp, 261.

314 Anderson and Stansfield, 87.

315 Finlan, 75.

316 Tripp, 261.

317 Finlan, 75.

318 Tripp, 261

319 Gordon and Trainor, *The General's War*, 459.

destroyed the middle class.[320] In the midst of their suffering, Iraqis took note of U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's response when asked if the cost to the Iraqi people was worth the gains achieved by sanctions. "Yes, I think the price is worth it" came her memorable reply.[321] Saddam benefited from the outraged reactions to such poorly received foreign rhetoric, which united the country as had the war with Iran. [322]

The United Nations instituted an "oil-for-food" program in 1996 under UNSCR 986, but this perversely increased the rentier character of the state. The Iraqi people became even more dependent on government patronage, which proved a formidable tool in the regime's domestic and international survival strategies.[323] The oil-for-food program also led to the rise of a huge black market and a resulting dichotomy between the very rich merchants of the shadow economy and the vast majority of the Iraqi people living in poverty.[324] By 2001 and 2002, allowable levels of trade in the oil-for-food program gave Iraq $12 billion a year. Other both authorized and clandestine trade brought in another $2 billion a year. Even this relatively modest level of trade restored Iraq as a major regional economic player.[325] Iraq slowly eroded the U.N. embargo, by initiating civilian flights in 2000, for example.[326]

The people of Iraq were also cut off from the rest of the world, as international travel was either forbidden or prohibitively expensive, and few foreign visitors traveled to the country. Thus, people had no exposure to the communication revolution transforming the rest of the Middle East: no internet, no satellite television, no cell phones.[327] Conversely, foreigners had little information about developments in Iraq.

320 Jabar, 271.

321 Quoted in Shadid, 37.

322 Tripp, 279.

323 Jabar, 271.

324 Anderson and Stansfield, 98

325 Tripp, 278.

326 Ibid., 280

327 Shadid, 42.

2. The Direct Solution: New Coercive Institutions

The *intifada* showed Saddam that many of his security forces were unreliable or ineffective. He created new institutions, and while these addressed his needs, they also indicated his weaknesses.

In early 1992, Saddam formed the 30,000-member Special Republican Guard, designed specifically to protect him and his regime from internal coups. This gave him additional insurance against intrigue, but illustrated his weakness and fear.[328] In 1994, the regime formed the *Fedayeen Saddam* militia and placed it under the command of Saddam's son Uday. This lightly armed militia was created specifically to defend sites that the military and security services were unwilling or unable to defend during the Shi'i *intifada*. To guide its actions, the government drew up a Ba'ath Emergency Plan, in effect, a counterinsurgency strategy to prevent or crush potential uprisings. The plan called for the *Fedayeen* to hold off rebels until the Republican Guard could be summoned to put down the insurgency. In accordance with this plan, each town or village received large shipments of light weapons, although ammunition was held back to avoid arming potential rebels.[329] To fulfill their mandate to "control" the Iraqi population, the *Fedayeen* employed brutal and often random violence, often resorting to summary executions. [330] Recent evidence suggests that the *Fedyeen* later formed the nucleus of the post-Saddam insurgency, fighting against the loss of their privileged status to the Shi'a.

3. Tying Tribalism and Islam to the Ba'athist State

After the Shi'i *intifada*, the regime officials saw a need to adjust the government ideology. Whereas, previously, Saddam had forced the Iraqi people to remain unified under his leadership, he no longer had the power to compel such unity.[331] Instead, he sought to retain power by dividing the people and turning them against one another. To construct this new ideology he looked to four forms of identity: Arabism, tribalism, pre-Islamic Mesopotamian tradition, and Islam.[332] Loyalty to one's tribe and religious sect became the most obvious manifestation of this policy. Most notably, after the Shi'i

328 Anderson and Stansfield, 104.

329 Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 62.

330 Anderson and Stanfield, 108-9.

331 Makiya, xxx-xxxi.

332 Baram, 7.

intifada, Saddam no longer emphasized pan-sectarianism. Instead, he played on the fears of the Sunni populace for what might take his place, were he to be deposed.[333]

a. The Regime's Neo-Tribal Policies

Public recognition of tribal leaders in Iraq only became common after the Gulf War, as Saddam turned to the tribal chiefs in hopes of finding reliable instruments of authority.[334] He justified the use of tribal agents to his party members by reminding them of the Ba'athists' failure to contain the *intifada*. To incorporate his officials into a tribal structure, he presented the Ba'ath Party as "the tribe of all the tribes."[335]

On 17 March 1991, select tribes took an oath of allegiance to Saddam; soon after, some tribal leaders traveled to Baghdad to meet with regime officials. Over the next several years such contacts and oaths grew in number and significance, eventually incorporating elements of traditional tribal ceremonies.[336] Saddam and his deputies also began to publicize their meetings with tribal leaders, and occasions such as tribal funerals became significant political and social events. The tribal leaders also received financial support and other assistance, including provisions of modern small arms and even artillery.[337]

The *Intifada* showed that Ba'athist ideology and regime patronage were not sufficient to assure national unity in the absence of sectarian equality. Thus, outreach to the Shi'i tribes offered both practical and ideological benefits. The Shi'i tribal sheiks supported the regime in exchange for patronage, and tribal values supported the cross-sectarian ideology that the regime sought to employ in the south.[338] Because the destruction of much of the Iraqi army during the Gulf War had removed much of the coercion mechanism from the regime, local tribal militias became particularly important.[339]

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333 Makiya, xxx-xxxi.

334 Baram, 7.

335 Baram, 18.

336 Ibid., 11.

337 Ibid., 12-13.

338 Ibid., 20.

339 Ibid., 19.

By the mid-1990s Saddam's power devolution to the tribes had given the rural population a sense of autonomy that it had not enjoyed since the 1958 revolution. Tribal justice began to parallel and even to supersede the regime's legal system, and the sheiks regained much social prominence. At the same time, many of the educated urban elites who had been hurt by Ba'ath policies that constrained the free market in the late 1960s were now also denied access to public-sector employment because of the massive financial difficulties facing the government.[340]

b. The State and the People Turn to Religion

In the 1980s, Saddam had turned to religion as a tool to oppose Khomeini. On the surface, however, much of the nation remained secular, although religion was being quietly revived at the popular level.[341] After Iraq's 1991 defeat, the turn to religion by both the regime and the people emerged into the open. Despite the financial burden of the sanctions regime, the regime built more than 100 mosques in Baghdad. The government shut down bars and nightclubs, and promoted the veiling of women, advising women to stay out of the workforce and instead remain in the home. The unemployment rate made this recommendation particularly effective. In 1994, at the height of its economic difficulties, the regime announced the construction of "The Grand Saddam Mosque," which was to feature the largest and tallest dome in the world, among other attributes.[342]

Religion also flourished at the popular level. The mosques saw a massive increase in attendance, with the Kazimiya shrine in Baghdad seeing 50,000 daily worshippers, three times the prewar level. More and more people sought the support of religious charities for food, medicine, and public safety.[343]

c. The Shi'i Religious Revival and the Sadr II Movement

The turn to religion by both the regime and the general populace provided an opening for renewed Shi'i activism, but traditional clerical leaders remained cautious. After the 1991 revolt, Grand Ayatollah al-Kho'i was put under house arrest, several of his

340 Baram, 20

341 Jabar, 272.

342 Anderson and Stansfield, 103.

343 Jabar, 272

followers and members of his family were imprisoned, and several were executed. Al-Kho'i died in August 1992, after which his sons and other followers were closely monitored.[344]

Throughout the 1980s, Kho'i had groomed Sistani as his successor. Born in 1930 in Mashad, Iran, the son of a prominent clerical family, Sistani was sent to study in Qom at the age of nineteen. At twenty-one he moved to Najaf, where he became a follower of Kho'i, who gave him his certificate as a *mujtahid* at the young age of thirty-one. Sistani inherited Kho'i's foundation, which, together with Kho'i's mentoring, made him the most respected and best financed cleric in Najaf.[345]

Despite following Kho'i's quietist example, Sistani experienced some of the repression of Saddam's rule. He was briefly imprisoned after the 1991 *intifada*, and was threatened with expulsion several times. [346] In 1994 he was placed under house arrest in order to limit his contact with society.[347] He survived two assassination attempts, including one close call in 1997, after which Sistani very rarely ventured out in public.[348]

With the traditional ulama remaining quiet, Mohammed Sadiq Sadr (Sadr II) saw an opportunity to assert his leadership. He established a network of social services to step in where the state had retreated, and quickly built a constituency among sheiks and emulators. In effect, he recreated the networks of Mohammed Baqir al-Sadr that the Ba'athists had destroyed in 1980. Sadr II developed his networks quietly and seemed for quite a while to pose little threat to the regime. After the death of Kho'i he gained prominence and built powerful constituencies among the peasant, urban lower class, and urban middle class, and soon gained strength in Najaf, Baghdad, Nasiriya, Basra, and other cities.[349]

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344 Shadid, 188.

345 Shadid, 188.

346 Ibid., 189.

347 Tripp, 271.

348 Shadid, 189.

349 Jabar, 272-273.

Najaf was soon split between supporters of Sistani and supporters of Sadr II. The two sides maintained decorum, but rivalry festered.[350] Sadr II referred to the Najaf *hawza* as being split in two, between a *hawza natiqa* (outspoken *hawza*), led by him, and a *hawza samita* (silent *hawza*), led by Ayatollah Sistani.[351] In an implicit attack on Iranian-born Sistani, Sadr stressed the importance of native Arab leadership.[352]

In 1997, Sadr II defied both Saddam and the long-standing Shi'i doctrine by organizing Friday prayers. His services drew as many as 250,000 worshippers,[353] and photographs and first-person accounts of the Friday crowds reminded observers of the first years of the Islamic Revolution in Iran.[354] Sadr II would eventually deliver forty-seven Friday sermons at the Kufah mosque near Najaf that would have a lasting impact on the entire Shi'i community. He spoke in the language of the common man and aimed his remarks at the poor and dispossessed. He also wrote extensively and used scholarly language to discuss Islamic topics and the coming of the Mahdi.[355]

Sadr II was not a public critic of the Ba'athist regime, but as a populist figure, he enjoyed ever-widening loyalty within the Shi'i community. Thus he posed a potential rival to state power, and so became a target of the security apparatus. In February 1999, he and his two elder sons were killed by unidentified assailants in a drive-by shooting.

When Sadr II's death was announced, much of the Shi'i community rioted in protest.[356] Saddam deployed the *Fedayeen* and the Republican Guard to contain the unrest. Ali Hassan al-Majid, "Chemical Ali," led the security forces in an assault on Nasiriya, during which he indiscriminately shelled the city with artillery. In Baghdad, twenty-five protestors were killed and fifty wounded.[357] Shi'i Iraqi exiles in Iran also

350 Jabar, 273.

351 Nir Rosen, *In the Belly of the Green Bird: The Triumph of the Martyrs in Iraq* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 21.

352 Rosen, *In the Belly of the Green Bird*, 13.

353 Shadid, 170.

354 Rosen, *In the Belly of the Green Bird*, 24.

355 Ibid., 13.

356 Tripp, 271.

357 Anderson and Stansfield, 113.

vocally commemorated Sadr II's death, and they physically attacked Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim and his associates in SCIRI when they suggested that Sadr II had been a government agent.[358]

Two days after his assassination, the regime shut down Sadr II's Najaf office, and his son Muqtada was placed under house arrest. Moqtada went underground, joining other young clerics in quietly preserving his father's networks.[359] After Sadr II's assassination, Sistani's position as most senior *mutjahid* in Najaf was no longer disputed. [360]

E. THE ISOLATION OF THE EXILES

Through violence and intimidation, Saddam had effectively destroyed any political open space within which an internal opposition movement might gestate or an outside group recruit members. Therefore, there was no mechanism for exile groups to build networks within Iraq, or even to gain significant information about events within the country. [361]

Dawa, SCIRI and other exile groups were still able to maintain small efforts at resistance, despite the massive repression they suffered after the 1991 rebellion. Saddam City formed one of their remaining strongholds, as did key cities in the south. In the face of continued repression, however, all efforts at resistance remained small and ineffectual, useful more for maintaining morale than for seriously challenging the regime. Some reports attributed the December 1996 shooting and permanent disabling of Saddam's older son Uday and a 1997 assassination attempt on Saddam's younger son Qusay to Shi'i Islamists.[362]

The various parties that formed the Iraqi opposition met in Vienna in June 1992 to form the Iraqi National Congress (INC), an umbrella organization financed by the CIA. In October of that same year, the INC held a meeting at Salahuddin, in the autonomous

358 Jabar, 184.

359 Shadid, 172.

360 Juan Cole, "Shiite Religious Parties Fill Vacuum in Southern Iraq," *Middle East Report*, 22 April 2003.

361 Tripp, 276-276.

362 Ibid., 269.

Kurdish area of Iraq. The members formed an assembly to represent almost all of the opposition factions, establishing Ahmad Chalabi as the leader. Chalabi, who came from a prominent Shi'i family, left Baghdad in 1958, studied mathematics at MIT, received a doctorate in mathematics from the University of Chicago, and was convicted in Jordan *in absentia* in 1992 of embezzlement, theft, and forgery after the collapse of his Amman-based Petra Bank in 1989.[363] He enjoyed significant influence in Washington, but had little real authority or influence over the other opposition groups.[364] The INC planned to establish a base in Kurdish territory and to incite a popular uprising against Saddam.[365]

The National Accord (al-Wifaq al Watani) formed in 1990, and consisted largely of those opposition figures that had not joined the INC. It counted former Ba'athists and regime defectors among its members, many from the Sunni northwest, the home of many intelligence and military leaders. Ayad Allawi, the founder, is a former Ba'athist, also with connections to the CIA, born 1946 in Baghdad.[366] The Accord operated first from Damascus and later from Amman, and sought to stage a bloodless coup in Iraq, and thus replace the current Sunni regime with a new one.[367] Like the INC, the Accord faced the dilemma of trying to generate legitimacy and run effective operations while being cut off from Iraqi society.[368] Its members had kinship and other ties to members of the regime, but still had difficulty penetrating the government to organize a coup.[369]

In the fall of 1998, the U.S. Congress passed the Iraq Liberation Act.[370] This legislation dedicated $100 million to the various Iraqi opposition groups, marked more of a symbolic gesture than a realistic effort to generate domestic opposition due to conditions on the ground.[371]

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363 George Packer, *The Assassin's Gate: America in Iraq* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 76 and Kenneth Katzman, *Iraq: Post-Saddam Governance and Security* RL 31339 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 16 May 2006), 3.

364 Tripp, 275.

365 Anderson and Stansfield, 92.

366 Katzman, *Iraq: Post-Saddam Governance and Security*, 4.

367 Anderson and Stansfield, 92.

368 Tripp, 277.

369 Ibid., 276-276.

370 Ibid., 282.

371 Tripp, 277.

F. THE TRIAL OF REVOLUTIONARY FORCES IN IRAN

The Iranian political situation from 1989 to 2005 can be divided into two segments: the presidency of Hashemi Rafsanjani, and the presidency of Mohammad Khatami. Rafsanjani presided over a period of modest economic reform and foreign outreach, but he did not markedly improve the state's standing at home or abroad. He also declined to change the revolutionary institutions established under Khomeini, or to open the political space to actors outside the religious establishment. Khatami brought about a small degree of political liberalization, but failed to support those pushing for even more openness and ultimately gave in to a conservative campaign to preserve the revolutionary regime.[372]

Iran's economy had been devastated by the war with Iraq, with household income down 40 percent since 1979 and main critical infrastructure nodes, such as the Khorramshahr port, Abadan refinery, and Kharq loading facility effectively destroyed.[373] Beginning in 1993, Rafsanjani initiated a program of privatization of state industries, but achieved only limited success.[374] He was reelected in 1993, but the low voter turnout indicated the apathy of many Iranians.[375]

The constitution limited Rafsanjani to two terms as president, and so the 1997 elections promised a new set of actors. That election had two candidates: Ali-Akbar Nateq Nuri, the conservative speaker of parliament, and Mohammad Khatami. Nuri enjoyed the support of Leader Khameini and the commander of the IRGC, who ordered his forces in writing to vote for Nuri. Other regime organizations also supported Nuri. The resulting conservative coalition intimidated many of the more pragmatic forces, however, including many of Rafsanjani's supporters, who then banded together in support of Khatami Khatami promised increased freedom of expression, greater civil rights, and a more robust civil society, which appealed especially to young people, students, women, minorities, and the middle class. Nevertheless, Nuri was widely favored. Voter turnout reached record levels, and delivered Khatami 29.7 million votes

372 Keddie, 263.

373 Ibid., 263-264.

374 Ibid., 265.

375 Ibid., 267.

to Nuri's 7 million.[376] In the aftermath of the vote, stunned conservative forces eventually consolidated in support of Khameini, who in reality had more power than the president.

Despite Khatami's win, conservatives continued to hold most of the levers of power in the regime, and so the new president had to act carefully. Khatami was able to make some progress in improving relations with other countries, most notably by hosting the Organization of the Islamic Conference in December 1997 and signing a cooperation agreement with Saudi Arabia in May 1998.[377] Relations with the United States did not improve, however, despite Khatami's call for a U.S.-Iran "Dialogue of Civilizations." Overall, Khatami enjoyed only modest success with economic reform. His attempts to increase privatization were not helped by the fact that the state still controlled 60 percent of the economy, and that 10-20 percent more fell under the control of five foundations with connections to Khameini and his supporters.[378]

Khatami and his allies faced significant ideological opposition immediately after he took office. In November 1997, Grand Ayatollah Montazeri spoke out in favor of measures to curtail the power of the Supreme Leader, favoring an institution that would "supervise, not rule." Despite his religious prominence, Montazeri was denounced by the conservative forces and placed under house arrest. In April 1998, conservatives prosecuted the reformist mayor of Tehran, Gholam Hosein Karbashi, for corruption charges. They impeached the Interior Minister Abdollah Nuri, attacked newspapers and demonstrators, and apparently embarked on a campaign of assassination of dissidents.[379] Events heated up after student demonstrations in July 1999 led to violence, possibly due to incitement by conservative infiltrators. Khatami was threatened by the IRGC, and forced to denounce the students. Reformers were disillusioned and dispirited by Khatami's lack of resolution.[380]

376 Keddie, 269-270.

377 Ibid., 271.

378 Ibid., 273.

379 Ibid., 274-275.

380 Ibid., 277.

In the 2000 parliamentary elections, reform elements faired well, winning 71 percent of the vote in the first round. By this time the country had become so tense and polarized that little reform was possible, however.[381] Reform measures passed by the parliament continued to be overturned by the unelected Council of Guardians. Violence and persecution of reformists continued throughout 2000 and 2001. Legal repression was led by conservative forces in the judiciary, who were accountable only to Khameini.[382]

Khatami won more support in his 2001 reelection victory, but continued to be unable or unwilling to translate this support into tangible change. As time passed, more and more reformists ceased to view him as an agent of change. If nothing else, however, his term in power prompted more discussion of democracy and government transparency. He also kept the opposition movement nonviolent.[383]

G. THE SECOND BUSH ADMINISTRATION

The major American policy figures who had pushed for the 1998 Iraq Liberation Act strongly supported the 2000 presidential campaign of George W. Bush. Many of these individuals took senior positions in the new Bush Administration. An early Bush attempt to reform U.N. policy through the use of "smart sanctions" failed for lack of support from regional actors such as Syria, Jordan, and Turkey, and the threat of a Russian veto in the Security Council.[384] With the United Nations closed as an avenue for change, Bush Administration officials began to search for alternate means to deal with Iraq. Some advocated regime change, but this was seen at the time as impractical.[385] Calculations changed, however, in the aftermath of the terror attacks of 11 September. Some members of the administration advocated striking Iraq in response, despite the lack of evidence of Iraqi links to the attacks. Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan soon put such thoughts to the side, but only temporarily.[386] After 11 September, Iran assisted American efforts in Afghanistan and supported Hamid Karzai as he instituted the

381 Keddie, 277.

382 Ibid., 278-279.

383 Ibid., 280-281.

384 Tripp, 282.

385 Ibid., 283

386 Ibid., 286.

post-Taliban government.[387] Inclusion in President Bush's "Axis of Evil" surprised and disappointed Iranians. They had hoped that their cooperation on Afghanistan had garnered goodwill, but now saw that it did not.[388]

H. CONCLUSION

During the 1990s, Iraq and Iran underwent profound changes. In Iraq, military defeat and rebellion exposed the precarious position of Saddam Hussein's regime. Economic sanctions weakened the regime, but by destroying the market economy also strengthened its hold over the population. Saddam adjusted his ideology to incorporate old forms of identity, dividing the people in an effort to make them easier to rule. The new sources of identity also produced new leaders who were eventually able to assert their power in post-Saddam Iraq. America, with little knowledge of Iraqi politics, did not anticipate the sources of power that would arise in post-Saddam Iraq. The Bush Administration was overly influenced by the exile groups, whose isolation from Iraqi society made them unlikely to succeed in post-Saddam Iraq.

Meanwhile, though events in Iran posed a challenge to the ruling mullahs, the Iranian regime proved determined to crush dissent. The mullahs would be able to advance their revolutionary interests in post-Saddam Iraq. The Americans, unaware of conditions on the ground in Iraq and convinced that the Iranian regime remained vulnerable to popular uprising, would thus hamstring themselves in the coming competition with Iran for the loyalty of the Shia of Iraq.

387 Keddie, 283.

388 Jo-Anne Hart, "Perceptions and Courses of Action toward Iran," *Military Review* LXXX, No. 5, September-October 2005, 9.

V. SHI'I ALLEGIANCES AFTER SADDAM

> Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man; the same is consequent to the time, wherein men live without other security, than what with their own strength, and their own invention shall furnish them withal. In such condition, there is no place for industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by the sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving, and removing, such things as require such force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.[389]
>
> -Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*

> Promoting disorder is a legitimate objective for the insurgent. It helps disrupt the economy, hence to produce discontent; it serves to undermine the strength and the authority of the counterinsurgent. Moreover, disorder-the normal state of nature-is cheap to create and very costly to prevent.[390]
>
> -David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*

A. INTRODUCTION

Because the Shi'a make up the majority of Iraq's population, American plans to overthrow Saddam rested on a gamble that the Shi'a were more pro-American than pro-Iranian. This gamble was based on hope more than knowledge and experience. In reality, the United States was always going to face an uphill battle in its quest to win the favor of the Shi'a of Iraq. The Americans were foreigners and non-Muslims, had motives that seemed questionable to the Shi'a, and had shown in 1991 that they were unreliable. Even with these disadvantages, however, it was conceivable that the Shi'a could form an effective partnership with the United States. After all, it was the Americans who were to overthrow the Sunni regime headed by Saddam, empower Shi'i politicians, and hold out

389 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1960), 82.

390 David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York: Frederick A. Preager, 1968), 11.

the promise of a reconstructed Iraq. So far, the Shi'a have proven to be pro-Iraqi, and willing to use both American and Iranian resources for their own purposes.

Chapter IV argued that events in the 1990s transformed Iraqi society in ways not readily visible to outsiders. This chapter shows the consequences of that ignorance. To America's surprise, the Shi'a did not greet the American invaders with uncritical goodwill as predicted, but with wariness. The chapter explains that the initial period following the invasion formed a brief window of opportunity in which American policy goals were most achievable. Instead of exploiting this window, however, the United States' inaction created a security vacuum that remains to this day. This vacuum and the corresponding slow pace of reconstruction discredited the United States in Shi'i eyes. The chapter shows that the Shi'a reacted to this breakdown in security by turning to their own sources of authority and security, including influential Shi'i leaders such as Sistani and Sadr, whom the Americans hesitated to acknowledge. Events such as the Abu Ghraib prison scandal further shocked and offended Iraqis, adding to anti-American sentiment. The chapter shows that the context of disorder propelled sectarianism and ethnic conflict, leading most dangerously to the emergence of regionalism as a divisive issue that could conceivably end in a divided Iraq, with the formation of a Shi'i region in the south. While Sadr and Sistani have resisted this trend, their ability to control events may be waning. The Shi'a may be distancing themselves from the United States, enabling Iran to increasingly able step more overtly into the resulting void.

This chapter focuses largely on Americans actions in Iraq, actions that it argues have empowered the Shi'a, tested their loyalties, and created conditions that Iran may be able to exploit. The chapter does not seek to use hindsight to fix blame, but rather to understand the genesis of current Shi'i attitudes.

B. THE U.S. INVASION AND THE FIGHT FOR SHI'I LOYALTY

1. American Assumptions and Plans

a. "Shiaphilia" and "Sunniphobia"

Some participants in American initial efforts in post-Saddam Iraq blame at least some of the increasing sectarian tension on initial American misperceptions. U.S. officials allegedly began the endeavor with a greater sense of sectarianism than the Iraqis

themselves possessed.[391] Many of the leading neoconservatives held to a vision of the Shi'a, an unrealistic "Shiaphilia" according to Ahmed S. Hashim of the Naval War College, which would soon be disproved by reality.[392] Ironically, neoconservative rhetoric echoed that of Sunnis who accused Shi'a of being "less Arab."[393] Some observers even claim that "Shiite power was the key to the whole neoconservative vision for Iraq."[394] In due course, that conviction is said to have led Americans to make unrealistic promises to the Shi'a,[395] thereby creating a scenario in which the Shi'a would naturally lose faith in the United States as their expectations were not fulfilled.

b. ORHA's Plans

In January 2003, retired General Jay Garner established the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) to supervise the postwar American effort. The organization's first error was its assumption that Iraq had functioning infrastructure.[396] In reality, however, the economy "had essentially collapsed by 2003."[397] Iraqi society was now marked by enormous structural challenges such as high illiteracy rates and a youth bulge.[398]

In early April, Rumsfeld aide Lawrence Di Rita outlined ORHA's postwar political plan. "We're going to stand up an interim Iraqi government, hand power over to them, and get out in three to four months," he said. "All but twenty-five thousand soldiers will be out by the beginning of September."[399] Although Garner had estimated in February that reconstruction costs would total no more than $3 billion over three years, according to Garner's aides, in mid-April, Di Rita angrily told him, "We don't owe these

391 Barbara Bodine, "Reaping the Whirlwind: Can We Leave Iraq Better Than We Found It?" (Speech at the Naval Postgraduate School, 8 February 2006).

392 Ahmed S. Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 274.

393 Hashim, 285.

394 Packer, *The Assassin's Gate*, 108-9. Packer provides a detailed description of various neoconservative projects that, among other efforts, advocated restoring the Hashemite monarchy to Iraq and supporting "traditional Shiite values."

395 Bodine.

396 Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 150.

397 Anderson and Stansfield, 103.

398 Diamond, 21.

399 Packer, *The Assassin's Gate*, 133-4.

people a thing. We gave them their freedom." Di Rita would later deny making the comment.[400] In any case, American plans for Iraq's postconflict governance and reconstruction did not at all fit the situation that would soon exist.

c. Transformational War

In what would form a crucial element in this mismatch, the Bush Administration's theory of victory did not include the use of large numbers of U.S. forces to enforce security. According to Rumsfeld's doctrine of "transformation," smaller, lighter forces would bypass resistance and overwhelm the enemy through speed and shock. Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz publicly rejected U.S. Army Chief of Staff Eric Shinseki's estimates of the necessary troop numbers, claiming that Iraq's postwar requirements would be much lower than previous such interventions.[401] Deputy U.S. Centcom Commander General Abazaid judged U.S troops to be "an antibody" in Iraqi society.[402] As things turned out, however, the lack of a large enough deployment of U.S. troops meant trusting security to Iraqi forces that for various reasons did not exist at the time they were most needed.

2. The Shi'i Reception

The U.S.-led coalition forces began their attack on Iraq on 20 March 2003. The Shi'a received the American invaders with wariness, dubious of American intentions after the "Great Betrayal" of 1991 and suspicious of American rhetoric about democracy.[403] One son of a senior Najafi ayatollah asked *Washington Post* correspondent Anthony Shadid: "If the Americans had finished the task in 1991, the Shiites would have received them with flowers. We have a previous experience with foreigners. Is it possible to trust them?"[404] The Shi'a feared two things: that they would be denied a share of political power in proportion to their numbers and that the liberation

400 Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 464.

401 Shadid, 132.

402 Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 163.

403 Hashim, 286.

404 Shadid, 164.

would turn into an occupation.[405] The invading U.S. forces satisfied their commanders' desire for speed, reaching the outskirts of Baghdad on 5 April. They fully occupied the city by 9 April.[406]

3. Iranian Infiltration and SCIRI/Badr

On 9 September 2002, the Iranian National Security Council began planning an active campaign for post-Saddam Iraq.[407] In early 2003, Iran authorized SCIRI to meet with other Iraqi opposition groups and allowed Iraqi exiles based in other nations to come to Tehran for meetings with SCIRI and Khameini.[408] Badr was divided up into northern, central, and southern sections and ordered to infiltrate into Iraq in the immediate aftermath of the invasion. It was to seize government offices and other centers of authority.

As the Americans invaded, up to 12,000 Badr fighters, accompanied by Iranian intelligence agents, entered Iraq. Captured IRGC documents allegedly show that the organization reported that Kut and Amarah were soon under their control. Pay records captured by U.S. forces are said to show that the IRGC funded 11,740 Badr members as of August 2004. Badr leader Hadi al-Amri has denied the allegations.[409]

Even as he led SCIRI back home, however, Mohammed Baqir Sadr began distancing himself from Iran's revolutionary government, saying, "Neither an Islamic government nor a secular administration will work in Iraq but a democratic state that respects Islam as the religion of a majority of the population."[410] This stance seemed opposed to Iran's previous demands for *vilayat-i faqih*.

4. Sadr's Power Play

As the American offensive drew to close in Baghdad, Moqtada al-Sadr saw an opening. On the day American forces entered Baghdad, Sadr supporters expelled Baath Party officials from East Baghdad, renamed the district Sadr City, reopened closed

405 Hashim, 214-5.

406 Shadid, 332.

407 Michael Ware, "Inside Iran's Secret War for Iraq," *Time*, 15 Aug 2005, 26.

408 Keddie, 284.

409 Ware.

410 Hadad, 9.

mosques, captured arms caches, and began forming militias.[411] In contrast to other Shi'i movements who waited for security to improve, Sadrist imams immediately led prayers. These imams established the rhetorical themes that would propel the movement thereafter, preaching that proper Iraqis must live under Islamic law; that foreigners should stay out; that Iraqis who sought exile had abandoned their responsibilities; that foreign-born clerics such as Sistani could not speak for Iraqis; and that God, not the United States, had freed the Iraqi people.[412]

Sadr quickly gained at least a reflected religious authority. On 9 April, his father's designated successor, the Iran-based Ayatollah Kazim al-Hairi, named Sadr as his representative in Iraq. Declaring that his followers should follow only the rulings of his late father and Hai'ri, Sadr thus undermined the influence of the Grand Ayatollahs Sistani and Hakim.[413]

Sadr apparently turned to violence the very next day, as members of his movement allegedly killed Abd al-Majid al-Kho'i. the son of the late ayatollah, who had been brought into Iraq by U.S. forces on 3 April in hopes of exerting a moderate influence.[414] As he sat in a meeting with the custodian of the shrine of Imam Ali, a mob entered the building and barricaded the office, demanding that the custodian be turned over for summary justice for collaborating with the Ba'athist regime. Kho'i and the custodian surrendered after a ninety-minute stand-off and were taken to see Sadr, although it is unclear whether he in fact received them or passed any guidance to his followers. In any case, the crowd turned on the captives, stabbed them death, mutilated their bodies, and displayed their corpses in public.[415] A subsequent American investigation concluded that Kho'i had been killed at Sadr's command.[416]

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411 Juan Cole, "The Iraqi Shiites: On the History of America's Would-Be Allies," *Boston Review*, October/November 2003.

412 Timothy Haugh, "The Sadr II Movement: An Organizational Fight for Legitimacy within the Iraqi Shi'a Community," *Strategic Insights*, Volume IV, Issue 5 (May 2005).

413 Haugh

414 Anderson and Stansfield, 134.

415 Jabar, 23-24.

416 Shadid, 192.

Sadr then turned his attention to Ayatollah Muhammad Said al-Hakim, the nephew of SCIRI's Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim, and unsuccessfully attempted to intimidate him into giving him his allegiance. His followers also surrounded Grand Ayatollah Sistani's home in Najaf. Hakim and Sistani were ordered to leave the city immediately, but Sadr's supporters were driven away by the arrival of 1,500 tribesmen loyal to the senior *mutjahid*.[417]

C. THE STATE OF NATURE REVEALED

1. Initial Missteps by ORHA and the CPA

The American occupiers were not prepared for challenges to their authority. Though they conquered Iraq easily, unorganized forces promoting disorder soon challenged them. The looting of Baghdad, in particular, undermined American authority. When potential insurgents saw the vacuum of security that the looting had exposed, they realized that they could organize resistance. American leaders refused to recognize the situation. The Shi'a, meanwhile, saw that they could not depend on the Americans for protection.

a. The Looting of Baghdad

Looting broke out in Baghdad as early as the morning of 9 April and increased in intensity with each passing day, but the American authorities seemed unconcerned. Defense Secretary Rumsfeld commented, "Stuff happens."[418] Even if they had wanted to provide security, the Americans lacked the force to do so. The American Third Infantry Division found itself responsible for much of the security of Baghdad. While the division had 18,000 troops, only 1,200 were dismounted infantry. The division had only several hundred sets of body armor. The division's policing power was diluted by the need to provide security to Garner's team. "We simply did not have enough forces for a city of six or seven million," said an ORHA official.[419]

As Noah Feldman, an advisor to the Coalition Provisional Authority, pointed out, "The key to it all was the looting. That was when it was clear that there was no order… That also told them they could fight against us and we're not a serious force."

417 Jabar, 26; and Juan Cole, "Shiite Religious Parties Fill Vacuum in Southern Iraq."

418 Shadid, 132.

419 Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 469.

CPA officials later estimated that the damage from the looting totaled more than $12 billion, and the psychological damage inflicted by the chaos was likely far worse.[420]

b. The First Fight for Political Authority

Garner's initial meeting met with seventy-five Iraqi leaders on 15 April went poorly, as representatives from *Dawa* and SCIRI boycotted in protest at their lack of representation.[421] Garner, who favored Chalabi and the Kurds, was uninterested in other Iraqi actors. When a knowledgeable ORHA official attempted several times to convince him to engage in dialogue with Sistani, Garner replied, "Why? Who is this person?"[422]

When Garner's team arrived in Baghdad on 18 April, they quickly found that their job was much more challenging than they had expected. In October 2002, Saddam had released many prisoners, and in the chaotic environment they now embarked on a crime wave. Violent crime soared as a result.[423] These problems were further exacerbated by the failure of Iraq's infrastructure. Government ministries had been sacked by looters, and telephone exchanges were destroyed or otherwise out of service. To prevent serious damage, Iraqi engineers had shut down the electrical grid, but now they could not bring it back on line. Two of three sewage plants in the city were heavily damaged. The Iraqi police had abandoned their posts, and were in any case far more corrupt and untrustworthy than the American planners had anticipated.[424] Baghdad's two aging electrical plants were on the verge of complete failure, and their intermittent service had a dire effect on water, sanitation, air conditioning, and security. These failures eroded Iraqi confidence in American competence,[425] especially when compared to the recovery instituted by Saddam after the Gulf War.

America's initial efforts to organize an Iraqi government also quickly failed as the Iraqi exiles immediately began squabbling between themselves. As Qubad Talabani, the son of Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani, said, "We were collectively unable to

420 Packer, *The Assassin's Gate*, 138-9.

421 Diamond, 33.

422 Ibid, 35

423 Shadid, 134.

424 Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 465-6.

425 Shadid, 134.

form this government because of what has plagued Iraq since then, quotas and who gets what share and what responsibility. This sent a message to Washington that the Iraqis were unable to administer themselves."[426] In early May, John Sawyer, the senior British official in Iraq, sent a secret cable entitled "Iraq: What's Going Wrong?" back to his home office, He warned that the Americans were losing the support of the Iraqi people, and that ORHA was "an unbelievable mess."[427]

2. The Resistance Begins in Earnest

a. Bremer's Orders

On 6 May, the White House announced that Jay Garner, after serving only weeks in Iraq, would be replaced by Jerry Bremer. As part of his agreement to take the job, Bremer opted to remove Zalmay Khalilzad from the American mission, thereby depriving it of the official who best knew and was most trusted by the Iraqi leaders.[428] Bremer arrived in Baghdad on 12 May and quickly established the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). On 15 May, he overturned a Garner and Khalilzad agreement to establish an interim Iraqi government by the end of the month. Instead Bremer sought a two-step program: to first write a constitution; and to only then hold elections.[429]

Bremer was to become most famous for the two orders that he issued within days of his arrival. On 16 May, he published Order No.1: "De-Baathification of Iraqi Society." The order banned all members of the top four levels of the Ba'ath Party from public sector employment; which, as the CIA's Baghdad station chief noted, disenfranchised more than 30,000 people.[430] On 23 May, Bremer issued Order No. 2: "The Dissolution of Entities," which formally dissolved the Iraqi military, the Defense Ministry, and the intelligence services. This order contradicted the Central Command's prewar planning and was promulgated without any consultation with key figures such as Colin Powell, Condoleeza Rice, or the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Violent protests broke out in Baghdad and Mosul.[431] As a U.S. official later pointed out, "That was the week we made

426 Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 470.

427 Ibid., 472.

428 Ibid., 475-6.

429 Ibid., 478-9.

430 Ibid.

431 Ibid., 483-4.

450,000 enemies on the ground in Iraq."[432] Bremer's two orders, along with other less-noted policies toward the Sunnis, soon caused the Sunnis to feel marginalized, and, according to a Sunni who became part of Allawi's interim government, created the perception that the United States believed "every Sunni is a terrorist."[433]

b. The Formal Declaration of Occupation

On 22 May, the United Nations Security Council approved Resolution 1483, which recognized the United States and Britain as "occupying powers" in Iraq. While this provided international recognition of American authority in Iraq, it alienated many Iraqis, who considered it an insult to their national pride.[434]

3. Alienating the Shia

a. Disregarding Resident Religious Figures

When the Americans quickly proved unable or unwilling to enforce the law or provide security, the Iraqi people began to look for other sources of authority. Given the regional political context of the preceding decades, they saw religious leaders as the most obvious source of authority. In response, the *hawza*'s network of mosques soon created an "imagined community" of Shi'a, which would serve not only their religious needs but also their need to act with collectively.[435]

This also allowed Moqtada al-Sadr to continue his foray into the leadership void. In a 2003 interview, Sadr proclaimed his leadership of a new movement. "I accept the burden and the responsibility," he said. "I advise the Americans to ally with the Shiites, not to oppose them." As the self-proclaimed leader of the Shi'a, Sadr meant for the Americans to ally with him.[436]

Common people could relate to Sadr. According to Shadid, "He spoke like the dispossessed; he even looked like them." He and his family had remained in Iraq throughout the political repression and economic decline of the last thirty years and had suffered terribly and personally. Sadr believed that he was the only one speaking up for

432 Diamond, 39.

433 Hashim, 79.

434 Diamond, 38.

435 David Patel, remarks at the Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C., 21 Nov 05.

436 Shadid, 168.

his constituents: "I found a vacuum, and no one filled that vacuum."[437] As part of an effort to reinforce the idea of his legitimacy, his supporters posted many images of Sadr and his father together.[438] The Sadr movement received funding via the *khoms* (religious taxes) collected in its mosques, estimated in the early days of occupation at $65,000 a month.[439]

Despite his ambition, Sadr is a mere *hujjat al-islam*, a junior cleric, not an *ayatollah*, and is much younger than traditional clerical leaders. Some senior followers of Sadr II, who rejected his leadership because of his junior status, formed their own factions.[440] Sheikh Muhammad al-Yaqubi, a former student of Sadr II, became the leader of a dissident branch of the Sadr movement which is now the *Fadhila* (Islamic Virtue) Party.[441] Sheikh Ahmad al-Fartusi spun off another Sadr splinter group even more militant than Moqtada's.[442]

More importantly, Sistani, his followers and other tradition-based religious leaders could not give legitimacy to Sadr, for doing so would negate the basis for their own legitimacy. "Who is he?" Hakim said in response to a question about Sadr, "I don't have any comment on this question." Sistani's son Mohammed Rida, who often functions as his father's spokesman, likewise said, "I don't have any comment on this person."[443]

On 4 June, a United Nations representative met with Sistani and Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim in Najaf. This meeting marked Sistani's first public entrance on the political scene. Sistani argued that a constitution should be drawn up by an elected national assembly, not by an appointed body as Bremer planned.[444]

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437 Shadid, 173.

438 Ibid., 177.

439 Ibid, 186.

440 Ibid, 172.

441 Nir Rosen, "The Shiite Voice That Will be Heard," *Asia Times*, 8 April 2004.

442 Juan Cole, "Saving Iraq: Mission Impossible," *Salon*, 11 May 2006.

443 Shadid, 191.

444 Diamond, 41.

On 25 July, British envoy John Sawyer wrote another memo, labeled "Iraq: Progress Report," in which he documented the security vacuum, economic challenges, and the threat of "well-targeted sabotage of the infrastructure." Sawyer emphasized that problems with security and services were causing even moderate Shi'a to turn against the coalition. He also warned that Iran was preparing to take advantage of any openings provided by the coalition shortcomings.[445]

b. Cancelling Elections in the Shi'i South

As Bremer issued orders in a top-down fashion, he undercut the local initiative of the U.S. military. Most significantly, he cancelled the local elections in Najaf that were organized by U.S. troops. U.S. Marines there had planned the elections to be held in mid-summer, but the day before the proposed vote they were suddenly cancelled. Bremer worried that anti-American Islamist candidates might win. The Marines, recalling Administration rhetoric about freedom and democracy, were dismayed. Their commander, General Mattis, later summarized the situation: "A window of opportunity existed when the regime fell…Two things then created major problems: disbanding the Iraqi army and putting proud soldiers on the street unemployed. The other was shortstopping local elections."[446] Mattis' supervisor, General Conway, later also recalled that, "When we denied Iraqis the opportunities to elect local officials-vice appoint them by the area commander-we were increasingly seen as occupiers."[447]

c. Ignoring, Then Antagonizing Sadr

Having failed to take over the religious establishment by force, throughout the summer of 2003, Sadr continued to consolidate his networks and build his militia. He denounced the Iraqi interim government as puppets of the United States during a sermon on 18 July 2003,[448] and called for a militia to oppose the occupation.[449] Although, at this point, the Sadr movement was opposed to foreign occupation, it was not necessarily committed to fighting the Americans. When asked his opinion of U.S. intentions, Riyahd

445 Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 489.

446 Ibid., 490-1.

447 Ibid., 493.

448 Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Iraqi Insurgency and the Risk of Civil War: Who Are the Players?*, (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1 March 2006), 77.

449 Shadid, 258.

al-Nouri, a key leader, responded that he was withholding judgment until he saw whether the Americans followed through on promises of reconstruction and democratic governance. Other Sadr leaders were less open to accepting America, however, which created confusion about the movement's overall position.[450]

Relations between the Americans and the Shi'a, especially Sadr's followers, deteriorated sharply on 13 August 2003. In the late morning, about one hour before the noon prayers, a U.S. helicopter hovered near a radio tower in Sadr City in an attempt to remove a black flag emblazoned with the name of the Mahdi. By that afternoon, images of the incident were being broadcast on al-Arabiya, an Arabic satellite television station. The incident, at first vehemently denied by the U.S. military but later verified, greatly angered the entire city. It soon became a symbol of the growing gap between the Americans and the Iraqis.[451]

4. Ceding Its Role as Leviathan

In the months after the invasion, U.S. officials dealt with the deteriorating security situation by arguing that they were making progress and that the unrest was the product of unorganized and desperate "dead-enders." While there may have been some truth to that contention at first, as the U.S. military failed to more actively impose security, Iraqi resistance began to organize. As a subset of a broader Iraqi resistance, Sunni terrorists began a campaign to discredit the occupation by isolating it from allies, international institutions, and the general Iraqi population. The terrorists then turned on the Shi'a of Iraq, both for religious reasons and in hope of sparking a civil war in which the Americans might withdraw and the terrorists might take charge of the Sunni population. While they would not accomplish these extreme goals, the terrorists did succeed in showing the Shi'a that the Americans either could not or would not protect them.

a. Ignoring the Problem

On 16 June 2003, the new Centcom commander General Abazaid, described the situation in Iraq as a "classical guerilla-type campaign." On the 18th, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz echoed this observation, telling a congressional audience that "There is a guerilla war there, but…we can win it." On 30

450 Shadid, 259.

451 Ibid., 263-5.

June, Rumsfeld spoke out in contradiction, saying that his assessment of the situation "doesn't make it anything like a guerrilla war or an organized resistance."[452] Rumsfeld's argument was that insurgencies are fought only against sovereign governments, and Iraq was not a sovereign state. When Captain Jesse Sellers of the U.S. Third Armored Cavalry Regiment was told by a general that "this is not an insurgency," he recalled thinking, "Well, if you can tell us what it is, that'd be awesome." [453] Because they did not so much as acknowledge the problem, U.S. leaders could not hope to effectively address it.

b. Terror Bombings to Isolate the Occupation from Its Allies

As the resistance gelled, terror cells began a campaign to discredit the occupation. In August 2003, terrorist bombings destroyed the Jordanian Embassy and the local headquarters of the United Nations. Late in the month, a bomb made from a gas cylinder targeted Grand Ayatollah Mohammed Saeed al-Hakim, one of the four senior *mujtahids*, only slightly wounding him. A week later, a massive car bomb detonated just outside the shrine of Imam Ali at the end of Friday prayers, killing Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim and eighty-one others. Hakim's death deprived American officials of a powerful link to the Shi'i community.[454]

On 27 October 2003, the first day of Ramadan, a coordinated series of bombs destroyed the Baghdad headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross and several police stations.[455] The ambiguous identity of the perpetrators and their timing increased the people's sense of anxiety and made America look like an incompetent authority that provoked rather than prevented such incidents. One wounded Iraqi policeman commented, "When I joined the police, I thought the Americans should stay to provide us security. Now they're just creating risks for us." From that point on, many Iraqis stopped believing the promises or assurances from America, and instead, believed only in the threats of the terrorists.[456]

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452 James Fallows, "Why Iraq has No Army," *Atlantic Monthly* 296, Issue 5, December 2005, 60.

453 George Packer, "The Lesson of Tal Afar," *New Yorker* 82, Issue 8, 10 April 2006, 49.

454 Shadid, 254-5.

455, Ibid., 266.

456 Ibid., 270-2.

If the Ramadan bombings marked a turning point in Iraqi perceptions of U.S. competence, the bombings on 2 March 2004, *Ashura*, in Karbala and Kadhimiya, solidified that negative image. At ten o'clock in the morning, with tens of thousands of pilgrims crowding the shrine cities, a series of blasts erupted at Karbala and in Kadhimiya.[457] Once again, the anonymous nature of the bombers fueled popular suspicion of various groups, from Wahhabis and Ba'athists to Americans. In any case, the event made the U.S. forces look weak and inadequate; they were unable to protect the Shi'a on their holiest day.[458]

5. A Confrontation with Sadr

In the midst of this tension, U.S. forces finally moved against Sadr. On 28 March 2004 they closed down his newspaper, *Al Hawzah* (The Seminary), accusing it of anti-Israel and anti-American incitement. Sadr was not intimidated into silence, as the Americans had hoped, but was instead motivated to act. Protests erupted over the next few days.[459] On 3 April U.S. forces arrested a Sadr movement leader, Mustafa al-Yaacoubi, and twelve others on charges related to Khoi's death.[460] Sensing an impending attack, Sadr ordered his forces to rebel, and violence erupted in Kufa, Najaf, Sadr City, Nasiriyah, Kut, and Basra.[461] "The response we got from capturing Yaacoubi was unexpected," said a senior U.S. Army officer. "We did not expect it to be as broad-based as it was." The next day, Bremer labeled Sadr an outlaw. Meanwhile, after four U.S. contractors were killed by a mob, U.S. forces became involved in a simultaneous uprising in the Sunni city of Fallujah.[462]

Sadr linked the twin revolts as complementary efforts to expel the occupiers: "the union of Sunnis and Shiites toward an independent Iraq, free of terror and occupation."[463] On 6 April 2004, neighbors in the Sunni neighborhood of Adhamiya marched alongside

457 Shadid, 353.

458 Ibid., 355.

459 Shadid, 368.

460 Ibid, 369.

461 Juan Cole, "Iraq: All Together Against the Occupation," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, May 2004, available at http://mondediplo.com/2004/05/03iraqinationalism, internet, accessed 12 June 2006.

462 Shadid, 370-2.

463 Ibid, 375.

Sadr supporters, and Sunni groups celebrated his bravery and leadership. Kadhimiya residents held a blood drive for those in Fallujah, and, in Baghdad, people of both sects gave refugees from Fallujah food and shelter.[464] Sadr's uprising continued intermittently through April and part of May, and then gradually faded away, especially after a major battle in Karbala.[465]

D. THE SHI'I TAKE POWER

1. The Iraqi Governing Council

In the summer of 2003, Bremer appointed an Iraqi Governing Council, whose members drafted the Transition Administrative Law that would serve as Iraq's interim constitution. The CPA ceased operation on 28 June 2004, ceding power to an interim government.[466] Allawi served as interim Prime Minister on the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) from June 2004 to January 2005.[467] Chalabi was also selected to serve on the IGC, where among other duties, he headed the "de-Baathification" effort.[468] Allawi and the interim government lost credibility over time because of their inability to reduce violence and their support for the coalition campaign in Fallujah in November 2004.[469]

a. Najaf and Fallujah, Fall 2004

Throughout the summer and early fall of 2004, Sadr's Mahdi Army grew in strength and boldness, challenging coalition and government forces in Sadr City, Najaf, and other Shi'i areas. On 5 August 2004, Sadr called for his forces to rise up against the United States, and attacks intensified. His violent opposition climaxed in battles around the Imam Ali Shrine in Najaf in November of 2004, in which his forces were soundly defeated but allowed to exit the battlefield. After this defeat, Sadr was forced to turn away from most violent resistance, but political deals preserved his Mahdi Army.[470]

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464 Shadid, 378.

465 Ibid, 381.

466 Hashim, 290-1.

467 Kenneth Katzman, *Iraq: Post-Saddam Governance and Security* RL 31399 (Washington, D.C.; Congressional Research Service, 16 May 2006), 12.

468 Cordesman, *Iraqi Elections*, 8.

469 Hashim, 292.

470 Cordesman, *The Iraqi Insurgency and the Risk of Civil War: Who Are the Players?*, 77.

b. Zarqawi's War on the Shia

While coalition errors created an environment of general disorder, the sectarian conflict in Iraq has been stoked most effectively by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who has deliberately attempted to provoke a Sunni-Shi'a civil war. Zarqawi has used references to Alqami among other rhetoric meant to condemn Shi'i heresy and treachery.[471] While radical Sunni clerics and the five Sunni insurgent groups have all condemned Zarqawi's campaign against the Shi'a,[472] Shi'i factions have responded to Zarqawi's provocations by retaliating against Sunnis, thereby furthering the advancement of ascribed identities and sectarian conflict.

c. Abu Ghraib

The Abu Ghraib prison scandal further alienated Shi'a from the Americans, undermined the rhetoric of democracy and human rights, and confirmed the Iraqis' fears of abuse by the U.S. occupiers. Most significantly, it solidified Iraqi perception of disrespects on the part of the Americans, making it harder for Iraqis to trust and cooperate with them.[473]

2. The Transitional Government

a. The Formation of the United Iraqi Alliance under Sistani

Sistani played an instrumental role in building the UIA slate for the January 2005 elections and may have ensured the slate's victory through his endorsement.[474] Sistani's political influence was directly observable in the discrepancy between Shi'i votes for the transitional national assembly and for the governing council. He endorsed candidates only for the transitional assembly. Despite the fact that many parties nominated candidates for both elections, Shi'a voted in a unified manner only for the transitional assembly.[475] Chalabi ran on the UIA list in the January 2005 elections.[476]

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471 Hashim, 181.

472 Nir Rosen, "On the Ground in Iraq: The Roots of Sectarian Violence," *Boston Review*, March/April 2006, http://bostonreview.net/BR31.2/rosen.html (accessed 12 June 2006).

473 Abbas Kadhim, "Official US Reaction Compounds Rage," *Los Angeles Times*, 9 May 2004, M1.

474 Katzman, *Iraq: Post-Saddam Governance and Security*, 5.

475 Patel.

476 Katzman, *Iraq: Post-Saddam Governance and Security*, 3.

b. The Shi'i Religious Parties Take Office

In the elections of January 2005, Allawi was voted out of office.[477] A new government was formed in April, led by the *Da'wa* Party's Ibrahim al-Jaafari. Jaafari had fled to Iran in 1980, but later moved to London to distance himself from the Iranians.[478] Chalabi, who served as one of the three deputy prime ministers, remained responsible for the de-Baatification program.[479] The tenure of the new government was marked by indecision and continued violence.[480]

c. The New Government and Iran

In July 2005, Jaafari visited Iran and met with leaders including Supreme Leader Khameini. During the visit, Jaafari and other Iraqi officials took responsibility for starting the Iran-Iraq War, blamed Saddam Hussein for using chemical weapons in that conflict, and condemned Israel. The two countries agreed to open diplomatic facilities in Basra and Karbala,[481] the Iranians agreed to invest in a proposed multi-million dollar airport in southern Iraq, and the leaders signed a deal for an oil pipeline from Basra to refining facilities in Abadan Iran.[482] As a result of these developing ties, one a Western diplomat assessed that "We have to think anything we tell or share with the Iraqi government ends up in Tehran." [483]

Despite this official relationship, even those Shi'a most connected to the Iranian regime continue to profess Iraqi nationalism. Badr leader Hadi al-Amri, for example, has said, "We are sons of Iraq. The circumstances that forced me to leave did not change my identity." He pointed out that though his organization cooperated proudly with the IRGC in the days of Saddam, it did so only "to the limits of our interests."[484]

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477 Katzman, *Iraq: Post-Saddam Governance and Security*, 8.

478 Ibid., 6.

479 Ibid., 3.

480 Hashim, 57.

481 Katzman, *Iran's Influence in Iraq*, 1.

482 Kemp, 8-9.

483 Quoted in Ware.

484 Quoted in Ware.

d. Shi'i Factions Take Over the Security Services

With Shi'i Islamists at the head of the new government, Shi'i factions quickly took over the vital security services. In 2004, in an effort to improve the effectiveness of the police forces, the Iraqi Interior Ministry had begun building commando units, drawing veterans of the Republican Guard and other security forces. When the Sunni Interior Minister Falah al-Nakib turned over his office to Bayan Jabr of SCIRI (and formerly Badr) in the spring of 2005, he knew that those units would soon be stocked with Shi'i militiamen.[485]

Badr already provided security for many Shi'i religious sites and community leaders, including Grand Ayatollah Sistani, and the Badr Organization and the Mahdi Army soon controlled much of the security apparatus.[486] Those new ties to security services made actors and connections uncertain. "The difference between the Ministry of the Interior and the Badr Brigade has become very blurry," said one human rights investigator. "You have these people in the security services, and they have different masters," noted a U.S. official in Baghdad. "There isn't a clear understanding of who is in charge."[487]

The so-called Wolf Brigade is one of several official affiliates of Badr to be incorporated into the Interior Ministry,[488] as is the Volcano Brigade. The Volcanoes allegedly massacred 36 Sunnis on 23 August 2005 in the Baghdad neighborhood of Dolay, although Volcano Brigade commander Bassem Gharawi denied those accusations. Other government sources contradict him, however.[489] A Sunni group investigating incidents says it has documented the death or disappearance of seven hundred Sunni civilians between August and November 2005.[490] A senior U.S. military officer characterize the situation this way: "The Mahdi Army's got the Iraqi police and Badr's

485 Michael Moss, "How Iraq Police Reform Became a Casualty of War," *New York Times*, 22 May 06.

486 Department of Defense (DOD), *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, Report to Congress, October 2005, 3.

487 Quoted in Dexter Filkins, "Sunnis Accuse Iraqi Military Of Executions," *New York Times*, 29 November 2005, p. A1.

488 Katzman, *Post-Saddam Governance and Security*, 8.

489 Filkins, "Sunnis Accuse Iraqi Military Of Executions."

490 Ibid.

got the commandos. Everybody's got their own death squads."[491] Many Sunnis now view the Badr Organization as Iran's chosen instrument for domination in Iraq, and Sunni organizations including Zarqawi's "Umar" unit have formed to hunt down Badr members.[492]

In the summer of 2005, the Mahdi Army reorganized under a national command in Baghdad that centralized its command and control.[493] In a report in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, dozens of officers in the 1st Brigade Special Police Commando Unit, also known as the Lion Brigade, identified themselves to journalists as followers of al-Sadr.[494] The Sadr movement issues identification cards, which are required to enter Sadr city and other areas controlled by the movement.[495] Some reports in the late fall of 2005 indicate that roughly 90 percent of the police in northeast Baghdad at the time had ties to the Sadr movement and were actively cleansing Sunnis from Shi'i neighborhoods.[496] Sadr has controlled the Health Ministry since mid 2005, and in the guise of the Facilities Protection Service, his Mahdi militiamen have also taken over security at hospitals and morgues. Sunni leaders claim that, so far in 2006, 275 Sunnis have been killed or abducted in health ministry facilities.[497] The Facility Protection Service is to be closely examined and brought under more centralized control as part of efforts to rein in militias.[498]

In mid November 2005 U.S. troops discovered a secret Iraqi prison in Baghdad holding 173 malnourished and abused prisoners, mostly Sunnis, some showing signs of torture. Sunni politicians protested the site, claiming it was one of many, and demanded an investigation by the U.N. Some Shi'i guards at the site expressed little

491 Quoted in Solomon Moore, "Killings Linked to Shiite Squads in Iraqi Police," *Los Angeles Times*, 29 November 2005, p. 1.

492 Hashim, 249.

493 Tom Lasseter, "How U.S. Inaction Led to the Rise of Militias," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 18 April 2006, p. 1.

494 Phil Sands, "Various Private Armies Still Exist, Threatening Iraq's National Security," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 21 December 2005.

495 Sharon Behn, "Militia ID Cards Are the Key to the City," *Washington Times*, 31 October 2005.

496 International Crisis Group, *Unmaking Iraq: A Constitutional Process Gone Awry*, 78.

497 Dan Murphy, "Sadr' Militia Tightens Grip on Healthcare," *Christian Science Monitor*, 25 May 2006, 1.

498 "Iraq to Put Baghdad under Unified Security Command," Agence France Press, 12 May 2006.

remorse, characterizing the prisoners as "terrorists."[499] The prison was said to be run by the Secret Investigative Unit, under the command of a brigadier and a colonel. The colonel was allegedly in charge of infiltrating Badr members into the police and had a direct-reporting relationship to Jabr.[500] U.S. officials pledged a thorough investigation, while Shi'i leaders said the incident was an attempt to discredit the Shia-led government ahead of the 15 December elections.[501]

In fact, some Shi'i leaders have appealed for more leeway in conducting operations. In late November 2005, SCIRI leader Abdul Aziz Hakim asserted that U.S. officials were restricting Iraqi forces from pursuing more aggressive tactics. While denying allegations of death squads, militia infiltration, and Iranian influence, Hakim criticized U.S. restraint and called for a southern Shi'i region. He did not specify what measures would be more appropriate, and he indicated a strong distrust of the United States.[502]

U.S. military officers have acknowledged the need to control sectarian forces within the police services. "2006 we're going to call the year of the police," said Lieutenant Colonel Fred Wellman, a spokesman for the military. In 2005, U.S. officials announced plans to embed U.S. troops within Iraqi police units.[503] While this may constitute a possible solution to militia infiltration of the police, it would seem to call into question Iraqi sovereignty and may potentially set U.S. forces up for a confrontation with elected Iraqi officials. A senior U.S. military officer acknowledged the dilemma in late December 2005. "Everybody says you have a Badr guy in the MOI. Well…he was

499 "Sunni Leaders Press for Torture Probe," *The Age*, 16 Nov 2005.

500 Solomon Moore, "Killings Linked to Shiite Squads in Iraqi Police," *Los Angeles Times*, 29 November 2005, 1.

501 "Sunni Leaders Press for Torture Probe," *The Age*, 16 Nov 05.

502 Ellen Knickermeyer, "Shiite Urges U.S. to give Iraqis Leeway in Rebel Fight," *Washington Post*, 27 Nov 05, A1.

503 Quoted in Alastair MacDonald, "U.S. Forces Aim to Bring Iraqi Police Under Control," Reuters, 29 December 2005.

elected. And they say he's appointed a bunch of Badr guys. We have a Republican Administration in American and guess what? They've appointed a lot of Republicans. You elected SCIRI, and SCIRI is Badr."[504]

E. SADR REBUILDS

In the middle of 2005, Sadr turned to formal political participation. He was able to gather support due to other Shi'i factions' corruption and incompetence. During the summer, he began an effort to collect one million signatures on a petition demanding the withdrawal of the Coalition.[505] His supporters ran for office in the January 2005 elections without his direct involvement, and in their aftermath, he took control of the health and transportation ministries and purged them, claiming to be "cleansing [them of] Saddamists."[506]

The Mahdi Army also began to display its reconstituted strength, holding parades or otherwise operating openly in Basra, Amarah, Nasiriyah, Najaf, and Qut. While these activities were not as aggressive as in the past, they effectively demonstrated the potential of the Sadr movement. By late spring of 2005, it was clear that the Mahdi Army was the largest militia in Basra, held significant force in Amarah, and cooperated with police in Nasiriya. [507]

F. THE TRIUMPH OF THE IRANIAN CONSERVATIVE HARD-LINERS

1. New Ties between Iran and Iraq

Recently, the ties between Iraq and Iran have increased on both formal and informal levels. In the absence of strong authority and border controls, cross-border smuggling between the two nations has greatly increased in the last three years. The flow of pilgrims from Iran to the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala also has increased steadily since 2003, slowing only after insurgent attacks. An estimated two million pilgrims a year now make the journey from Iran.[508] The burial trade to the *Wadi al-Salam* cemetery outside the Imam Ali mosque in Najaf has also greatly increased and brought significant

504 Quoted in Tom Lasseter, "Iran Said to Have a Hand in Iraqi Security Units," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 13 December 2005, 1.

505 International Crisis Group, *Unmaking Iraq: A Constitutional Process Gone Awry*, 78.

506 Nir Rosen, "Iraq is the Republic of Fear," *Washington Post*, 28 May 2006, B1.

507 International Crisis Group, *Unmaking Iraq: A Constitutional Process Gone Awry*, 78.

508 Katzman, *Iran's Influence in Iraq*, 1.

revenue. In an indirect reflection of Iran's influence, the southern city of Basra has gradually changed from a Western-oriented metropolis full of nightlife to a theocratic city patrolled by religious police and governed by edicts, similar to the early days of the Islamic Republic in Iran.[509]

2. The Iranian Elections of July 2005

Shortly after the Shi'i Islamists took power in Iraq, religious conservatives in Iran completed their political triumph, culminating in the victory of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the mayor of Tehran, in the presidential election of June 2005.[510] A "conservative coup" in February 2004, caused by the Guardian Council's disqualification of 3,600 reformist legislature candidates, had prompted many reformers to ponder the usefulness of elections.[511] Reformist forces had been disillusioned by politics under Khatami and responded to calls for a boycott.[512] The 2005 presidential elections thus became a mechanism for conservative factions to resolve their differences.[513]

Though Ahmadinejad's win reflected the power of conservative forces, it did not indicate that they enjoyed a majority of popular support.[514] Khatami and his allies had emphasized political and cultural reforms, but did not address the economic concerns of the lower class.[515] Ahmadinejad's victory signaled a transfer of political power to the post-revolutionary generation and from middle-class interests to the lower class.[516]

Ahmandinejad campaigned on economic issues. Focusing on economic inequality and corruption, he promised to stabilize prices, boost wages, and even income disparities. This approach garnered significant popular support among the forty percent of Iranians who live in poverty. Inflation runs at 16 percent, and official statistics rate

509 Kemp, 10.

510 Ibid., 14-15.

511 Vali Nasr, "The Conservative Wave Rolls On," *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 16, Number 4, October 2005, 12.

512 Ibid., 14.

513 Ibid., 16.

514 Hart, 14.

515 Nasr, "The Conservative Wave Rolls On," 10.

516 Ibid., 9.

unemployment at 15 percent, though unofficial estimates go as high as 30 percent.[517] Two-third's of Iran's population are under thirty years old.[518] The conservative hard-liners face continued opposition from some religious quarters. Grand Ayatollah Montazeri, now 84, still opposes the Tehran regime from his home in Qom. He is joined in this effort by Grand Ayatollah Yusuf Saanei, 68, who has praised Sistani for avoiding direct involvement in politics and points to him as a model for other religious leaders.[519]

3. Iranian Attacks on American Targets

Press reports blame Iran for training and equipping insurgents to target U.S. forces and for introducing new shaped-charge improvised explosive devices into the country. [520] According to U.S. intelligence, the IRGC plans "non-attributable attacks" through deniable proxies, though their sources are uncertain which Iranian organizations and leaders direct such attacks. They claim, however, that General Sullaimani told his forces in 2004 that "any move that would wear out the U.S. forces in Iraq should be done. Every possible means should be used to keep the U.S. forces in Iraq."[521] Rumsfeld said in August 2005, "It is true that weapons clearly, unambiguously from Iraq have been found in Iraq."[522]

G. EMERGING ISSUES, LATE 2005

Once it is formed, the new Iraqi government will face many serious challenges. Most important, it must address several issues left unresolved or ambiguous by the recently approved constitution. Left unmodified, the constitution could increase political tension and sectarian conflicts, possibly leading to ethnic cleansing, especially if the Kurds consolidate their dominance of Kirkuk.[523]

1. Writing the Constitution

In the summer of 2005, when the Shi'i negotiators began talks over the new constitution, they initially opposed the idea of federalism, preferring a state with strong

517 Hart, 14.

518 Hart, 14.

519 Jackson Diehl, "In Iran, Apocalypse Versus Reform," *Washington Post*, 11 May 2006, 11.

520 Ware.

521 Ibid.

522 Ibid.

523 Sherifa Zuhur, remarks at the Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C., 20 November 2005.

central authority. Once they realized that Kurdish autonomy was a fact that could not be undone, however, some began to support similar autonomy for themselves. [524]

In the 15 October 2005 Constitutional referendum, the majority Sunni provinces of Anbar and Salahuddin voted 97 percent and 82 percent respectively against the constitution. Another majority Sunni province, Ninevah, voted 55 percent against, while the mostly Sunni Diyala province voted 51 percent in favor. Despite the strong Sunni opposition, opponents of the constitution did not achieve the two-thirds rejection vote in three provinces required to defeat the draft. The U.S. administration praised the large Sunni turnout as a sign of political engagement, but critics saw the largely anti-constitution vote as a foreshadowing of future political problems. [525] Coupled with the recent election returns, this dynamic could dramatically increase sectarian tensions. In the aftermath of its approval, Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khameini, praised the new constitution as "blessed" and urged Iraqis to turn out in large numbers for the elections on 15 December.[526]

Nevertheless, the draft Iraqi constitution includes several articles that are likely to heighten tensions, particularly among Sunnis. Article 109, for example, divides Iraqi oil revenues from all "current fields" among the population as a whole. It also authorizes "a set allotment for a set time for the damaged regions that were unjustly deprived by the former regime and the regions that were damaged later on." The "current fields" specification is controversial to the Sunnis, because it suggests that revenues from future fields will not be divided and the Sunni areas have neither current nor likely future fields. Exactly what is meant by "a set allotment for a set time" also remains unclear, but it could be construed to mean compensating Shi'i areas more than Sunni ones. Article 113 recognizes Kurdistan as a region and allows for the development of other regions. Article 114 says that the new government shall define procedures to form regions within six months of the formation of the new government. Article 117 allows regions to pass

524 Marina Ottaway, *Back from the Brink: A Strategy for Iraq*, Policy Brief No. 43, (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 2005), 3.

525 Kenneth Katzman, *Iraq: Elections, Government, and Constitution* RS 2968 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 4 November 2005, 6.

526 "Iran's Supreme Leader Praises Iraqi Referendum as 'Blessed,'" Associated Press, 22 October 2005.

legislation that contradicts national legislation, says that regions shall establish their own offices in Iraqi embassies and diplomatic missions, and mandates that regions shall develop their own internal security forces. Article 131 continues the mandate for the High Commission for De-Baathification, which may be an institution to discriminate against Sunnis.[527]

Realizing that these elements and other issues would likely lead to higher tensions, Ambassador Khalilzad attempted to negotiate a mechanism that would allow modification of the draft and thus minimize its controversial aspects. On 11 October 2005 Shi'i and Kurdish officials and the Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party agreed to add a provision calling for a panel to be seated after the December elections to recommend amendments within a four-month time-limit. Any proposed amendments would then need approval by a majority Assembly vote and a public referendum.[528] In light of these stipulations, the composition of the new Assembly and government will be critical to resolving controversial or ambiguous issues. The apparent poor showing of Sunni factions, therefore, does not bode well for the resolution of their concerns.

The constitutional referendum was widely seen as a defeat for Sunni interests, mainly due to the provisions on the future distribution of oil revenues.[529] According to Iraqi exile and war supporter Kanan Makiya, "The 79 percent of people who voted in favor of a constitution that promotes ethnic and sectarian division are unwittingly paving the way for civil war that will cost hundreds of thousands of lives…Without the return of real power to the center, the ascent of sectarian and ethnic politics in Iraq to the point of complete societal breakdown cannot be checked."[530] Saleh al-Mutlaq, a Sunni Arab member of parliament, also finds that "If there is a civil war in Iraq, the constitution will be a big part of it, particularly the issue of federalism."[531]

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527 Draft Iraqi Constitution, http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2005/10/15/CONST.DTL, (accessed 12 June 2006).

528 Katzman, *Iraq: Elections, Government, and Constitution*, 5.

529 Ottaway, *Back from the Brink: A Strategy for Iraq*, 1.

530 Kanan Makiya, "Present at the Disintegration," *New York Times*, 11 December 2005, 4.13.

531 Quoted in Rick Jervis, "Iraqis Leaders May Soon Face Debate on National Unity," *USA Today*, 23 May 06, 9.

2. Security Forces and Militias

The issue of Shi'i militias has taken on new urgency in the spring of 2006. "It's a far more serious problem now than it was before because of who is in power," said a U.S. official. "Until there's a commitment on the part of the government, there will be no solution."[532] As discussed earlier, Article 9 of the Constitution prohibits armed forces or militias that are not part of the Iraqi Armed Forces, [533] but implementing that prohibition will be one of the most difficult tests facing the new government. Though the constitution mandates specifically that there will be no militias "outside of the army," the question is, "Can militias exist *within* the army?"[534]

The Shi'i militias have been able to grow in part by not presenting a threat to the Americans. "The so-called Sunni insurgency is active in hostilities toward the Americans, while Badr-and perhaps the Mahdi Army-is not attacking Americans," said Adnan Pachachi, a secular Sunni politician. "Badr has been rather careful not to antagonize the Americans, not to provoke them."[535]

According to some reports, the Sunni character of the insurgency and the poor quality of the Shi'i army units has meant that the central government has become heavily reliant on Kurdish forces, which are generally better trained and motivated.[536] Kurdish leaders claim to have 100,000 *peshmerga* under arms and insist on keeping them intact to guarantee Kurdish security.[537]

3. Federalism and Regions

The struggle over the Constitution highlights the most pressing issue facing Iraq today: the struggle over federalism and regional autonomy. This issue has its roots in the de facto independent Kurdish state (or, more properly, states) in northern Iraq, but it has

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532 Jonathon Finer, "Threat of Shiite Militias Now Seen as Iraq's Most Critical Challenge," *Washington Post*, 8 April 2006, A1.

533 DOD, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, 24.

534 Alex Dawoody, Remarks at the Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C., 20 November 2005.

535 Quoted in Tom Lasseter, "How U.S. Inaction Led to the Rise of Militias," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 18 April 2006, 1.

536 Jeremy M. Sharp, *Iraq's New Security Forces: The Challenge of Sectarian and Ethnic Influences* RS 22093, (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 12 January 2006, 6.

537 DOD, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, 25.

now become relevant in the south as well. In early August 2005, in a speech commemorating the death of his brother, the SCIRI leader Abdul Aziz al-Hakim advocated the creation of a Shi'i region composed of nine provinces. This proposed southern region controls 80-90 percent of the country's oil reserves, and its only ports.[538] Not surprisingly, Sunnis were dismayed by the proposal. "We hoped this day would never come," a Sunni politician, Saleh al-Mutlak, told Reuters news agency, "We believe that the Arabs, whether Sunni or Shia, are one."[539]

While Hakim's statement was publicized by the press, it did not reflect a major shift in Shi'i nationalism. Previously, Ahmad Chalabi had been the strongest voice in favor of regional autonomy in the south, while Moqtada al-Sadr and Ayatollah Muhammad Yacoubi continue to oppose such a region,[540] because much of their political base lies in Baghdad, outside the proposed region. Jaafari called Hakim's proposal "a bad idea,"[541] and Sistani aide Thafir Taqi spoke for the *hawza*, saying: "The Shi'ites in the south cannot live on their own without their brothers from other sects and vice versa…Even though a few people are demanding federalism, this does not mean that Iraq should be divided."[542] Thus, to some extent, Hakim remains isolated in his calls for a southern region, although the idea may be attracting more support in light of the increasing sectarian tension and violence.

Nevertheless, events on the ground propelled federalism as an issue. In a visible sign of their autonomy, in late November 2005 Kurdish leaders authorized the Norwegian company DNO to begin drilling for oil near the city of Zakho. During the ceremony marking the start of the project, the Kurdish regional prime minister, Nechirvan Barzani, stated that "there is no way Kurdistan would accept that the central government will control our resources." Leaders from the Shi'i and Sunni communities were notably

538 Edward Wong and Abdul Razzaq al-Saiedy, "Top Shiite Politician Joins Call for Autonomous South Iraq," *New York Times*, 12 August 2005, A8.

539 Quoted in "Iraq Shia Call for More Autonomy," BBC News, 11 Aug 05, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4141616.stm (accessed 12 June 2006).

540 Wong and Saiedy.

541 Jonathan Finer, "Iraq's Shiite Hub Awaits its Day," *Washington Post*, 13 October 2005, A1.

542 Quoted in Alastair Macdonald, "Sunnis Eye Iraq Charter Changes, Germans Freed," *Washington Post*, 2 May 2006.

shocked and upset by this news.[543] Recently, southern oil interests have taken actions similar to the Kurds**.** In March 2006, the Basra city council rejected a British proposal for investment in the area's oil, an action that occurred as a dispute festered between the British and Basran officials over alleged British mistreatment of Iraqis.[544] The new oil minister, Hussein al-Shahristani, has recently announced that all oil contracts should be handled by the central government, possibly setting him on a path to confrontation with the Kurds and the Basran government.[545]

4. The Elections of December 2005

a. Sadr Joins the United Iraqi Alliance

For the elections of December 2005, the UIA once again prepared a list of Islamist parties, including *Dawa*, *Fadila*, the Centrist Coalition, the Badr Organization, SCIRI, and others.[546] On 27 October 2005, Sadr entered into a political agreement with *Dawa* and SCIRI and joined the list. Before joining the UIA, the Sadr Movement insisted on two conditions: parity with SCIRI in representation, and a pledge not to recognize "the Zionist entity" [Israel].[547] Sadr placed thirty candidates on the UIA slate, as many as SCIRI and *Dawa*.[548]

On 3 December 2005, Sistani told followers to turn out to vote on election day, to avoid voting for any list whose leader was not religious, and to avoid voting for "weak" lists so as not to split the Shi'a vote. Together, this was seen as a coded endorsement of the UIA and a blow to the lists of Allawi and Chalabi.[549]

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543 Borzou Daragahi, "Kurdish Oil Deal Shocks Iraq's Political Leaders," *Los Angeles Times*, 1 December 2005, 1.

544 Abbas Kadhim, "Iraqi Media Watch: March 21, 2006," Center for Contemporary Conflict, Naval Postgraduate School.

545 Steve Negus, "Iraq Faces Clash with Kurds over Oil Deals," *Financial Times*, 23 May 06, 8.

546 "Final List of Coalitions: Election for Council of Representatives," The Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq, http://www.ieciraq.org/English/Frameset_english.htm (accessed 12 June 2006).

547 Juan Cole, "Sadr Joins United Shiite Coalition," http://www.juancole.com/2005_10_01_juancole_archive.html (accessed 12 June 2006).

548 Cordesman, *The Impact of the Iraqi Elections*, 21.

549 "Al-Sistani urges Religious Vote," Al-Jazeera, 3 Dec 05, http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/8D6F54BC-58EA-4940-BDC0-053691F9BF24.htm (accessed 12 June 2006).

b. The Election Results

On 15 December 2005, Iraqis went to the polls. Turnout was strong, averaging almost 70 percent across the nation.[550] The elections were notable not just for the high voter participation, but also for the apparent sectarian and ethnic character of the results. Ninety percent of voters in Shi'i southern Iraq voted for Shi'i religious parties, ninety percent of voters in Sunni central and western Iraq voted for Sunni parties, and ninety percent of those in Kurdish provinces voted for Kurdish candidates. Thus, less than ten percent of the voters nationwide voted outside their sectarian or ethnic identities.[551]

The UIA list emerged as the winner, winning majorities in nine southern provinces as well as in Baghdad,[552] and ending up with 128 seats out of 275. Sadr's faction won 29 parliament seats within the UIA coalition,[553] and counting Sadr factions outside the UIA, he now controls thirty-two seats in parliament, the most of any faction.[554] Allawi's electoral list won only 14.5 percent of the vote in Baghdad province, and performed even more poorly in other provinces. Chalabi's list, now separate form the UIA, won only 0.5 percent of the vote in Baghdad province, not enough for even one seat in the Assembly.[555] While Chalabi is noted for his repeated revivals from political obscurity, he seems significantly and perhaps permanently weakened by these results.[556] With only 46 percent of the votes, the UIA needs to work with other factions, and remains vulnerable to no-confidence votes.[557]

During the campaign, General Casey accused Iran of interfering in the December elections, claiming, "They're putting millions of dollars into the south to influence the elections." Hadi al-Amri, who in the past played down Badr's connections

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550 International Crisis Group, *The Next Iraqi War? Sectarianism and Civil Conflict* , 7.

551 Borzou Daragahi and Louise Roug, "Iraq's History Still Divides Children of Mesopotamia," *Los Angeles Times*, 29 December 2005.

552 Cordesman, *The Impact of the Iraqi Elections*, 11.

553 Cordesman, *The Iraqi Insurgency and the Risk of Civil War: Who Are the Players?*, 79.

554 Nancy A. Youssef, "Iraqi Cleric Tries to Expand Militia into a Political Bloc," *Houston Chronicle*, 7 May 2006.

555 Cordesman, *The Impact of the Iraqi Elections*, 8.

556 Ibid., 21.

557 Juan Cole, "Saving Iraq: Mission Impossible."

to Iran, countered such accusations by contrasting his organization with its rivals and their sponsors: "Allawi receives money from America, from the CIA, but nobody talks about that. All they talk about is our funding from Iran. We are funded by some Gulf countries and the Islamic Republic of Iran. We don't hide it."[558]

H. POST-ELECTION POLITICS

The winter of 2005/2006 saw a bitter competition for the post of prime minister. Sadr's UIA parliamentarians made the crucial difference in the contest to nominate the Alliance next candidate for prime minister. Without the support of the Sadr movement, incumbent Prime Minister Jafaari would have lost to his rival from SCIRI.[559] Jaafari defeated SCIRI's Abdel-Mahdi by only a single vote in an internal UIA vote.[560] Sadr backed Jafaari only after the prime minister agreed to a fourteen-point list of demands. These included the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq, an agreement to delay any efforts to establish federal regions, a pledge for greater efforts to release prisoners held in U.S. and Iraqi detention facilities, and a strong commitment to keep Kirkuk from being ethnically cleansed of non-Kurds. When the Kurds, likely encouraged by the Americans, threatened to dissolve the coalition with the Shi'a and to form a new bloc with Allawi and the Sunnis, Sadr simply threatened to abandon the Kurds and form an anti-American bloc himself with the Sunnis. The Kurds backed down. Sadr reportedly told other politicians that if Jaafari did not win the prime minister post, there would be civil war. When such tactics worked, "everyone was stunned; it was a coup d'etat," said a senior member of the UIA. Sadr seems to posses enough political power to sabotage any initiatives that displease him. Whether he has also enough power to accomplish positive outcomes remains to be seen. A Western diplomat noted that "It will be harder to take on the Mahdi Army with Jaafari as prime minister."[561]

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558 Tom Lasseter, "Iran Said to Have a Hand in Iraqi Security Units," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 13 December 2005, 1.

559 Liz Sly, "Radical Cleric Well-Placed to Influence Iraqi Politics," *Chicago Tribune*, 16 February 2006, 23.

560 Joost Hilterman, "External Forces on Iraq's New Government," *Christian Science Monitor*, 19 April 2006.

561 Quoted in Robert F. Worth and Sabrina Tavernise, "Radical Cleric Rising as a Kingmaker in Iraqi Politics," *New York Times*, 16 February 2006, A18.

Sadr's role in the selection brought him to the forefront of Iraqi politics as the "kingmaker," according to Amatzia Baram of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. In exchange for his support of Jaafari, Sadr retained control of the Health, Education, and Transportation ministries. "He will do this Hamas thing," continued Baram, he "will establish himself, he will get large budgets, he will do what needs to be done, and the people will be beholden to him for services, not the state, but him, and his picture will be in each hospital and school."[562] Sadr and Sistani met in late February, apparently as part of an effort to improve relations between them.[563]

American officials in Iraq opposed Jaafari's retention as prime minister, accusing him of having close ties to Iran, among other faults. To defeat Jaafari, Khalilzad helped put together a coalition of Kurdish and Sunni factions whose 143 seats outweighed the UIA's 128.[564] Jaafari resisted this pressure for many weeks. In mid-April, United Nations representative Ashraf Qazi met with Sistani and apparently convinced him that Jaafari's intransigence was greatly heightening sectarian tensions. There were also rumors of a coup plot, especially after Allawi suggested on television that it might be necessary to empower an "emergency government." In any case, shortly after Qazi's meeting with Sistani, Jaafari removed himself from consideration.[565]

The man who took Jaafari's place as the new prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki, is fifty-five years old and a senior member of *Dawa*. He was active in the post-Saddam de-Baathification efforts, which could antagonize Sunnis, and had a leading role in drafting the constitution. He has pledged to act firmly against Sunni insurgents and Shi'i militias.[566] Before the vote to approve him, he told members of parliament that he opposed strong regions and was not close to Iran.[567] As he took over the leadership,

562 Quoted in Sharon Behn, "Militant Cleric Wields Influence with al-Jaafari," *Washington Times*, 14 February 2006, 13.

563 Abbas Kadhim, "Iraqi Media Watch: March 3, 2006," Center for Contemporary Conflict, Naval Postgraduate School.

564 David Ignatius, "In Iraq's Choice, A Chance for Unity," *Washington Post*, 26 April 2006, A25.

565 Tony Karon, "Iraq After Jaafari," *Time*, 20 April 2006, http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1185825,00.html (accessed 12 June 2006).

566 Nelson Hernandez and K.I. Ibrahim, "Parliament Approves 7 Officials To Lead Iraq," *Washington Post*, 23 April 2006, A12.

567 Sabrina Tavernise, "Warily, Iraqis Investing Hope in New Leaders," *New York Times*, 24 April 2006, A1.

Maliki thanked Iran, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey for hosting Iraqi refugees from Saddam, but said that Iraqis now would not tolerate "security interference" or foreign involvement with "certain movements inside Iraq," apparently, a veiled reference to Iran and Syria.[568]

In a surprisingly open endorsement of Maliki, Khalilzad described him as "someone who is independent of Iran." "The Iranian pressured for Jafari to stay," continued the ambassador. Jaafari's defeat "showed great courage on the part of key Shia leaders," he said. "It showed that Sistani doesn't take Iranian direction. It showed that Abdul Aziz Hakim doesn't succumb to Iranian pressure. He stood up to Iran. It showed the same thing about Kurdish leaders."[569]

1. The Sadr Movement's Philosophy and Base of Support

Even as a key player in Iraqi politics, Moqtada al-Sadr has not promoted a specific political vision or ideology.[570] When asked what he represented, Sadr listed not philosophical ideals, but concrete achievements such as security and social services, concluding, "What I can do, I do."[571] Sadr's ambiguity and ideological flexibility gives him freedom to adapt to evolving political opportunities and to enlist otherwise unlikely allies. According to David L. Phillips of the Council on Foreign Relations, what Sadr really wants is a part in enforcing *sharia* through the constitutional court in Baghdad. Amatzia Baram is more explicit: "He sees himself as the Khomeini of Iraq."[572]

The Sadr movement is class-based, grounded in the urban poor repressed by the Ba'athist regime. It does not tolerate dissent or challenges to its leaders' authority. The movement seeks to form an Islamic republic, although the shape of such a state may differ from that of Iran.[573] The movement has three supporting elements: religious leaders, mostly young and junior in rank, who transferred their loyalty from Sadr II to

568 "Al-Maliki to Neighbors: Don't Interfere," Associated Press, 25 April 2006.

569 Quoted in David Ignatius, "In Iraq's Choice, A Chance for Unity," *Washington Post*, 26 April 2006, A25.

570 Jabar, 25.

571 Quoted in Shadid, 175.

572 Quoted in Craig S. Smith, "The Man Who Would Set Shiite Against Shiite," *New York Times*, 11 September 2005, 4.7.

573 Cole, "Shiite Religious Parties Fill Vacuum in Southern Iraq."

Moqtada; those who benefit from its charity networks; and street agitators, who can quickly assemble violent crowds at important moments.[574]

Moqtada has contempt for Sistani's alleged "silence" n the face of Saddam's oppression. [575] He has called Sistani a Persian, and thus not an Iraqi. One of his aides, Sheikh Rida al-Nu'mani, made this case in the summer of 2003. "As for Sayyid Sistani," he said, "with all due respect, he cannot involve himself in political action in Iraq because he is not Iraqi and he does not have Iraqi citizenship; he has Iranian documents."[576] Sistani's survival throughout the Saddam years is also used against him and contrasted negatively with the martyrdom of Sadr II.[577]

Nationalism plays a large part in the Sadr movement, although it can be seen more specifically as a vision of Iraqi Shi'ism that rejects outside interference. Slogans such as "No Shiites, No Sunnis…Unity, Islamic Unity" epitomize its aspirations to leadership of all Iraqis. The movement also prominently displays the Iraqi flag, which is looked down on by other religious factions who see it as a symbol of Saddam. [578]

a. Sadr's Post-Election Diplomacy

Following the elections, Sadr began a tour of neighboring nations, including Saudi Arabia, Iran, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. While in Saudi Arabia, he pressed King Abdullah to advocate a firm date for a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq. In late January 2006, he visited Tehran, and, while there, promised to defend Iran if it came under attack. This statement, along with his visit to Syria the next month, further stoked the already palpable fears of an emerging "Shia Crescent."[579]

b. Sadr and the Other Shi'i Factions

Sadr despises the returned exiles.[580] "The people who deserve to rule are the ones who stayed here," he said in one interview.[581] His position has led to conflict

574 Jabar, 26.

575 Cole, "Shiite Religious Parties Fill Vacuum in Southern Iraq,"

576 Borzou Daragahi, "Sadr's Mentor Distances Himself From Young Firebrand," *Daily Star*, 17 April 2004.

577 Shadid, 189.

578 Shadid, 178.

579 Cordesman, *The Impact of the Iraqi Elections*, 21.

580 Cole, "Shiite Religious Parties Fill Vacuum in Southern Iraq."

with all of the prominent Shi'i organizations, including most notably *Dawa* and SCIRI. These clashes also constitute a family rivalry with the al-Hakim, al-Mudarisi, and al-Kho'i clans.[582] Sadr bolsters his claim to the legacy of the larger Sadr clan by reference to his marriage to Mohammed Baqir Sadr's daughter.[583]

c. Sadr and the Sunnis

The Sadr movement is currently the only major political entity to reach across sectarian lines, although ties between its Shi'i members and its Sunni allies may be somewhat opportunistic.[584] Moqtada enjoys support among the Sunni community because he stands firmly against the occupation, passionately promotes Iraqi nationalism, and opposes federalism. He supported the resistance in Fallujah in November 2004, has celebrated the Eid al-Fitr feast ending Ramadan on the Saudi date rather than the Iranian one, and promoted the story of Sunnis saving Shi'a during the Kadhemiya bridge disaster of August 2005.[585]

In late August 2005, Isam Kadhem al-Rawi, a member of the Muslim Scholars Association, told the International Crisis Group why he supported Sadr. "Muqtada is a real Iraqi and a real Arab," he said. "We share the same basic principles: We are Iraqis, and we aspire to national unity. He is not like al-Hakim or al-Ja'fari. Those guys are Persians. I respect Muqtada al-Sadr, and I have a good relationship with his followers."[586]

One might think that Sadr would be hesitant to reach out to the same community whose members killed his father, brothers, cousin, and other family members. However, many members of his movement have reciprocated the affection of their Sunni sympathizers.[587] Sadr has expressed a willingness to cooperate with anyone except "Saddamists" and takfiris. By specifying "Saddamists," not "Ba'athists," he broadens the

581 Shadid, 174.

582 Jabar, 25-26.

583 Cole, "The Iraqi Shiites: On the History of America's Would-Be Allies," *Boston Review*, October/November 2003, http://www.bostonreview.net/BR28.5/cole.html (accessed 12 June 2006).

584 International Crisis Group, *Unmaking Iraq: A Constitutional Process Gone Awry*, 10.

585 International Crisis Group, *The Next Iraqi War? Sectarianism and Civil Conflict*, 26.

586 Quoted in International Crisis Group, *Unmaking Iraq: A Constitutional Process Gone Awry*, 11.

587 Ibid.

scope of his potential political partners significantly. Takfiris refuse to acknowledge that Shi'a are even Muslims, so he cannot work with them.[588]

The journalist Nir Rosen experienced firsthand the interaction between Sadr supporters and their Sunni allies as he waited for an interview with Saleh al Mutlaq of the National Dialogue Council. Mutlaq in his role as "the political face of the resistance," apparently represents at least some portion of the Sunni insurgency. As Rosen sat in his waiting room, Seyid Hassan Naji al-Mussawi arrived for an appointment. Mussawi is the leader of the Mahdi Army in Baghdad and one of Sadr's senior advisors. He allegedly served as a Ba'athist agent under Saddam, as did up to a third of the men in the Mahdi Army.[589]

Despite their apparent solidarity with Sunnis, Sadrists have committed sectarian attacks, events that contribute to the opaque nature of the movement. There is also strong evidence that Sadr's nationalism is largely inspired by tactical considerations and is "in sum, politically expedient."[590] Some Shi'i forces are convinced that they will triumph over Sunni insurgents in any future conflict. "We will take care of the [sectarian] problem" when U.S forces pull out, one Sadr supporter told interviewers from the International Crisis Group.[591]

In addition to his Shi'i bastions in Baghdad and southern Iraq, Sadr enjoys some support in the north. Almost half of Iraqi Turkomen are Shi'i, and many of these are devotees of Sadr II. Many live in the pivotal city of Kirkuk and oppose Kurdish autonomy. Sadr has said that a Kurdish federation will not be necessary after foreign forces leave Iraq. He has also asserted that oil-rich Kirkuk belongs to all Iraqis.[592] Thomas Wise, the political counselor for the U.S. Embassy's Kirkuk regional office, alleges that the Mahdi Army deployed two companies of 120 men each to Kirkuk in April 2006. The local Sadr leader Abdul Karim Khalifa informed U.S. officials that more

588 Juan Cole, "Muqtada al-Sadr on Aljazeera," 19 February 2006, http://www.juancole.com/2006_02_01_juancole_archive.html (accessed 12 June 2006).

589 Rosen, "On the Ground in Iraq: The Roots of Sectarian Violence."

590 International Crisis Group, *The Next Iraqi War? Sectarianism and Civil Conflict*, 27.

591 Quoted in Ibid, 23.

592 Cole, "Muqtada al-Sadr on Aljazeera."

militiamen would be sent and that the seven to ten thousand Shi'i residents of the city would join the militia in any fighting. Badr has apparently also increased its presence in the disputed city. Kurdish officials have expressed their alarm at these developments.[593]

d. Sadr and Iran

Sadr's relationship with Iran has gone through phases of amity and ambivalence. Observers at first saw him as another Iranian agent, then watched him distance himself from Iran, and finally saw him reach out in partnership to Iran's new leadership. The connections between Iran and the Sadr movement remain vague.

As a result of his designation as Ayatollah Ha'iri's representative immediately after the U.S. invasion, Sadr was perceived to be a follower of Ha'iri, who in turn enjoys close relations with the ruling clerics in Tehran. Whatever the true extent of this relationship at one time, however, it appears to have deteriorated.[594] In spring of 2004, Ha'iri's younger brother Muhammad stated that, "Sadr speaks for himself and we speak for ourselves. People thought that everything he said he got directly from Ayatollah Ha'iri. But we've said that's not true. As a result, the Sadr group doesn't have much of a relationship with the ayatollah anymore."[595]

For their part, members of the Sadr movement have distanced themselves from Iran. "Sadrists often define themselves as anti-Iranian and accuse SCIRI of being Iranian stooges," according to Rory Stewart, a former Coalition Provisional Authority official who was stationed in the southern city of Amara, a Mahdi Army stronghold. "It's the main reason why people like them."[596]

Iranian officials have said in the past that they do not support Sadr. Some Iranian officials have even labeled him a "nuisance." Commenting on Sadr's standoff in Najaf in 2004, senior Iranian Foreign Ministry official Mostafa Zahrani expressed disapproval, saying, "based on Shiite thinking, no one approves of bloodshed, especially when it comes to the holy shrine." Iranians have praised him, however, even as they

593 Jonathan Finer, "Shiite Militias Move Into Oil-Rich Kirkuk, Even as Kurds Dig In," *Washington Post*, 25 April 2006, A16.

594 International Crisis Group, *Iran in Iraq: How Much Influence?*, 12

595 Quoted in Borzou Daragahi, "Sadr's Mentor Distances Himself From Young Firebrand," *Daily Star*, 17 April 2004.

596 Quoted in Robert F. Worth and Sabrina Tavernise, "Radical Cleric's Influence Grown in Iraq."

keep him at a rhetorical distance. In the same interview, Zahrani was upfront in stating that "the consequences of what Sadr is doing may be beneficial for Iran." Former President Rafsanjani supported Sadr's initial armed opposition against coalition forces. "Contrary to these terrorist groups in Iraq," he said, "there are powerful bodies which contribute to the security of the nation…among them is the Mahdi Army, made up of heroic young people." The Iranian Foreign Minister, speaking to American journalists in September 2004, laid out the official Iranian stance toward Sadr and his movement. "We have not been guiding [Muqtada al-Sadr], we have not been financing him, but we have been trying to moderate him, control him."[597]

Western sources generally agree that even if initial Iranian assistance to Sadr transcended efforts to "moderate" him, the Iranians quickly reduced their support. The IRGC may have supported Sadr at the beginning of the Najaf crisis, claimed one EU diplomat, "but as the war went on, he [IRGC commander Qassim Sulaimani] withdrew his support." "Al-Sadr is useful to an extent," according to another EU diplomat, "and they [Iran] have provided him with funding and arms. But I don't think they want him to remain a prominent political figure in Iraq…He's too wild to control."[598] Iran most likely continues to support Sadr in some fashion, however, as part of its strategy of both benefiting from managed chaos within Iraq and maintaining a diversified portfolio of Iraqi clients.[599]

Cooperation between Iran and Sadr may have been improved by the ascension of the new Iranian President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Both leaders put anti-Americanism at the center of their political agendas, and both share similar religious beliefs. According to Babak Rahimi, professor of Islamic and Iranian studies at the University of California at San Diego, "Sadr is wisely realizing that he needs the support of Iran. Both men see each other as brothers in arms."[600]

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597 Quoted in International Crisis Group, *Iran in Iraq: How Much Influence?*, 18

598 Quoted in Ibid.

599 Ibid, 23.

600 Quoted in Liz Sly, "Radical Cleric Well-Placed to Influence Iraqi Politics," *Chicago Tribune*, 16 February 2006.

2. Sistani's Goals and Methods

Rather than imposing an Iranian-style *vilat-i-faqih* (guardianship of the jurisconsult) theocracy, Sistani seems to want to guide society in following strict Islamic norms, although his true intentions are unknown, as are his political beliefs prior to 2003.[601] Babak Rahimi argues that "quietism" and "activism" are false categories, and that the authority of *mujtahids* has always been ambiguous and subject to historical, cultural and political context.[602] Sistani has proven to be very active over time, although he has also been careful to maintain the appearance of being above politics.

Despite his apparent opposition to theocratic *vilayat-i faqih*, Sistani has a strong Islamic ideology that he cannot violate without compromising his legitimacy. As the senior religious authority, he must push for implementation of the *sharia*.[603] Sistani's son has said that Islam encourages democracy, and reportedly became angry when Babak Rahimi asked if his father supports *vilayat-i faqih*. Some experts believe that Sistani truly supports pluralism and democratic competition; that in fact he is creating a new *itjihad* (Islamic legal opinion) for Islamic democracy. Some believe that he sees his role as a guardian, akin to the Pope in some Christian nations, shaping society but not running the government.[604]

Reidar Visser has suggested that models of Sistani as either a "quietist" or a Machiavellian schemer rely on flimsy evidence.[605] Visser argues that only announcements bearing Sistani's seal and issued since 2003 can be relied on as evidence of his political philosophy.[606] Under this criteria, there is little evidence to support assertions that Sistani endorsed lists in either the January or December 2005 elections, and that the popularly cited endorsements were either exaggerations, distortions, or based

601 Katzman, "Iraq: U.S. Regime Change Efforts and Post-Saddam Governance," 6.

602 Babak Rahimi, "Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani and the Democratization of Post-Saddam Iraq," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 8, 4 (2004), 13.

603 David Patel, remarks at the Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C., 21 November 2005.

604 Barak Rahimi, remarks at the Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C., 21 November 2005.

605 Reidar Visser, "Sistani, the United States, and Politics in Iraq: From Quietism to Machiavellianism?" *NUPI Paper* no. 700, Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, March 2006, 3.

606 Ibid., 6.

on opinions of assistants with no authority to declare his views.[607] He argues that Sistani quickly recognized the Iraqi state as a political entity after Saddam.[608] Visser notes that Jawad Sharistani controls Sistani's web site from the Qom office, and suggests that it is possible that Sharistani may use this position to serve his Iranian hosts by selectively publicizing Sistani's fatwas.[609] Visser further argues that Sistani cannot support a Shi'i federal region without worrying that such an entity would be absorbed by Iran, potentially subjecting him to the authority of Khameini.[610]

3. To the Brink

a. The Bombing of the al-Askari Mosque

On 22 February 2006, explosives set by terrorists destroyed the Golden Dome of the al-Askari Mosque in Samarra, shrine to the Tenth and Eleventh Imams, and next to the site of the occultation of the Twelfth Imam. This set off a wave of sectarian violence across the nation. At least 3,800 civilians were killed in Baghdad in the first three months of 2006, many by death squads in summary executions. In May 2006, U.S. military figures showed such violence surged 86 percent over the nine weeks following the Samarra bombing.[611] The Iraqi Red Crescent claimed that 100,000 Iraqis had abandoned their homes since the Samarra bombing.[612]

After Samarra, public opinion turned decidedly pessimistic. In December 2005, 49 percent of those polled said that Iraq was headed in the right direction while 36 percent said wrong direction. By late March 2006, 52 percent said that Iraq was now headed in the wrong direction and only 30 percent thought it was headed in the right direction.[613] 53 percent of Iraqis rated economic conditions as poor, while 76 percent rated security as poor.[614]

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607 Visser, 16.

608 Ibid., 9.

609 Ibid., 25.

610 Ibid., 29.

611 Louise Roug, "Targeted Killings Surge in Baghdad," *Los Angeles Times*, 7 May 2006, 1.

612 Steve Negus, "Samarra Attack Blamed for Growing Refugee Problem, *London Financial Times*, 4 May 2006.

613 Michael O'Hanlon and Nina Kemp, *Iraq Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction and Security in Post-Saddam Iraq* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 22 May 2006), 42.

614 Ibid., 43.

b. Sadr and Sistani's Control Erodes?

Some observers argue that ethnic and sectarian divisions are not the product of political entrepreneurs among the leadership, noting that "in many cases, they are far more conciliatory than their constituencies."[615] Some believe that Sistani has been the single decisive factor in preventing civil war in Iraq. Sunni terrorists target the Shi'i community to provoke retaliation, but after each attack Sistani preaches restraint and reins in the Shi'i militias.[616] After the Samarra bombing, many young Shi'a disregarded Sistani's calls for restraint and instead struck out against Sunnis. Many Mahdi Army personnel also ignored Sadr's similar calls. Abdul Aziz Hakim, in contrast, declared that Shi'a had a right to seek revenge and partially blamed Khalilzad for the attack. Sistani called on "believers" to defend holy sites in the absence of capable government security forces. According to Joost Hilterman of the International Crisis Group, members of the Shi'i community have put a lot of pressure on Sistani in the last year to authorize revenge. He says that "People are just not listening anymore in the face of these sick outrages."[617]

c. Festering Civil Disorder and Economic Breakdown

The Samarra bombing accelerated the decline of the security situation, leaving little possibility for reconstruction. From 2004 to 2005, insurgent attacks, car bombs, and roadside bombs all increased significantly.[618] In mid-May 2006, the U.S. military reported than Iraqi deaths had increased from fifty-five a day to eighty after the Samarra bombing. Major General Rick Lynch said that attacks on noncombatants were up eighty percent from December 2005.[619] As of March 2006, an estimated thirty to forty people were being kidnapped each day across the country.[620] Daily insurgent attacks seem to have leveled off at about seventy-five throughout the first five months of

615 Nathan J. Brown, "Is Political Consensus Possible in Iraq?" Policy Outlook (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace November 2005), 1.

616 Patel.

617 Robert F. Worth and Edward Wong, "Younger Clerics Showing Power in Iraq's Unrest," *New York Times*, 26 February 2006, 1.1.

618 O'Hanlon and Kemp, 19.

619 Tom Regan, "Middle Class Leaving Iraq," *Christian Science Monitor*, 22 May 06.

620 O'Hanlon and Kemp, 16.

2006.[621] According to the Arabic paper *Al-Zaman*, security in Basra deteriorated sharply in the spring of 2006, as Iranian and Kuwait intelligence services funded various local militias.[622]

Hashim noticed a sharp difference in sectarian tension from 2004 to 2005. As late as March 2004, he heard Iraqis disparaging other sects and joking about them, but noted that most voiced hopes of avoiding civil war. On his return to Iraq in the summer of 2005, people were no longer joking and voiced little optimism of preventing civil war.[623] Only 11 percent of Sunnis reported feeling personally safer since the fall of Saddam, while 80 percent of Shia and 94 percent of Kurds reported feeling safer.[624] Between August 2005 and May 2006, the Iraqi government has issued passports to 1.85 million Iraqis, seven percent of the population,[625] suggesting that a sizable portion of the population is preparing to or already has fled the country.

In such an environment, reconstruction and economic growth is difficult at best. American attempts to impose a neoliberal/Washington Consensus development program erred by not appreciating the reality of the conditions on the ground. The development planners did not seek input from a representative sample of Iraqis, did not calculate the effect of uncertainty about security on private investment, did not create institutions to protect free markets, failed to create an information campaign to counter accusations of economic imperialism, and did not effectively address problems with the vast shadow economy. In short, "the economic system to date has been much more effective at creating an environment for criminals and extremists to thrive than it has for private investors."[626]

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621 O'Hanlon and Kemp, 22.

622 Juan Cole, "Basra in Chaos as Tribes Feud," 16 May 06, http://www.juancole.com/2006_05_01_juancole_archive.html (accessed 12 June 2006).

623 Hashim, 72.

624 Cordesman, *Iraqi Elections*, 25.

625 Sabrina Tavernise, "As Death Stalks Iraq, Middle-Class Exodus Begins," *New York Times*, 19 May 06, 1.

626 Robert Looney, "A Plan for Revitalizing the Iraqi Economy," *Strategic Insights*, Volume IV, Issue 8 (August 2005).

On the positive side, Iraqi GDP is expected to grow at 16.8 percent in 2006, while inflation is forecast to fall from 2005's twenty percent to twelve percent in 2006.[627] Car traffic has increased by a factor of five from prewar levels.[628] The number of registered cars has doubled, telephone subscribers have ballooned from 833,000 to 6,836,854, and internet subscribers have grown from 4,500 to 147,076.[629]

Still, the challenges are almost overwhelming. Current water-treatment facilities in Baghdad meet only sixty percent of demand. Garbage is rarely collected, as over 300 sanitation workers have been assassinated in Baghdad in the first five months of 2006 in an insurgent campaign against government workers. Dozens of gas stations throughout the capital have closed rather than risk terror attacks, adding to pressures that have caused gas prices to increase by a factor of four since the 2003 invasion.[630] In April 2006, Baghdad averaged four hours of electricity a day,[631] and the unemployment rate was estimated between twenty-five and forty percent.[632] The United Nations Children's Fund reported in May 2006 that one-third of Iraqi children are malnourished and underweight, and rates are higher in the impoverished south.[633]

Oil provides 98 percent of export revenues,[634] but a May 2006 report shows that, in December 2005, oil production fell to 1.1 million barrels, a new low.[635] Crude oil production has been rising since then, but as of April 2006 stood at just 2.14 million barrels a day, still below the prewar level of 2.5 million a day.[636] In February 2006, the 15,000 employees of the Southern Oil Company sent a letter to Baghdad

627 O'Hanlon and Kemp, 33.

628 Ibid., 38.

629 Ibid., 39.

630 Anna Badkhen, "Violence Aside, Baghdad is Broken," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 24 May 2006, 1.

631 O'Hanlon and Kemp, 31.

632 Ibid., 32.

633 "Iraq: UN Report Cites Vast Under-nutrition Among Children," Reuters, 8 May 2006.

634 O'Hanlon and Kemp, 38.

635 Robert Looney, "The Economics of Iraqi Reconstruction," *Strategic Insights*, Volume V, Issue 5 (May 2006).

636 O'Hanlon and Kemp, 29.

protesting the lack of investment in their oil infrastructure. Many of the 850 major wells in the south are now "dead," having been overexploited in the 1990s.[637]

To add to this, unplanned security costs have reduced the available $18.4 billion set aside by the United States for reconstruction, and by spring 2006 those funds were almost totally depleted. According to noted economist Robert Looney, "Many Iraqis cannot understand why-two and half years after the Americans arrived-electricity and sewage are not more reliable, why more reconstruction projects have not reached their neighborhoods, why corruption remains so prevalent and why their local (and in many cases democratically elected) officials have not changed things for the better."[638]

4. New Activism from the *Hawza*

In late April, Sistani took his most active political step thus far when he declared: "Weapons must be in the hands of government security forces that should not be tied to political parties but to the nation. The first task for the government is fighting insecurity and putting an end to the terrorist acts that threaten innocents with death and kidnapping." While this statement seems at first reasonable and even helpful, it marked the potential start of a process of "monitoring" the new government in an unprecedented manner. The *hawza* was quite explicit on this point. As Sheik Abu Mohammed Baghdadi, a cleric based in Najaf, acknowledged, "The *marjaiyah* intends to interfere in some issues. This monitoring and direct interference is an essential matter that has never before been proposed by the clergy. The *marjaiyah*, through this act, is expressing the voice of the people." Some Sunnis expressed discomfort with this stance, labeling it undemocratic.[639]

5. The Shi'a Turn Against America?

Since the beginning of 2006, Shi'i public opinion seems to have turned decisively anti-American. A banner hung on the fence surrounding the tombs of Husayn and Abbas recently said: "the American Ambassador is the gate through which terrorism enters Iraq." According to Mohammed Bashir Najafi, son of one of the four senior mujtahids,

637 Bernhard Zand, "On the Verge of Collapse," *Spiegel Online*, 1 May 2006, http://service.spiegel.de/cache/international/spiegel/0,1518,413981,00.html (accessed 12 June 2006).

638 Robert Looney, "The Economics of Iraqi Reconstruction."

639 Borzou Daragahi and Bruce Wallace, "Cleric Calls for End to Militias," *Los Angeles Times*, 28 April 2006, 1.

"The country is occupied, and this occupation is a weight on the chest of Iraq…The *marjaiyah* is calculating things and counting things according to the benefit of the Iraqi street. It wants independence with a minimum of losses and a maximum of profit. The *marjaiyah* has not ruled out the option of calling for jihad, and the Americans and their allies best not forget that."[640]

A violent incident involving U.S. troops at the Husainiya al-Mustafa near Sadr City in March 2006 brought protests from Shi'i groups. Nouri al-Malaki, who would soon be nominated for the prime minister post, called for security responsibilities to be turned over from the Americans to Iraqi forces. The provincial governor of Baghdad, Hussein al-Tahan, ordered a temporary halt to all cooperation with Americans. According to Joost Hilterman, "The Shiites now believe the Americans, who brought them to power, are engaged in what they call the second betrayal. First the Americans abandoned them in the first Gulf War and now they believe the Americans are turning their back on them."[641] After the raid on the Husainiya al-Mustafa, many Shi'a began to demand that Khalilzad be fired and replaced by a "non-Arab, non-Islamic person." Numerous articles emphasized his Sunni background and accused him of bias toward Sunnis.[642]

The Shi'a were embarrassed that they had not been able to liberate themselves, and had to rely on foreigners to overthrow the hated Saddam. As a practical measure they have worked with the foreigners, however, as they lacked the capacity to fight the Sunni insurgency.[643] The growth of Shi'i-led security services over the last year may be narrowing this capability gap, however, and may lead the Shi'a to decide that U.S. assistance is no longer required.

I. CONCLUSION

The Americans came to Iraq with assumptions and plans that did not match the reality they found there. The U.S. plans anticipated the development of a secular and

640 Borzou Daragahi, "Iraq's Shiites Now Chafe at American Presence," *Los Angeles Times*, 6 May 2006, 1.

641 Omar al-Ibadi, "Ruling Shi'ites Demand Iraq Regain Security Control," Reuters, 27 March 2006.

642 "Iraq Shi'ite Websites Call for Removal of U.S. Ambassador to Iraq," Global Issues Report, Center for International Issues Research-Office of the Secretary of Defense for Policy, 5 April 2006.

643 Hashim, 270.

pro-Western regime, to be led by actors familiar to Washington officials and to be built rapidly in a permissive environment. The plans had little margin for error, however, and little flexibility for unforeseen circumstances. Those who implemented the plans compounded those flaws by making a series of counterproductive decisions, both actively and passively.

The failure to provide security was the most significant error of the American occupation, and set a precedent for all that would follow. By not imposing authority, America convinced its Sunni opponents that they could organize resistance, while at the same time showing the Shi'a that they had only themselves and other allies to rely on for protection and reconstruction. These dynamics fed off one another, and propelled by Kurdish rejections of attempts to rebuild a Weberian state, led to an escalating cycle of sectarian conflict and ascribed identity. In that tense atmosphere, the most important Shi'i ally, by default, is Iran. Thus American errors since the invasion have driven Iraqi Shi'a toward their Persian co-religionists.

Since the invasion, domestic Shi'i leaders have emerged, most notably Grand Ayatollah Sistani and Moqtada al-Sadr. Whatever their other faults, these men and the other Shi'i leaders have placed what they see as the interests of Iraq above those of Iran. They have accommodated Iran on many issues, but only when it has been in their interest. They have also been willing to partner with Americans, despite events that have tested that relationship. They continue to support a strong and active American presence in the country. All in all, their position and general attitude suggest that the competition for partnership with the Shi'a is not zero-sum: that there are still many opportunities for the United States to advance its interests.

> The military has one duty in a situation like this, and that is to provide security for the indigenous people. It's the windbreak behind which everything else can happen. But we didn't do it, and the bottom line was the loss of security.
>
> -Lieutenant General Mattis[644]

644 Quoted in Fallows.

> The bottom line is we'll be judged on whether the lights are on or not--and the lights aren't on…We have promised again and again to get the electrical grid up. And what you get from every Iraqi; you hear this repeatedly, 'You guys can land a man on the moon, but you can't get the electricity up.'
>
> - Michael Rubin, the American Enterprise Institute[645]

645 Quoted in Phillip Dine, "Rebuilding Effort in Iraq Faces Roadblocks," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 15 May 2006, 1.

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VI. CONCLUSION

A. INTRODUCTION

The Shia' of Iraq have been persecuted for centuries. The United States brought this official subjugation to an end by reversing the political order in Iraq, acting in hopes that the Shi'a would embrace Western attitudes and norms. Now, these hopes appear less realistic, and Shi'i attitudes toward the United States seem to be declining. Meanwhile, America's Sunni allies have accused the Shi'a of having primary loyalty to Iran; of building a "Shi'a Crescent" led by Iran. American policy makers should be very careful when evaluating these charges. Some observers argue that Iran has won the war in Iraq, and that increasing sectarian conflict will create a vacuum that Iran will dominate. Iran has certainly benefited from the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and cessation of hostile Sunni Arab rule in Iraq. It enjoys more freedom of action with the removal of the Ba'athist state and the commitment of U.S. forces to counter-insurgency efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Iran cannot be happy to have tens of thousands of American troops surrounding it, however, and its leaders must fear the demonstration effect of the relatively free Iraqi elections and the religious legitimacy of Ayatollah Sistani.

In the past, American policy decisions have been based on erroneous assumptions about the Shi'a, to the detriment of both the United States and the people of Iraq. American leaders should realize that the Shi'a of Iraq are loyal to their own nation, not to Iran. While they may cooperate with and seek assistance from their Iranian neighbors, this does not necessarily create a zero-sum situation in which the United States will not be able to advance its interests. America should avoid creating such a scenario by acknowledging the Shi'a as they are, not as our Sunni Arab allies portray them.

B. REVIEW OF THE SHI'A OF IRAQ

This thesis explains that Shi'ism began in Arab territory, and that Arabs such as Ali and Husayn formed its first figures. It notes the many holy Shi'i sites in Iraq, and the fact that most of the holy documents are written in Arabic. It shows that most Iraqis in fact remained Sunni until relatively recently, when they converted in part due to political and military imperatives. It shows that as the Shi'i clergy became more assertive, they promoted an independent Iraq, but that their defeat led to decades more of repression. It

explains that political and economic factors drove the rise of Shi'i fundamentalism in both Iran and Iraq, but that the different contexts within the two countries meant that the movement manifested itself differently in each country. It shows that the Iranian Islamic Revolution was seen as the beginning of an effort to unite the Shi'i world, but that the revolution failed as its promoters did not understand the different contexts in Iran and Iraq, prosecuted a wasteful war, and gradually lost religious legitimacy. It shows that the Shi'a in Iraq experienced harsh conditions throughout the 1990s, and developed their own sources of authority in response; sources which proved in the post-Saddam era to be more credible than returning exiles. It shows that even today, few Shi'i actors promote even the concept of a Shi'i region, which conceivably would be more allied to Iran than a more united Iraq. In short, the examination of the history and present condition of the Shi'a of Iraq reveals that they have a strong Iraqi Arab identity, and have not expressed a desire to unite with Iran or to place its interests over their own. The Shi'a of Iraq are not most loyal to Iran. They are Iraqis.

C. THE SITUATION FACING THE SHI'A TODAY

1. Waning U.S. Influence

The United States has dominated Iraq for three years, but its influence may now be waning. U.S. leaders face domestic pressure for withdrawal, concerns about stress on the military, and increasing Iraqi independence. While these factors have not yet combined to constrain U.S. actions, they may portend future trends.

U.S. public opinion was grown weary of the war as it progresses through its fourth year. Polls have show declining support for the U.S. effort, and increasing doubts about the righteousness of the cause.[646] As of 21 May 2006, 2,457 U.S. troops had died in Iraq, with 18,088 wounded.[647] U.S. Marines will be criminally prosecuted for an incident involving the deaths of Iraqi civilians on 19 November 2005 and for another incident 26 April 2006,[648] which may further erode American enthusiasm for the mission. These factors may shape the Congressional elections in the fall of 2006, which in turn could affect the duration of the U.S. commitment in Iraq. Ambassador Khalilzad

646 "Poll: U.S. Disapproves of War in Iraq," Associated Press, 8 June 2006.

647 O'Hanlon and Kemp, 4 and 7.

648 "Marines Will Face Charges in Deaths of Iraqi Civilians," *USA Today*, 25 May 2006, 6.

has said that the duration of the United States commitment to Iraq depends on one primary condition: "Whether we, the people who have responsibility here and in Washington, project to the people that we know what we're doing: that we have reasonable goals, that we have a means to achieve those goals, and that we're making progress."[649]

Iraqi voices have begun to seriously raise the issue of American withdrawal. Before the December elections, aides to Ayatollah Sistani circulated a proposal calling on the new government to demand an American withdrawal. Prime Minister Maliki's *Dawa* Party has said it would support such a call if made. Talabani and Jaafari have warned against a premature U.S. exit, but would likely be unable to oppose Sistani.[650] In a recent interview with Newsweek magazine, Moqtada al-Sadr was unequivocal: "The most important issue is the timetable for the U.S. withdrawal…I demand a timetable. Even if is for a long time, it doesn't mean it isn't possible to have a timetable for it."[651] Sadr has said that he will not meet with Americans until U.S. troops leave Iraq.[652] Prime Minister Maliki has not laid out a timetable for a U.S. withdrawal, but he recently said that Iraqi forces should be able to take responsibility for security within eighteen months.[653] It is important to note, however, that even American opponents such as Sadr have not demanded an immediate U.S. withdrawal.

2. Iran's Position

Iran has grown more confident in the last three years. Talking about SCIRI and *Dawa*, scholar Juan Cole noted, "Khomeini dreamed of putting them in power in Baghdad. Bush and Rumsfeld have fulfilled that dream."[654] Even so, Iran still seeks to avoid negative outcomes, ranging from the success of democracy to the outbreak of massive civil and even regional war.

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649 Packer, "The Lesson of Tal Afar."

650 Hama Headway, "Iraq's Top Cleric Said to be Considering Demand for Timetable foe Troop Withdrawal", Associated Press, 28 October, 2005.

651 Scott Johnson, "I Demand A Timetable: Moqtada al-Sadr on War, Peace, and Occupation," *Newsweek*, 8 May 2006, 41.

652 Jonathan Finer and Ellen Knickmeyer, "Envoy Accuses Iran of Duplicity on Iraq," *Washington Post*, 24 March 2006, A12.

653 "Maliki Predicts Iraqis at Helm Within 18 Months," *Los Angeles Times*, 25 May 2006, A21.

654 "Unintended Consequences," *The Nation*, 15 August 2005.

Three factors have coalesced in tandem to boost the confidence of Iranian hardliners. First, the war in Iraq has bogged down the U.S. in an unexpected insurgency. Meanwhile, the hardliners consolidated their victory over their reformist brethren in the Iranian parliament and later in the office of the presidency. Lastly, the international effort to prevent an Iranian nuclear program has resulted in domestic support for hard-line policies among those who would otherwise be reformers but are more strongly shaped by nationalism.[655]

If the IAEA refers Iran to the U.N. Security Council for possible sanctions over its nuclear program, or if Iran faces possible military action from the U.S. or Israel, Iranian officials may decide to foster greater instability in Iraq or Afghanistan.[656] The IRGC could likely rapidly move several brigade equivalents, or possibly a division equivalent into Iraq at the invitation of a friendly force, or could more discretely infiltrate forces in smaller but still significant numbers.[657] The commander of the IRGC recently warned Americans against attacking his country. "You can start a war but it won't be you who finishes it," General Yahya Rahim Safavi said. "The Americans know better than anyone that their troops in the region and in Iraq are vulnerable. I would advise them not to commit such a strategic error. I would advise them to first get out of their quagmire in Iraq before getting into an even bigger one," he said with a smile. "We have American forces in the region under total surveillance. For the past two years, we have been ready for any scenario, whether sanctions or attack."[658] Retired U.S. Army General Barry McCaffrey recently concluded that "a military confrontation with Iran could result in Sadr attacking our forces in Baghdad - or along our 400 mile line of communication out of Iraq to the sea."[659]

Iraqi Vice President Adel Abdul Mahdi recently warned the United States not to attack Iran. "We will not allow anyone to attack Iran," he said. "We think that the use of

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655 Kemp, 17.

656 Ibid, 15.

657 Anthony H. Cordesman, *Iran's Developing Military Capabilities* (Washington, D.C.: CSIS Press, 2005), 48.

658 "Tehran Mocks U.S. Ability to Win Military Action," *Washington Times*, 15 April 2006, 6.

659 Barry McCaffrey, *Academic Report-Trip to Iraq and Kuwait Thursday 13 April through Thursday 20 April 2006*, United States Military Academy memorandum, 25 April 2006, 6.

force is not appropriate for solving any problem." With regards to proposed talks between Iran and America, he said "We promote any measure to help Iraq live in peace. We want to develop our relations with Iran and also with the United States."[660] While Sadr has pledged to fight America if Iran is attacked, and Mahdi opposes such an attack, Iraqis as a whole may be weary of serving as yet another battleground.

Lieutenant General Vines recently said "Iran wants us out, but not too soon—after a Shi'ite government friendly to Iran is established. Iran's view is that the current government is not strong enough, and if we pulled out now, there would be a low-level civil war."[661]

The U.S. has recognized the extent of Iran's power within Iraq and has taken steps to engage Iran. U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad has recently been given authority to hold talks with Iranian officials. "It's a very narrow mandate that he has," said his spokesman, "And it deals specifically with issues related to Iraq." According to the spokesman, U.S. policy holds that, "Iran and Iraq should have the kind of good relations that most neighbors enjoy (and) that those relations be governed by mutual respect and by transparency."[662] Khalilzad himself has stated, "I have said to Iraqis that we do not seek to impose our differences with Iran on them. But we do not want Iranian interference in Iraq."[663]

3. Future Trends

a. Whither the Hawza?

In light of recent statements, it is unclear what relationship the Najaf *hawza* will seek with the new government. If its members do pursue a more overtly active role approaching *vilayat-i faqih*, they will do so in the face of popular preferences, which as reported by a recent ABC News poll, manifest only 12% support for an Iranian-style Islamic state among the general Iraqi population, and only 24% support among the

660 "Iraq VP Warns American Against Striking Iran," Reuters, 28 April 2006.

661 Sharon Behn, "Zarqawi, Al Qaeda are Heading Out, U.S. General Says," *Washington Times*, 14 April 2006, 14.

662 Foster Klug, "U.S. Ambassador to Meet Iranians," Associated Press, 28 Nov 05.

663 Nelson Hernandez, "U.S. Envoy in Iraq Accuses Iran of Assisting Militias, Insurgents," *Washington Post*, 21 February 2006, A10.

Shi'i population.[664] On a personal level, Grand Ayatollah Sistani is now about 78 years old. He has experienced some medical problems in his advancing age, and sought treatment in the United Kingdom in August 2004.[665] It remains to be seen how influential his successor may be.

b. Rising Regional Conflict?

As seen in the statements of Mubarak, Abdullah, and Sultan, the tensions in Iraq have propagated throughout the Middle East. All of Iraq's neighbors seem concerned at the prospect of a widening war. This fear may make them amenable to a shared strategy on containing the violence and pacifying Iraq. The Turkish Foreign Minister has recently called for foreign troops to remain in Iraq for the time being. "The Iraqis should be able to administer themselves, but we say the withdrawal of coalition forces before these things can happen would cause a vacuum, a gap," he told reporters.[666]

D. U.S. POLICY

1. Limitations

In addition to constraints arising from U.S. public opinion, American leaders may soon face tangible limits to American power. Figures in and out of the military have expressed increasingly urgent concerns about the effect of the war on the U.S. armed forces. The Congressional Budget Office estimated in October 2005 that the U.S. military could sustain a force of 123,000 personnel in Iraq indefinitely.[667] This number is significantly below the 132,000 troops in Iraq today. General McCaffrey told *Time* Magazine in the winter of 2004 that "the Army's wheels are going to come off in the next twenty-four months" if the military maintains its current posture in Iraq.[668] Lieutenant General John R. Vines, commander of the XVIII Airborne Corps and leader of coalition force in Iraq from January 2005 to January 2006, recently discussed the strain on the

664 Cordesman, *Iraqi Elections*, 17.

665 Katzman, *Iraq: U.S. Regime Change Efforts and Post-Saddam Governance*, 6.

666 "Turkey Says US Troops Must Stay in Iraq," Reuters, 2 March 2006.

667 Congressional Budget Office, *An Analysis of the U.S. Military's Ability to Sustain an Occupation in Iraq: An Update* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Budget Office, 5 October 2005), 8.

668 Fallows.

military. "There is an incredible amount of stress and I'm worried about it. The war has been going on nearly as long as the Second World War and we're asking a lot of our forces."[669]

At the same time, U.S. officials are limited by their perceptions of the consequences of a reduced American role in Iraq. Ambassador Khalilzad gave his definition of the scope of the problem in December 2005:

> People need to be clear what the stakes are here. If we were to do a premature withdrawal, there could be a Shia-Sunni war here that could spread beyond Iraq. And you could have Iran backing the Shias and Sunni Arab states backing the Sunnis. You could have a regional war that could go on for a very long time, and affect the security of oil supplies. Terrorists could take over part of the country and expand from here. And given the resources of Iraq, given the technical expertise of its people, it will make Afghanistan looked like child's play.[670]

He went on:

> A Pandora's box has been opened. The future of the world is at stake because this region, Iraq, is the defining challenge of our time…We need to close this in a way that does not produce huge problems down the road, that ultimately produces isolationism at home and a world with far more security problems than at present.[671]

It remains unclear how the United States can resolve this contradiction.

2. Goals

The United States is not going to achieve its original maximalist goals in Iraq. At least for the foreseeable future, Iraq will not have the secular and pro-Western orientation that pre-war plans anticipated. America can still achieve positive outcomes in Iraq, however, but to do so needs to fully understand the Shi'a. The United States should seek a peaceful and unified Iraq that has rule of law and protections for minorities and women, does not threaten its neighbors, and is not a proxy battlefield for outsiders. By thereby

669 Sarah Baxter, "US Plots 'New Liberation of Baghdad,'" *Sunday Times*, 16 April 2006.

670 Quoted in Michael Hirsh, Scott Johnson and Kevin Peraino, "The New Way Out," *Newsweek*, 5 December 2005, 26.

671 Quoted in Ibid.

reestablishing stability in the region, the United States will benefit from less volatile energy markets, less ideological support and political space for jihadism, and an improved international image.

3. Recommended Actions

U.S. policies have alienated many Iraqis over the last three years, but many continue to work with America. It is essential to retain our friends and allies, and to avoid creating still more enemies.

As part of an effort to do so, the United States should make it clear that it does not seek long-term basing right in Iraq. Foreign military bases have long been a tense issue in Iraqi politics, and America could dampen some hostility by making it clear that is has no enduring designs on Iraqi facilities.

The United States has a firm interest in Iraqi unity. It must continue to emphasize this interest, and must avoid to the greatest extent possible any perceptions of favoring one faction over another. It should especially attempt to avoid being seen as complicit in any divisions in Iraq.

U.S. officials should also recognize the sovereignty of the Iraqi government. If the new government does decide that its wants U.S. forces to withdraw, American officials should respect that decision. At the same time, the United States has a tremendous amount at stake in Iraq, and has sacrificed a great deal there. It should remain assertive in advancing its own interests.

U.S. officials must realize that any success in Iraq depends on cooperation with the Shi'a. Therefore, they must not fall pray to the rhetoric of their Sunni Arab allies. If they begin to see the Shi'a as inevitable servants of Iran, they may push the Shi'a away from any cooperation.

The United States should build goodwill by providing more funding and personnel for reconstruction. World Bank estimates in January 2004 determined that Iraq needed almost $36 billion for reconstruction. A CPA estimate added close to another $20 billion for other requirement. The United States has appropriated $20.9 billion in aid for Iraq, but has only disbursed $13.8 billion as of April.[672] Army Command Sergeant Major

672 O'Hanlon and Kemp, 33-34

Gregory Glen of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recently estimated that total cost for Iraqi reconstruction may top $100 billion.[673] U.S. funding has been almost completely depleted. If this struggle is as vital as Ambassador Khalilzad believes, the United States must devote more resources to it, both militarily and economically. General McCaffrey says that "we will fail to achieve our political-military objectives in the coming 24 months if we do not continue economic support on the order of $5-10 billion per year."[674]

As part of a more robust reconstruction effort, the United States should promote an economic program with an evolutionary approach and work to include more Iraqi voices in its formulation. Rather than the top-down programs that U.S. officials have promoted with little success, emphasis should be on a bottom-up approach focusing on community development and institution building. Specifically, successful programs such as the Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP), Local Governance Project (LGP) and Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) could be better funded and integrated into a more comprehensive strategy.[675] In terms of major projects, the United States must focus on investment in the vital oil sector.

American leaders must also prepare quietly for the possibility of a full-scale civil war. U.S. forces should seek to contain and then dampen any such expansion of violence. This may require cooperation with Iraq's neighbors, to include Iran.

In hopes of preventing such violence, the United States should promote a political solution in Iraq that respects its domestic actors while incorporating all of its neighbors. It should consider some form of treaty to guarantee Iraq's territorial integrity. Ambassador Khalilzad's proposed bilateral talks with Iranian officials should be encouraged, but should be augmented by including Iran in the wider regional dialogue, and ensuring that Iraqi leaders are not made to feel that America and Iran are plotting without their input. Even as they pursues such talks, however, U.S. officials must

673 Phillip Dine, "Rebuilding Effort in Iraq Faces Roadblocks," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 15 May 2006, 1.

674 McCaffrey, 6.

675 Looney, "A Plan for Revitalizing the Iraqi Economy."

remember that most regional leaders cannot focus on long-term initiatives even if they would prefer to, because their own survival in the short-term must take precedence.

E. CONCLUSION

The United States has invested hundreds of billions of dollars and 2,500 lives of its soldiers, however, as well as its reputation. If these are to be anything other than sunk costs, America should build on its relations with the Shi'a of Iraq rather than turn against them as supposed allies of Iran. It should not treat Iraq as the prize in a zero-sum game between a mythical "Shi'a Crescent" and itself and its Sunni allies. It should instead avoid stereotyping, and continue to work with all the willing partners it can.

If calls for an American withdrawal increase among the Shi'a, it may be tempting for U.S. policy makers to view the Shi'a as ungrateful, or to heed Sunni warnings of a Shi'i conspiracy led by Iran. Such attitudes, while comforting to some, would not serve U.S. interests and would jeopardize whatever toward the United States that remains in the Shi'i community. The United States can off the Shi'a protection from foreign threats. It can also facilitate investment in Iraq's critical energy sector. The Shi'a, meanwhile, can salvage the U.S. project in Iraq and can potentially even provide a bridge toward better relations with Iran.

The United States began its intervention in Iraq believing that the Shi'a were "good," secular, and pro-Western. It saw the Shi'a as inevitable close allies. These comforting and facile misperceptions have led to much tragedy and disappointment over the last three years. It would be even more tragic if American leaders now convince themselves that the Shi'a are in fact "bad" religious fanatics in the service of Iran and intractable enemies, they risk an even more damaging error.

After a careful study of the history and present condition of the Shi'a of Iraq, observers should conclude that Iraqi Shi'a have a strong identity as Arabs and as Iraqis. Although Arab Sunnis may accuse them of divided loyalties and treachery, they are not loyal first and foremost to Iran. Saddam raised the story of Alqami in part to libel the Shi'a by accusing them of betraying Iraq. What Saddam would never acknowledge was that the Shi'a could not betray Iraq, for by sheer weight of numbers, they are Iraq.

In their heart of hearts, Iraq's Shi'is like things to grow from their own soil.
-unknown Dawa leader[676]

676 Quoted in Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, 199.

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