The Impact of Foreign Interventions on Iraqi Politics and Nationalism:

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THE IMPACT OF FOREIGN INTERVENTIONS ON IRAQI POLITICS AND NATIONALISM

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THE IMPACT OF FOREIGN INTERVENTIONS ON IRAQI POLITICS AND NATIONALISM

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Abstract

This thesis takes a historical approach in examining the effects of foreign intervention and interference in the development of Iraqi nationalism. The first portion of the thesis provides a background of Iraq's history to provide the reader with knowledge of Iraq's political development. The thesis will demonstrate that direct occupation, transnationalism, and a weak state have prevented Iraq from developing a coherent national identity that can be adopted by all ethnosectarian groups in the state. Tracing the development of Iraq as a state, as well as an analysis of the motivations of foreign actors and transnational entities will shed light on this dynamic.

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Chapter 1: An Overview of Iraq's Early Modern History

This introductory chapter presents the early development of the Iraqi state beginning with its foundations under the Ottoman Empire. It follows the political history of Iraq through three distinct periods. These distinct periods are the British mandate in Iraq, the Hashemite Monarchy, and the Republican era. The chapter highlights the development of Iraq as a state organized by a foreign power. At its core the state was a foreign construct which empowered a specific sub-group of Iraq's population. The chapter demonstrates that the political foundations of the country were unstable leading to the formation of a weak state upon British departure. The foreign origins of the country's political development would give way to the development of regional nationalism and the search for a distinctly Iraqi national identity.

A. Early Beginnings

The state of Iraq is composed of a several distinct ethnic and sectarian groups, each of which maintain their own communal identities. Under the late Ottoman Empire, the present Iraqi territory was divided into three provinces or *Vilayets*, Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul.[1] Each province maintained a local government in order to extract revenues and provide financial and military contributions to the empire. This included agricultural products, small scale production, and recruits to serve in the Ottoman military. The inhabitants of the three provinces represented diverse ethno-sectarian societies. The Mosul *Vilayet* was primarily Kurdish with minority populations of Turkmen and Arabs. As a result of its primarily Kurdish ethnicity the Mosul *Vilayet* stood out significantly from Baghdad and Basra. In particular its linguistic differences limited social ties to Baghdad and Basra *Vilayets.* Furthermore, its geographic isolation in the

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[1] *The Ottoman Origins of Modern Iraq: Political Reform, Modernization and Development in the Nineteenth Century Middle East* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2011) 17-21.

mountainous regions made centralized control difficult leading to a prevalence of warlordism that would continue in the later periods of Iraq's history. The Ottomans paid close attention to the Mosul *Vilayet* due to long standing ties between the Ottoman upper class and the notable families of the region. They maintained a greater presence in the Mosul *Vilayet* than in Baghdad and Basra, which led to a greater degree of autonomy for the latter two provinces.[2]

The Baghdad *Vilayet* had been the heartland of ancient Mesopotamia as well as that of the Abbasid Islamic Empire. It maintained its historic divisions into nomadic and settled peoples. The leadership in the rural areas and among nomadic tribes was based upon tribal structures, governing all aspects of their members' social lives including the settling of feuds, marital choices, and the concentration of political and social authority in the hands of the tribal sheikhs.[3] These sheikhs expressed indifference to the rule of the Ottoman empire, oftentimes attempting to cultivate ties with Ottoman bureaucrats and administrators. Concerns for the creation of an independent Iraqi state were virtually non-existent among the tribal elements of the Baghdad *Vilayet.* In contrast to the rural areas, the city of Baghdad and its surrounding areas were led by bureaucratic and economic elites who also maintained close ties with Ottoman administration. The majority of these elite families and individuals would play important roles in Iraqi society after the founding of the monarchy and still later under the republican regimes.

Basra *Vilayet* was the southernmost region of the three and though it shared many of the tribal features of the rural sections of Baghdad, it was distinctly Shia and historically contained two of Shi'ism's most holy sites, the cities of Najaf and Karbala. Consequently, this region has had a long association with the Shia rulers of Iran from the Safavid and Qajar periods, which

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[2] Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 3rd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 8.
[3] Stacy E. Holden, *A Documentary History of Modern Iraq* (University Press of Florida, 2012), https://muse.jhu.edu/chapter/595862/pdf, 30.

institutionalized Shia Islam in Iran. Furthermore, there was a constant flow of Shia clerics, and pilgrims to the holy sites in Iraq, which greatly increased commercial ties of the region. Basra also had a great appeal to the nomadic tribes of the region who had adopted Shia Islam. These sectarian and tribal differences between Basra and Baghdad tended to alienate the population of the southern region from the Sunni Ottoman rulers in Istanbul. Political movements in the Ottoman empire during the early 20th century, in particular the Committee of Union and Progress, which sought to modernize the Ottoman empire and took power in a coup in 1913, contributed to an awakening in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire towards a reformist agenda.[4] Likewise, especially in the province of Basra the Shia community developed an anti-government sentiment following constitutional revolution of 1905-1909 in Iran.

Following the coup of 1913, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), gained control over the Ottoman Empire. The CUP was a more nationalistic administration than the previous government, and it attempted to modernize the Ottoman Empire to keep up with the more advanced European powers. Centralization increased the level of political organization in the Arab areas of the empire, combined with the rise of autonomous rulers in the Nejd region of Arabia and along the Persian Gulf. The increasingly centralized empire of the CUP stimulated the development of what would become Arab nationalism and a politicized Arab identity. Increasingly, even Arab officers of the Ottoman military would come to adopt this view and following the establishment of sovereign states in the Middle East they would come to occupy key positions in the early governments of the region.[5] The CUP, in its quest to modernize the Ottoman Empire's military and economy aligned itself increasingly with the German Empire.

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[4] Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 3rd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 23-29.
[5] Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 43-44.

This alignment would prove to be detrimental to the overall goal of the CUP as it became almost impossible for the Ottoman Empire to remain out of the First World War. The eventual victory of the allies over the central powers would formally bring the demise of the Ottoman Empire after 700 years, and fundamentally alter the political landscape of the Middle East region including the three *vilayets* of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul.

The First World War changed the political landscape of the Middle East and Iraq. This was to a large extent determined by the British war goals in the region and their foreign policy decisions in relation to the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire was a significant military concern for the British during the war, due to their proximity to the Suez Canal in British controlled Egypt that gave vital access to their Indian colony. The British strategy towards the Ottoman Empire during the war, was twofold. The first strategy was an attempt in the Gallipoli campaign to score a decisive military victory against the Ottoman Empire in order to secure the Bosporus for the Allies. The second strategy was to foment revolt from inside the empire. The British commissioner in Egypt oversaw a campaign to assist an Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire. The principal leader of the revolt and the main ally of the British was King Hussein Al Hashemi, Sharif and Emir of Mecca. In order to encourage the Arab revolt under Hussein Al Hashemi British foreign policy in 1916, sought to create an Arab state following the end of the war outlined in the Mc-Mahon-Hussein Correspondence, between the Sharif Hussein and the High Commissioner of Egypt.[6] With regard to Iraq, the correspondence included the entirety of the three *vilayets* into a new Arab state that would be ruled by the Hashemites. The beginnings of the Arab revolt led many of the Arab officers of the Ottoman military to desert and join the revolt. A significant number of them would later play a political role in Iraq at the end of the

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[6] David Holden and Richard Johns, *The House of Saud*, New Ed edition (London: Pan Macmillan, 1982), 52-56.

war. The revolt was largely successful in the Arab parts of the empire. Baghdad fell to the British in 1917, and soon they were able to consolidate the entirety of the three *vilayets.* In 1918, at the end of the war the armistice line was the northern border of the *vilayet* of Mosul incorporating all three provinces under the British.

Following the war possessions in the Middle East were parceled out to the British and the French as colonies, known under the new system in the League of Nations as mandates.[7] The Hashemites would soon fall out of favor with the British and by the early 1920s, they would begin to support the Al Saud family, a major threat to the Hashemites control over the Hejaz. Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud would eventually force the Hashemites out of the Hejaz and bring it under Saudi control.[8] Furthermore, the son of Hussein, Faisal, attempted to set up an Arab state in Syria, but was defeated by the British. These two events brought any independent political authority of the Hashemite family to an end.

The imposition of the British mandate in Iraq opened up two possible methods of rule, which included annexation into the colony of India, managing the new territory as a separate colony.[9] However, the imposition of the mandates under the terms of the League of Nations demanded the colonial rulers to adhere to a new international standard. The holders of the mandate were to commit to assisting the local populations in achieving self-determination and self-rule. The British initially attempted to impose a system of colonial rule similar to that which had been established in India and among their African colonies. Officers in the British military largely subscribed to the idea of direct rule, a British method of rule known as the "Imperial

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[7] Toby Dodge, "The British Mandate in Iraq, 1920-1932," Online resource, The Middle East Online: Series 2: Iraq 1914–1974, 2006.

[8] David Holden and Richard Johns, *The House of Saud*, New Ed edition (London: Pan Macmillan, 1982), 86-87.

[9] Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 11.

School".[10] This entailed direct administrational management through the establishment of a British commissioner who would report to London. Furthermore, all forms of local political councils that were decided through elections, common in provincial administration during the Ottoman period were disbanded. Local rule would instead be established through the creation of patronage networks with the most notable local elites, be it the heads of tribes in the rural areas of Iraq, or the notable merchant class families and former Ottoman military officers in the urban areas of Iraq. These patronage networks were established at will by the British, without regard for administrative procedures that were commonplace during the Ottoman period. All of these local officials would be accountable to British military officers, and when ordered would be responsible for the implementation of British administrative law and collection of taxes. According to Charles Tripp, this form of direct rule by the British gave the local population a semblance of local and decentralized rule but created a more imperial presence then that of the Ottoman's due to the consistent pressures and clearly visible presence of the British.[11]

The opposition to direct British rule and the process of increased centralization was supported by all segments of Iraqi society regardless of sectarian loyalties, ethnicity, or geographical location. The opposition continued to grow upon Iraqi sentiment believing that formal annexation would soon be announced by the British administration. This sentiment was bolstered by the results of the San Remo conference in April 1920, which formally awarded the British the mandate of Iraq. In 1920, this opposition would erupt as a full revolt against British rule in all three provinces that made up Iraq. Initially, the resentment of the British occupation was greatest among many of the former Ottoman military officers. Formalized opposition to the

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[10] Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 14.
[11] Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 3rd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 31-34.

British rule initially presented itself in the form of secret political societies that had Arab nationalist overtones and were carryovers from the period of the Young Turk reforms that occurred late in the Ottoman Empire's history.[12] These secret political societies were largely composed of Sunni Arab military officers. Additionally, Shia opposition was represented in other secret political societies calling for the independence of Iraq. The Shia areas were largely composed of civilians rather than military officers, due to their previous opposition to service in the Ottoman Empire's military. The Shia opposition was led by Mohammed Al Sadr, a son of one of the most important Shia clerics, Ayatollah Hassan Al Sadr. Despite having largely different political goals for the future of Iraq without the British rule, the two opposition camps largely stood together against the British in the 1920 revolt. Peaceful rallies were initially held in large urban centers such as Baghdad in May 1920. These would not remain peaceful and the crackdown by the British military forces would transform the rallies against them into an armed revolt.

Discontent and peaceful demonstrations continued throughout the spring of 1920 in opposition the British rule under the High Commissioner, Arnold T. Wilson. Wilson followed a policy of British colonial rule despite the guidelines of the League of Nations and did not believe that Iraq was ready for constitutional or democratic institutions.[13] He remained a firm believer in the imperial school of British thought, seeing direct control over the mandate of Iraq to be in the United Kingdom's best interest. Wilson was removed in the summer of 1920 when the High Commissioner Percy Cox returned to Baghdad from a hiatus in India. Initially, Commissioner Cox held the same position on control of the mandate of Iraq as Wilson who became his deputy.

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[12] Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 3rd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 33-34.
[13] Toby Dodge, "The British Mandate in Iraq, 1920-1932."

The 1920 revolt would soon change the British analysis of the Iraqi situation and end the dominance of the imperial school as a main driver of policy for how to approach Iraq and the wider Middle East.[14] By early summer, armed revolt broke out especially in the South with the Shia Ayatollah Shirazi urging all Iraqis to demand their rights of freedom and were allowed to use force to achieve their goals. The revolt spread to the tribes of the mid-Euphrates who were able to overcome the British garrisons, and then following to the lower Euphrates region and throughout the Baghdad area. Subsequently, the Kurds in southern Kurdistan also revolted but there was little communication between the Kurdish revolt and the national revolt in Baghdad and Basra. It should also be mentioned that there were groups such as the sheikhs of the tribes who held large tracts of land recognized by the British and who were promoted by the British as intermediaries between the rural and urban population as well as the Baghdad bureaucrats who did not join the revolt.

A decision was made in London under Winston Churchill, the British War Secretary, to put down the revolt by the use of British air power and ground forces. The British administration did not expect the high level of resistance to the British military forces that was met leading to an extremely expensive campaign. The British deployed troops from abroad especially from India as well as conducting a Royal Air Force bombing campaign which ended the revolt. Churchill and the government in London in 1920 had to deal with reorganizing costs in ruling their mandates and decided upon establishing new methods of control.[15] The continued deployment of significant levels of ground troops was deemed too high a cost to the government in London so a plan of imposing British rule through the use of air power was adopted which was continued

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[14] Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 134-136

[15] Liora Lukitz, *Iraq: The Search for National Identity*, 1st edition (London ; Portland, Ore: Routledge, 1995), 18-20.

throughout the rest of the mandate period. While there are many narratives of the 1920 Iraqi revolt as being a revolution in the quest for nationalism and the desire for an independent Iraq, the course of history only conclusively displays to us that the revolt was conducted due to the increasing centralization of the British administration, placing demands upon the various communities in Iraq that had previously not existed. At this point in time it is unclear as to whether the majority of people participating in the revolt consciously desired an independent Iraqi state and were actively working towards its inception, rather than a lifting of the new demands placed upon them by the British administration.

The revolt of 1920 would shake the confidence of London in its ability to consistently maintain order in the mandate of Iraq and would cause them to lose its appetite for any costly endeavors in maintaining control of the region. The government in London opted to take a new indirect approach to managing the mandate of Iraq through the establishment of a local government that would administer the territory but ultimately respond to the wishes and demands of the British government. At this point, Iraqi self-rule was not considered an option. The British actively excluded any local Iraqi notables that were outside of the patronage network that the British had created since the end of the First World War, throwing the legitimacy of any new government formed into question. The main focus of the government in Iraq was to ensure the security of British economic interests in the region.[16] To solidify these goals and to adopt manageable forms of government as required by the League of Nations in their mandates, the British in 1921 convened a series of conferences in Cairo to determine the issues of regional Middle East rule. The most important result of these conferences was the decision to appoint Faisal Bin Hussein Al Hashemi, as king of the newly created Kingdom of Iraq. Faisal was the

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[16] Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 3rd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 45-47.

son of Hussein Al Hashemi, Sharif of Mecca who had been the force behind the Arab revolt in the Hejaz and Syria against the Ottoman Empire under the British. King Faisal and his cabinet were figureheads for the British administration in Iraq with the High Commissioner, as the advisor. Percy Cox held the overwhelming authority in the mandate of Iraq changing very little except the image of the government.[17] The British had supreme control over any decisions made by the king or his cabinet of ministers. The division of the new Iraqi administration, largely followed the Old ottoman *Vilayet* system and further encouraged division among the populace along the lines of ethnicity and sect. As the monarchy settled into its new positions attempts to erode the control of the British over the monarchy began largely ending in failure. The vital petroleum of Iraq would remain under the direct control of the British with the monarchy receiving royalties from what was extracted.

The policy of Britain from the late 1920s on was focused on the need to reduce costs through the eventual disengagement from its mandates. The ruling power of the king and his cabinet, parliament and administration was not representative of the population or the largest movements in the territory but only of the interest of the minority elite who had fostered ties with the British through the patronage networks. The years of Hashemite rule therefore produced uninspiring visions on the character of the Iraqi state and nation. Before his death in 1933, King Faisal perceived of the need for a more diverse central government and forced Nuri al Said, his pro-British prime minister to resign in favor of more neutral prime minister. These efforts failed and led to an increased mobilization of dissident views to the Sunni majority government and fostered tribal and sectarian revolts in the north and the south. Additionally, by the mid 1930s new cadres of younger ideological intellectuals and professionals arose forming political groups,

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[17] Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 16-18

mainly based on opposition to the monarchy and its British backing.[18] Many of these groups had

a Marxist platform, or supported liberalism and others were social democrats. These groups were

largely formed from the urban educated middle class. These new ideological groups largely

crossed over social and sectarian lines but there also remained strong dissidence among the

Kurdish nationalists, some of the tribal leaders and the Shi'a majority groups led by the clerical

elite. King Faisal was followed by his son King Ghazi ruling from 1912-1939. He was a believer

in the pan-Arab movement which had its beginnings in the earlier part of the century in Egypt.

Ghazi began to shift his government away from the older Ottoman administrative structure

adopted by his father and came to rely heavily on a developing Iraqi army, which was built up

under his rule to over 40,000 by the late 1930s, with its officer corps being staunch supporters of

the rising Arab nationalist movement.[19]

There was an increased perception from different aspects of Iraqi society, that the

government of the monarchy was a sectarian one biased towards the enrichment of the Sunni

community. A result of this was the inevitable beginnings of Shia and Kurdish movements

against the monarchy. Shia grievances during this period focused on the sectarian divide which

limited Shia participation in the government. The opposition called for the implementation of

equality of representation and specifically blamed the sectarian and social divide on the

constituent assembly and not directly on the King. The increased opposition led to periods of

unrest, arrests, and suppression of the Shia leaders.

The events of the 1930s, mainly the increased levels of resistance to the regime and the

ideological tendencies of King Ghazi, resulted in the army becoming the most important

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[18] Sherko Kirmanj, *Identity and Nation in Iraq* (Boulder, Colorado ; London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2013), 28-29.
[19] Adeed Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation* (Princeton University Press, 2009), 34.

institution of the central government and paved the way for their insertion into the politics of

Iraq. The activity of the military in Iraqi politics was clear through the military coup of 1936.

Baqir Al Sidqi, an Iraqi nationalist, clashed with his opponents, the Arab nationalists. The Arab

nationalists centered around King Ghazi and Rashid al-Gaylani who headed the government. Al

Sidqi orchestrated the military coup which deposed the acting government bringing into power

reformist and Iraqi nationalist oriented leaders.[20] Al Sidqi was an Arabized Kurdish military

officer who championed reform and a concept of Iraqi nationalism based on collective identity

not sectarian or ethnic allegiance. The coup was short lived and Baqir Al Sidqi was assassinated

the following year. Subsequently there were six more military coups in Iraq until 1941. The

cycle of coups would represent the continued struggle between the officers of the military and

secular politics over whether Arab nationalism or Iraqi nationalism represented the way forward

for the formation of a state and nation.

The 1936 coup proved to shift the balance of power away from the central government or

cabinet to the military. The increasing power of the Iraqi military built up by King Ghazi to

insulate himself from the British brought with it an officer corps that was extremely ideological,

increasingly powerful, and sought to insert itself in the decision-making process for the

development of an Iraqi state. The increasingly powerful military structure and the ideological

officer corps would set up its own power structures and political agendas.

Whereas the majority of coups prior to 1941, were aimed at changing the policies of

government, while at the same time retaining the structure of the monarchy as nominal head of

the state of Iraq, the coup of 1941 led by Rashid Ali Al Gaylani and four powerful military

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[20] Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 3rd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 86-91

officers known collectively as the Golden Square, deposed the monarchy in its entirety.[21]

Gaylani's coup was intolerable to the British as it did not only shake up the cabinet of the

monarchy, actions that could be considered tolerable by the government in London, it upset the

entire structure that the British sought to maintain. The Golden Square coup deposed King Faisal

II and his cabinet including the prime minister Nuri Al Said. The Golden Square openly

proclaimed itself to be rooted in the ideas of Arab nationalism. As a ruling government the

Golden Square was highly authoritarian and dissociated itself with the established notables and

elites who they believed to be infiltrated by the interests of the British government. The Golden

Square immediately attempted to foster close ties with the Nazi regime to be able to withstand

any British attempts to remove them from power and reestablish the Hashemite monarchy in

Iraq. Almost immediately following the Golden Square's seizing of authority in Baghdad, they

mobilized the military to move against the British airfields in Iraq. The Iraqi military moving

against vital British airfields no longer represented a threat to British control in Iraq alone, but

jeopardized the maintenance of the grand British strategy for continued superiority in the Middle

East region.[22] These actions by the Golden Square forced the British to engage in a military

intervention to restore King Faisal II. The intervention by the British, known as the Anglo-Iraqi

War, would end in a clear victory for the British forces and the end of the regime of the Golden

Square with its leaders being executed or sent into exile.

Following the Anglo-Iraqi War of 1941, the monarchy was restored under the rule of

King Faisal II. Nuri Al Said was once again appointed as Prime Minister, from this period going

forward he began to struggle with maintaining the old system of rule through the traditional Iraqi

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[21] Adeed Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation* (Princeton University Press, 2009), 99.
[22] Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 3rd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 100-104.

elites based on the system of patronage. Increasingly, all segments of Iraqi society outside of the inner circle of elites in Baghdad and the monarchy's government demanded a change to the system of patronage, particularly economic and social equality.[23] Nuri Al Said's government found itself unable to deal with this rising dissent in the mid-1940s, and came to realize that redistribution of largesse through the distribution of rent from the budding oil industry and patronage ties to different camps of elites was no longer sufficient and that the entire system of the monarchy and the elevation of Baghdad elites was now under threat. In response, a further increase in reliance upon the security apparatus was adopted to repress dissent against the monarchy as much as possible.

In the period following the end of the Second World War to the end of the monarchy in 1958, Iraq remained under British indirect rule but also initiated changes toward liberalization and modernization. One such policy which is often discussed in research on Iraq and was held throughout the mandate and monarchy periods was the implementation of a universal education policy throughout the country which was based in the notion of an Arab nation linked to a solid Arab identity through the Arabic language.[24] This policy had the opposite effect of reinforcing ethnic and sectarian movements among the Kurds and Shi'a and strengthened their separate identities and goals of separation from the increasingly Arab nationalist education program attempted by the monarchy. National integration was also strengthened through the easing of restrictions on political parties which grew through this Post-World War II era. The trends in these parties was either adherence to Pan Arabism or the following of a socialist or democratic platform. The two main parties which emerged were the National Democratic Party

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[23] Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 3rd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 134-138.
[24] Liora Lukitz, *Iraq: The Search for National Identity*, 1st edition (London ; Portland, Ore: Routledge, 1995),114-115

(NDP) and the Istiqlal Party (IP).[25] The NDP grew from the younger reformist factions composed of both Sunni and Shia and not all called for independence from Britain but overwhelmingly sought major structural changes on the part of the monarchy most importantly in the realms of social justice, political freedom, social reform and the rule of law in a new Iraqi government. The NDP gained seats in the Iraqi parliament in the late 1940s composed of Sunni and Shia members but also reached out to Kurds.

The Istiqlal Party was largely composed of Pan Arabist leaders in the 1930s many of whom were involved in the Al Gaylani coup. Its main theme was a call to Pan-Arabism.[26] It was Istiqlal as a Pan Arabist party that initially took a stance against a local Iraqi identity and furthered the Arabization of the educational system. The party gained seats in the National Assembly in the late 1940s and early 1950s and while initially exclusive to advancing the cause of Arab nationalism, by 1958 it modified its overall program to promote the advancement of Kurdish identity. During this period, a number of leftist and Marxist parties emerged the most important of which was the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) with a classic Marxist platform of the unification of all sects and groups of lower-class Iraqis to unite against imperialism and exploitation by the upper class, especially against the British and seek social reform. The strongest Arab Nationalist Party to emerge in the period was the Arab Ba'ath Party which made its appearance in Iraq in 1948. Finally, during the late 1940s-early 50s, although the power of military leaders had been severely dismembered after the failed 1941 coup and the end World War II, the success of military officers in the wider region such as Jamal Abdul Nasser in Egypt, lead to the growth of a free officers movement within the military ranks of Iraq, founded in 1952.

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[25] Sherko Kirmanj, *Identity and Nation in Iraq* (Boulder, Colorado ; London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2013), 67-80
[26] Ibid, 76.

These officers were influenced by both the NDP and the ICP, but the majority were affiliated with the cause of Arab nationalism.

In the former *vilayet* of Mosul, the Kurdish nationalist movement was active throughout the Mandate period which was evident in the many revolts and rebellions against the new Iraqi state. The first major Kurdish nationalist party was formed in 1930, the Hope Party composed of urban elites and military officers. A major Kurdish revolt was that of the Barzani clan, termed the Barzan revolts occurring from 1921-1936.[27] The main grievance was the failure of the central government in Iraq under Nuri Al Said and his successor in Baghdad to uphold agreements with the Kurds to enhance their economic social and political participation in the state. The goal of Barzani's revolt was to form an all Kurdish region composed of several provinces and, most importantly, the recognition of the Kurdish language and ethnic identity of the Kurds. The Kurds, in particular, had suffered the most from the Arabization policies of the government particularly in the educational system which imposed the Arabic language and narrative, without mention or promotion of any aspects of the Kurdish language or culture. Ultimately Barzani's revolt against the Iraqi monarchy in the 1940s would fail. The failure of the revolt led to Barzani's forced exile to Iran in 1945.[28] Following Barzani's exile from Iraq, several leftist Kurdish political organizations were created and formed the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP).[29] The goals of the Party were mainly Pan-Kurdish nationalism. It promoted an Iraqi State free from any imperialist influence and sought a voluntary integration of Arabs and Kurds into a single nation. The KDP supported the leftist ideas of the Kurdish intelligentsia, maintained the

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[27] Adeed Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation* (Princeton University Press, 2009), 89.

[28] Jr. Archie Roosevelt, "The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad," *Middle East Journal* 1, no. 3 (1947): 247–69.

[29] Sherko Kirmanj, *Identity and Nation in Iraq* (Boulder, Colorado ; London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2013), 76.

recognition of tribal leadership and also upheld maintenance of a Kurdish identity whether given autonomy or a part of the Iraqi State as their own.

In the South, the Shia population was continually opposed to the mandate and the monarchy throughout the 1930s to the end of the monarchy. Under the British mandate, large tracts of land held by Shia tribal leaders were broken up and granted to Sunni elites from Baghdad, as part of advancing the British patronage system.[30] However, it was the process of state building in Baghdad that ignited the most opposition by the Shia. The religious and tribal leaders of the Shia south utterly opposed what they perceived to be an imperialist imposition of the Sunni monarchy with its Ottoman administrative structures and Sunni military cadres. The opposition was mainly based on a Shia tribal structure fragmented by the new Sunni urban elite government and opposition to the authority of the Sunni elites. The religious elite of Najaf and Karbala since the 19th century were the final authorities for the social, political, and economic life of much of the south particularly in urban centers. Their authority was being undermined by the central powers in Baghdad. The clerical establishment among the Iraqi Shia issued fatwas in the 1920 revolt and opposed the Mandate. Shia grievances also included, more specifically, agriculture and irrigation in the South as well as exclusion from proportional participation in the government. Shia displeasure to these political developments was expressed by unrest in the mid Euphrates region in 1935 supported by fatwas from Najaf. These grievances were laid out in The Peoples Charter signed by the major tribal and religious heads of the south and presented to the government.[31] The government in Baghdad disregarded the grievances that were put forward and continued its established policies. The inaction of the government lead to a revolt of Shia tribes

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[30] Liora Lukitz, *Iraq: The Search for National Identity*, 1st edition (London ; Portland, Ore: Routledge, 1995), 50-58
[31] Adeed Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation* (Princeton University Press, 2009), 92-96.

which was quickly put down by the central government and military particularly by using air power. This is generally considered the end of active tribal resistance although small revolts occurred from time to time. Throughout the period of the monarchy, Shia opposition was heard in the voices of the Shia intelligentsia and also from the clerical leadership for fair representation of Shia participants in the government proportional to their more than 60% base of the population.

The Treaty of Portsmouth was negotiated in 1948 which drew up terms for military withdrawal of the British. The treaty allowed British intervention in the event of war and was reflective of the reality of the monarchy's dependency on Britain for military supplies and assistance in the case of an outbreak of war. The treaty was opposed and caused a series of government ministers to resign. The following years saw a return of Nuri Al Said to importance under his own party the Constitutional Union Party (CUP), created through a series of cash infusions that absorbed his political rivals and important tribal leaders. Nuri Al Said followed two policy goals. One was economic and focused on developing the civil industry in Iraq. The second was continuing Iraqi alignment with western powers especially Britain as well as Turkey and Iran to ensure the security of the state, shown through the signing of the Baghdad Pact military alliance between Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan with the support of the United Kingdom. He did not actively promote Pan-Arabist ideals but cultivated the Iraqi identity under the guise of his Sunni elites.

The failure of the monarchy to open up its political system, a lack of liberalizing policies, and the rise of new political parties and ideologies damaged an already weak legitimacy that the Hashemites occupied in Iraq. Concurrently, the rise of Arab nationalism in the wider region, damaged the legitimacy of the monarchy and its cadre of elites. The Iraqi was increasingly

subject to the pressures of the Arab nationalist ideology. The mid-levels officers of the military came to resent the policies of patronage the monarchist government was adopting, its indifference to nationalist policies, and the subservient status that Iraq was playing to the British.

B. The Republican Period

The Coup of July 14, 1958 brought the end of the monarchy in Iraq. The coup was led by the mid-level military officers unsatisfied with the policies of the monarchy. The coup occurred as the monarchy in Iraq was dispatching its forces to assist the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan against aggression from the United Arab Republic, led by the Arab nationalist Gamal Abdul Nasser. The governments in Jordan and Iraq feared the growing power and attraction of Abdul Nasser's government and ideas and sought to protect themselves from the threat of being overthrown. Instead of following the king's orders to assist the Jordanian monarchy they decided to march towards Baghdad and overthrow their own government and seize the reins of power. The coup was generally supported by the urban poor, the peasantry, and the rising middle class in the form of professionals and students. The coup opened up a new era in Iraqi history in which the military would influence and shape the rule of government in Iraq for the next decade.

The center of power of the new government resided with the military and two leaders emerging from the coup, Brigadier General Abdul Karim Qassim, and Colonel Abdul Salam Arif. Qassim and Arif concentrated political power in the hands of the defense and interior ministries. The initial government formed by Qassim and Arif was an attempt to create an anti-monarchical unity government that included representatives from almost all spheres of Iraqi politics such as Kurds, Arab nationalists, Communists, and representatives from the military. The unity government at face value seemed to represent the various political groups, parties, and agendas that were growing in power under the monarchy. The political groups were united only

in their opposition to the monarchy and not towards working for a unified or compromise goal of Iraq's political future. The disunity in ideological positions was also reflected between the two leaders of the coup Qasim and Arif, each with differing goals for Iraq's path forward, with the ideas of Arab nationalism being the main point of contention. Qasim did not believe in the Arab nationalist path forward, in particular he refused any notion of having Iraq join the UAR or the wider pan-Arabist project being led by Egypt.[32] Qassim sought an Iraqi path forward attempting to create a state that had the interests of Iraqi's, Shia Arab, Sunni Arab, and Kurd as the most important. In holding these views, he believed that Iraq could not join the wider Arab nationalist project in the region as it was not reflective of Iraq's demographics, and in so doing would most likely relegate him to a secondary position under both Nasser and Arif. Qassim's main allies early in his rule in opposing Arab nationalism in Iraq and joining the UAR was the ICP. Abdul Salam Arif on the other hand was a staunch supporter of Arab nationalism and favored Iraq immediately joining the UAR, he was greatly supported by the regional Arab nationalists' governments, particularly from Egypt, as well as the local Iraqi Arab nationalist party.

In the early years of the Republican period Qassim and his program for Iraq gained ascendancy over the Arab nationalists through the use of the ICP as his political base. Arif and his Arab nationalist program were suppressed, and he was imprisoned by Qassim for plotting against the state. Concurrently, the national unity government and policy that was exemplified through the cabinet established following the coup was dissolved and Qassim was able to emerge as the sole ruler of Iraq, staffing the government with his own supporters. The Kurds in particular were initially very supportive of Qassim's government and plans for Iraq due to his policies towards them being more inclusive than those of the monarchy. Qassim allowed for education in

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[32] Sherko Kirmanj, *Identity and Nation in Iraq* (Boulder, Colorado ; London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2013), 96-100.

the Kurdish areas of the country to include the teaching of Kurdish language, he sought to

include Kurdish symbolism in the flag of Iraq and sought to enshrine political rights for the

Kurdish areas of Iraq into the constitution.[33] This made him the politician to support in the

central government for Kurdish representatives as the Arab nationalist plan for Iraq was

generally incompatible with the political aspirations of the Kurds. However, Qassim's support

for the Kurds was predicated on negotiations and special favor towards the Barzani clan

following his return from exile. The central governments major support for Barzani in particular

would split Kurdish support for Qassim and drive the Iraqi military into a war in Kurdistan.

As Qassim soon found himself at the height of his power, with very little political

challenges ahead of him he sought to create a cult of personality around himself. Qassim

attempted to do away with the independent political authority of the Communist party and

establish himself as the total ruler of the country. He began purging the government of anyone

who had political loyalties that went beyond himself and staffed the government with individuals

who without his support had no political platform. He then began a policy of agrarian reform the

real motivation being to break the political authority and independence of the tribal sheikhs. The

policy was generally unsuccessful. On the other hand, Qassim did begin attempts at genuine

economic reform, placing vast amounts of the budget into infrastructural development,

transformed cities into developed urban centers and created Iraq's national petroleum company.

Qassim in attempting to increase his personalized authority believed that he had to reduce

the power of the ICP. The victory over Arif had made the ICP the most powerful political

organization in Iraq and it was perceived by Qassim to be a threat to his authority. To reduce

their power, he cut them off from access to the government and began to allow prominent Arab

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[33] Ibid, 102-106.

nationalists to return to Iraq. Furthermore, he began to reduce sanctions against Arab nationalist groups in the country. This policy led to Qassim having no political allies in Iraq that had an organized political party. In 1963, his political isolation became clear with Qassim being assassinated by the Arab nationalist Ba'ath Party allied with Arif.

Following the assassination of Qassim in 1963, the Ba'ath Party seized control of the country in a coup that removed the supporters of Qassim from government. Arif was not a member of the Ba'ath Party, which was composed mainly of civilian politicians, ideologues of pan-Arabism and a small number of military officers. However due his powerful military background, and his cooperation with the coup effort against Qassim he was given the position of President of Iraq. The Ba'ath Party proceeded to occupy all other areas of the government, and for a period of around nine months were the main power in Baghdad essentially running the government and the direction of foreign affairs. The Ba'ath Party understood the power of the military and the potential for Arif to leverage this source of strength in order to increase his own power vis-a-vi the party. The Ba'athists therefore created their own paramilitary group, the National Guard, in order to counterbalance the coercive power of the military. During this period the Ba'ath Party and Arif were able to almost completely destroy the political power of the ICP. Arif, sought to sideline the Ba'ath Party and establish himself as the sole ruler of Iraq. The Ba'athists suffered from major discord and dysfunction within the party's ranks. This provided the opportunity for Arif to achieve his goal of gaining total control over the political apparatus in Iraq.

On November 11, 1963 Arif was able to completely sideline the Ba'ath Party and achieve total control over Iraq becoming the sole ruler. Arif was able to achieve this through exploitation of the discord within the ranks of the Ba'ath Party. The military were unhappy with the creation

of the National Guard, believing them to be unprofessional, disrespectful of the armed forces, and diminished the political importance of their positions in the military. As a result of this discord Arif, mobilized the military officers who did not occupy party positions. The civilian members of the Ba'ath Party were arrested by the military loyal to Arif and deported from the country, and the National Guard was disbanded. Upon the success of his coup against the Ba'ath Party, Arif would conduct an immediate De-Ba'athification campaign against all segments of the government and appoint officials loyal to his person alone, attempting to cultivate a cult of personality similar to that of Qassim.

Upon his achievement of total control of the Iraqi government, Arif created a Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), that was composed entirely of military officers specifically loyal to him. Upon creation of the RCC, Arif sought to limit the military's involvement in the official cabinet and governance of the country. Arif attempted an economic reform program that was socialist in nature and included the nationalization of vital industry's in the country. The economic reforms put forward by the government were essentially a copy of those done by Jamal Abdul Nasser in Egypt. This is widely seen as being conducted, less for genuine economic concerns but as more of a prelude to prepare Iraq's domestic conditions for unification with the UAR. These economic reforms would place strain upon the Iraqi economy setting back much of the economic advancement achieved during the era of Qassim. Upon seeing the scale of the damage done by his policies they were reverted. Beyond these events Arif would not have much time as president of Iraq, he was killed in 1966, around three years from achieving power, in an airplane crash.

Upon the death of Abdulsalam Arif, his brother Abdulrahman Arif would take the position as president of Iraq. Abdulrahman Arif would preside over an increasingly weak and

divided government. The only major achievement during the period from 1966-1968, was the nationalization of Iraq's largest oil field, the Rumaila oil field in the south of the country. In 1968, the increasingly weak and dysfunctional government of Abdulrahman Arif would succumb to a resurgent Ba'ath Party. The next era in Iraqi history would increasingly reflect increased levels of repression and cults of personality, that had been on the rise since the later periods of the Qassim era.

C. The Early Ba'athist Era

      Unlike the previous Ba'ath regime that came to power in 1963, the power behind the 1968 coup and the early years of the government, was from high level Ba'athist officials who made their political careers in the military. The 1968 coup was led by three powerful Ba'ath party members all with backgrounds or positions in the military, they were, Ahmad Hasan Al Bakr, Hardan Al Tikriti, and Saleh Mahdi Awwash.[34] Al Bakr would go on to become the president of Iraq, with Awwash as his vice president and Hardan Al Tikriti becoming Minister of Defense. Two important characteristics would define the new Ba'ath government throughout its lifetime. These namely were the party's turning away from the importance of formal Arab unification in favor of a focus on the interests and political status of Iraq. The rhetoric of Arab unification and solidarity would still play a large role in maintaining the party's popularity both in Iraq and abroad, however. The second important characteristic of the new rule of the Ba'ath party was a new emphasis on tribal ties with the Sunni Arab clans of the northern provinces. Commitment to ideological Ba'athism was no longer deemed as being vital for rising in the ranks of the party or reaching high levels of authority in the government. Tribal ties with the Sunni clans were emphasized upon under the new Ba'ath regime as they were more conducive to

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[34] Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 3rd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 187.

maintaining power and creating a new elite almost entirely based on kinship ties and insulated from the concerns of the wider Iraqi society ensuring the utmost loyalty.

Immediately following the 1968 coup the three leaders of the Ba'ath coup would engage in a power struggle amongst each other in order to emerge as the sole power broker in all of Iraq, with the goal of establishing themselves as the sole ruler similar to Abdul Salam Arif or Qassim. Ahmad Hasan Al Bakr would emerge victorious in this power struggle. Al Bakr's deputy was his tribal kinsman Saddam Hussein. Upon Al Bakr ascension to the position of president following the coup, Saddam was given control over the Ba'ath party and the role of vice president, rather than a cabinet role in the new government. Believing that his path to power lay with Al Bakr, Saddam assisted him in emerging on top in his conflict with Awwash and Hardan Al Tikriti.[35] Almost immediately after the coup Saddam would establish a party militia loyal to himself and to Al Bakr that would go on a mass arrest campaign purging any other political organizations in the country other than that of the Ba'ath party.[36] Furthermore, the government and the military began to be purged of members that were either ideological Ba'athists or whose personal loyalty was deemed lacking. The only party to escape this initial mass purge of potential political rivals by Al Bakr and Saddam was the ICP whose members were initially offered partnership in government, due to the new Ba'athist government's desire to court a relationship with the Soviet Union for the sale of its oil and the procurement of weaponry.

With Al Bakr as president and Saddam given substantial control over the affairs of the party, Saddam began promoting his own close associates into significant positions in the party, particularly seats on the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), the highest decision-making

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[35] Adeed Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation* (Princeton University Press, 2009), 210.

[36] Kanan Makiya, *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq, Updated Edition*, First Edition, With a New Introduction edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 52-70.

apparatus of the party. The domination of the party, the government, and the solicitation of the ICP as partners in government all ensured that Al Bakr and Saddam's faction were in stronger positions than Awwash and Hardan. Two years following the coup, in 1970, Hardan Al Tikriti was stripped of all formal positions, exiled from Iraq and then assassinated in 1971 while in Kuwait. Awwash was stripped of his significant positions in the government and the party and made the ambassador to the Soviet Union. Following the political fall of these two major officials the Ba'ath party would be completely dominated by the figures of Al Bakr and Saddam Hussein. Al Bakr's decision to give control over the majority of party affairs to Saddam Hussein, saw the party increasingly become loyal to Saddam rather than to the president. The Ba'ath party would no longer represent a forum for debate among the different factions of the party but would now simply be an extension of these two leaders' personal authority.

The first major political hurdle for the new Ba'ath government of Al Bakr and Saddam was the power of the Kurdish leader Mustafa Barzani, his increasing political demands regarding Kurdish nationalism, and his ties to Iran. In 1969, Barzani's military forces the Peshmerga attacked Iraqi oil facilities in the Kurdish regions of Iraq, significantly affecting the oil production of the country and forcing the central government into negotiations.[37] The negotiations between Barzani and the government in 1970, seemed to reflect the demands for Kurdish autonomy that Barzani was championing such as the identity of the Kurds as being separate from the Arabs being formally adopted, self-rule over their territories, and larger participation in the central government. The ultimate goal of the central government was that by offering these concessions Barzani would give up his ties to the Iranian government something briefly considered by the KDP. In 1971, Saddam, in charge of negotiations with the Kurds

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[37] Sherko Kirmanj, *Identity and Nation in Iraq* (Boulder, Colorado ; London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2013), 131-133.

reneged on most of the agreed concessions and began to encourage a policy of settling Arab's on historically Kurdish areas in order to shift the demographic of economically favorable territory.[38] The response of Barzani was to maintain his Iranian ties and to begin an armed insurgency against the Iraqi government.

The Iranian government was supportive of Barzani's insurgency in the Kurdish provinces of Iraq. They provided weaponry, training, and at times even a direct Iranian presence in support of the revolt. Iran for its part was suspicious of the new Ba'athist government's intentions particularly over the Khuzestan region and was opportunistic in seeing a chance to rewrite the Iran-Iraq border along the Shatt Al Arab and was fearful of the growing Iraqi-Soviet relationship.[39] The support from Iran prevented the Iraqi military from gaining a decisive edge in the war making them unable to completely defeat Peshmerga forces. The Iraqi government attempted to propose terms for Kurdish autonomy in 1974, which were rejected by Barzani due to his belief in continued Iranian support. As the war dragged on and the relations between Iran-Iraq continued to suffer the two governments entered into political negotiations at Algiers. The Algiers Agreement between Iran and Iraq was not known to the Kurds at the time of its negotiation. The agreement asserted that Iraq would agree to shifting the border of Iran and Iraq along the Shatt Al Arab in favor of Iran on the condition that the Iranians end all support for the Kurdish revolt.[40] Following the end of Iranian support, the Iraqi military was able to win a decisive victory against the KDP, leading to Mustafa Barzani's exile in Iran. Furthermore, the defeat of the revolt, would lead to a major clan in the KDP, the Talabani's, leaving and setting up

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[38] Adeed Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation* (Princeton University Press, 2009) 209-211

[39] Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 3rd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 203-206.

[40] Saadoun Hamadi and Abbas-Ali Khalatbary, "Algiers Agreement 1975," 1975, https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/fullpeace/Iran-Irak%2019751226a.pdf.

their own rival Kurdish organization, the PUK, that would regularly come into conflict with the KDP.

Despite Al Bakr and Saddam's government being less ideological, and more tribal in its character, it was nonetheless a secular regime in both policy and rhetoric. This factor contributed to Shia dissent in addition to Kurdish unrest, that would continue throughout the duration of the regime after 1971, it also contributed to the delegitimization of the regime by the members of the Shia religious elite. Saddam Hussein and Ahmed Al Bakr considered the Shia population of Iraq to be the most dangerous threat to their rule, particularly regarding the strength of the communities' religious elite. In 1969, the first wave of protests organized by the Shia religious elite against the government would occur, in response to an expulsion of Iraqi's of Shia descent, labeled as Iranian, increased restrictions of the religious authority, and the closing of educational institutions under their control. The protests in 1969, found their leader in the form of Ayatollah Muhsin Al Hakim. Al Hakim would become the de facto leader of the Shia community until his death in 1970, whereupon he was replaced by the more extreme Muhammed Baqr Al Sadr.[41] The government found an inability to deal with the rising dissent among the Shia population through the use of force and therefore conducted a strategy of extending their networks of patronage among the Shia in order to cut off the religious elite's base of support from the local population. Significant amounts of Iraq's wealth were transferred to the south directed at individuals and families who would be supportive of the regime and were then brought into government. This strategy of patronage for the Shia south, was successful in maintaining control and obedience from the general public but was a huge strain upon the Iraqi economy.

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[41] Elvire Corboz, *Guardians of Shi'ism: Sacred Authority and Transnational Family Networks* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015).

The relationship that Al Bakr and Saddam had cultivated with the Soviet Union through incorporation of the ICP into the ruling government became vital in dramatically increasing Iraq's direct oil revenues, leading to a significant increase in the size of the Iraqi economy and budget. In 1969, Soviet engineers-built oil pipelines from Iraq's fields to the refineries along the Persian Gulf and assisted the government in direct exploitation of oil fields rather than through the use of the British controlled Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC). This lead Al Bakr and Saddam to have a steady enough revenue from their own sources that they were able to nationalize the IPC without major detrimental effects to the Iraqi economy. Furthermore, in the aftermath of the nationalization, Saddam Hussein would directly travel to the Soviet Union and sign a treaty of cooperation and friendship with the Soviet Union, giving the new Iraqi government a potential superpower ally.[42] Following the cultivation of a direct relationship with the Soviet Union, the ICP would be purged from the Iraqi government and driven underground. The consolidation of total control over the oil resources of Iraq, and the cultivation of a direct relationship between the Ba'ath government and the Soviet Union without the need for ICP mediation gave Al Bakr and Saddam total control over the affairs of Iraq, and supreme power previously unseen by any other leaders of Iraq.

By 1978, Saddam Hussein was president of Iraq in everything, but name and Al Bakr had been relegated to a position that was largely divested of any independent power, everything having to go through Saddam's contacts and relationships. Upon achieving the ability to rule Iraq and set policy without the influence of Al Bakr, Saddam once again set out to purge the Ba'ath party of individuals whose loyalty he felt was lacking and were too ideological for his regime.[43]

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[42] Adeed Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation* (Princeton University Press, 2009), 213.

[43] Adeed Dawisha, "'Identity' and Political Survival in Saddam's Iraq," *Middle East Journal* 53, no. 4 (1999): 553–67.

Furthermore, he sought to alleviate tension with Iraq's main Ba'athist rival, Syria, under the rule of Hafez Al Assad. In doing so he achieved minor success, the two governments agreeing to a political unification deal, that rather than be implemented was done to increase relations. The break in tension between the two countries would be short lived with the rivalry once again coming to the front by the early 1980s.

Following his total consolidation of power in 1979 with the sidelining of Bakr and the purging of the Ba'ath party of his supporters, Saddam began to create the most robust cult of personality in the history of the country. He likened himself to the ancient kings of Babylon, Mesopotamia, and the Abbasid caliphs. He presented himself as being the representative of all Iraqi's regardless of sect or ethnicity, and the institutions of the state, such as schools were forced to conform to this interpretation, teaching of obedience and loyalty to the personality of Saddam Hussein. Notions of an Iraq that had an identity beyond his rule and person were done away with, as were any teachings that were considered to be ideological in nature that could potentially undermine the new cult of Saddam. These changes to the social structure and the national myths surrounding the Iraqi state can be considered to be the Saddamization of the government, and society.[44] The days of formalized ideological conflict that had been typical of Iraqi politics under the monarchy, and the republican era would come to an end upon Saddam's consolidation of absolute power. The ultimate effect of this massive cult of personality revolving around Saddam's person was the strengthening of the patronage system that had been formed following the Ba'ath coup. It ensured the absolute loyalty of government officials, and the economic elite by tying their political and economic futures to that of the cult of Saddam, and allowed for the inclusion of individuals from all sects and ethnicities into the patronage network,

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[44] Sherko Kirmanj, *Identity and Nation in Iraq* (Boulder, Colorado ; London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2013), 137-140.

as the main concern of the regime was now obedience to the absolute ruler rather than the establishment of an ideological elite.[45]

The late 70s presented a major challenge for Saddam's government. The most threatening development by far was the increasing instability of the Shah's regime in Iran and the effects that the Islamist movement in the country was having upon the local Shia religious-political leadership in Iraq. Ayatollah Khomeini, the most powerful figure of Shia Islamist resistance to the Shah's government was based in Iraq in 1978, following his emigration out of Iran. The Shah's government demanded that he be expelled from the country, a request that the Ba'ath government was happy to oblige due to its nervousness over the effect of his presence on their own Shia population. The Iraqi government did not stop there however, and immediately went about on a massive repression campaign of the main Shia dissident political party, the Al Dawa.[46] His expulsion would not mean the end of resistance to the Shah by Islamists in Iran and in 1979 his government was overthrown, and the Islamic Republic of Iran was formed by Ayatollah Khomeini. The fall of the Shah's regime would fundamentally alter the politics of the region. In particular the revolution upset the stability of the Persian Gulf region most vital to Iraq. The Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979 was not only an Islamic regime, the natural enemy of Saddam's secular state but was also revolutionary. The new regime in Iran saw the Iraqi regime as a moral abomination and an unworkable partner. On the part of Iraq, Saddam saw the Iranian government as being vulnerable following the revolution, the purges to the Iranian military by Khomeini as weakening its security forces and held irredentist claims over the Shatt Al Arab territory lost in the Algiers treaty. These political forces would combine to lead to the largest war

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[45] Kanan Makiya, *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq, Updated Edition*, First Edition, With a New Introduction edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 110.

[46] Yamao Dao, "Transformation of the Islamic Da'wa Party in Iraq: From the Revolutionary Period to the Diaspora Era," *Asian and African Area Studies, Kyoto University*, 2008, 1–32.

in the history of the region, and permanently weaken the foundations upon which Saddam

Hussein had built his state.

Chapter 2: Saddam's Iraq

This chapter begins followings Saddam's complete consolidation of power in the Ba'ath

Party and explores the events in Iraq as he reshaped the country in his image. Saddam turned Iraq

into a regional military power and would prosecute two foreign wars, draining the country's

resources and establishing Iraq as an international pariah. Saddam conducted repression against

the Shia and Kurds in the country unprecedented in Iraq's history. It is under these conditions

that organized resistance to the Ba'ath party became relevant to international powers. Saddam's

actions ultimately led to international sanctions devastating the country's economy and

eventually the invasion and direct occupation of the country by the United States in 2003.

A. The Iran-Iraq War

The start of the Iran-Iraq War by Saddam in 1980 gave rise to another form of active Shia

resistance, most notably transforming it into a transnational movement. In addition to Iraqi Shia

deportations earlier in the country's history, many Shia had been deported under Saddam to Iran

during the 1970s. By the early 1980s, Saddam's war effort against the Islamic Republic of Iran

gave rise to a powerful Shia Islamist opposition in exile. Among the regional countries especially

the Arab states of the Persian Gulf and Syria to which many Shia had also fled, Iran was the only

state to allow Iraqi Shia to militarize.[47] The most important Iraqi Shia leaders who made their

way to Iran in the 1980s were the sons of Muhsin al Hakim, Mahdi and Muhammad Baqir Al-

Hakim. The movement sponsored by them with Iranian Revolutionary Guard support was the

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[47] Nader Uskowi, *Temperature Rising: Iran's Revolutionary Guards and Wars in the Middle East* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2018), 19-20.

Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) formed in 1982. This was an important

move for Iran as SCIRI backed Iran, including the political concept of Wilayat Al Faqih, the idea

that the highest Shia religious authority, also constituted the highest political authority and

represented a path forward sponsored by God until the return of the Mahdi. The Iranian

Revolutionary Guard offered military support to fight the Ba'ath government through training

and the direct assistance of the IRGC.[48] An important Shia military brigade was formed by the

SCIRI, the Badr Corps. This militia participated in regular guerrilla like tactics throughout the

Iran-Iraq War. The Badr Corps was largely conscripted from exiles and also from the many Iraqi

prisoners of war taken by Iran which were by and large rank and file Shia soldiers. During the

Iran Iraq war, the Al Dawa party was outlawed by Saddam but distanced itself from SCIRI. By

the late 1980s it was made up of many professionals, technocrats and ideologues not clerically or

militarily based. The outbreak of the war was a net gain for these Iraqi dissident and exile

groups, being able to receive greater funding, support, and assistance in creating armed

resistance against the Ba'ath regime.

Kurdish resistance to Saddam's government also resurged during the leadup to the Iran-

Iraq War and continued throughout. The resistance against the government would end with the

Al Anfal Campaign, the genocide of the Iraqi Kurds by the Iraqi military. Following the end of

open rebellion in the mid-1970s with the signing of the Algiers Agreement, the Ba'ath regime

began an even more oppressive program of active Arabization of the Kurdish region including

deportation, displacement, executions and resettlement of Arabs in Kurdish areas. Hundreds of

thousands were exiled mainly to Iran and Syria.[49] The result of this program primarily, focused

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[48] Nader Uskowi, *Temperature Rising: Iran's Revolutionary Guards and Wars in the Middle East* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2018), 20-27.

[49] Sherko Kirmanj, *Identity and Nation in Iraq* (Boulder, Colorado ; London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2013), 150-154.

in the oil rich areas of Kirkuk province and Mosul was the displacement of the Kurds and the creation of a new Arab majority. During this Arabization program in the 1970s, the Kurds who had fled or were exiled especially to Syria and Iran formed new opposition groups. One of the most important was the founding of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) under Jalal Talabani whose tribe was historically a powerful proponent of Kurdish nationalism.[50] The Talabani family who had previously been members of the KDP until the failed rebellion decided to defect and establish the PUK. The KDP of Barzani and the PUK of Talabani held differing ideological and nationalist positions on Kurdistan and open war between them continued from about 1975 to 1986. Any attempts by the KDP especially during the fighting to negotiate autonomy with Saddam's regime came to nothing because of territorial disputes on delineation of the borders of the Kurdish region. These unresolved issues further lead to a more active stance and opposition to the Ba'ath government by the Kurds and a Ba'athist program of extreme brutality against the Kurds.

The Al Anfal Campaign involved several stages and lasted from 1987-1989 towards the end of the Iran Iraq War. The early period involved the taxing of villages and the restriction of Kurds to limited areas. This was followed by the massacre of between 50,000 and 1000,000 civilians in 1988 through the use of chemical weapons.[51] The city of Halabja became the symbol of Saddam's use of chemicals against the Iraqi population. The Al Anfal Campaign became a symbol of Saddam's war crimes, and genocide. Despite the excessive brutality of the Al Anfal Campaign the Ba'ath government was unable to completely break the resurgent Kurdish forces,

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[50] Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 3rd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 205.
[51] "GENOCIDE IN IRAQ: The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds (Human Rights Watch Report, 1993)," accessed May 2, 2019, https://www.hrw.org/reports/1993/iraqanfal/.

with the Peshmerga maintaining control over much of the areas of northern Kurdistan and areas

that had not been subject to large amounts of demographic change.[52]

In the run up to the war with Iran, Saddam was extremely confident in his position to

win. His government was confident in its strong ties to the Soviet Union and was aware of the

Western governments, particularly the US's hostility to the new regime in Iran. In this regard

Saddam's government correctly believed that an attack on Iran would not draw much

international backlash against him. Among Saddam's inner circle there was a perception that the

revolution had left Iran politically unstable and that the beginning of war against them would

lead to the fall of the regime ending the Shia Islamic revolution.[53] These changes in the

international environment and the relative power of Iran vis-a-vi Iraq, gave Saddam's

government a high degree of confidence in their ability to win a war with Iran. Besides for the

weakness that Iraq perceived in Iran, Saddam had become highly confident in the abilities of his

own military. His strategic partnership with the Soviet Union had given him access to some of

the most advanced military hardware available for export, and the implementation of universal

conscription in 1979, in response to unrest in the Shia and Kurdish provinces had swollen the

ranks of the military. It was under this set of political assumptions that Iraq would declare war

upon the Islamic Republic of Iran in September 1980.

Saddam's initial plan for the war was to conduct a general offensive and occupy as much

Iranian land as possible, focusing as much as he could on oil rich areas of the south. He believed

that the quick defeat of the local forces in these areas and the occupation of the land before the

majority of the Iranian military could be mobilized would lead to the Iranian government seeking

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[52] Adeed Dawisha, "W(h)Ither Iraq?," in *Iraq*, A Political History (Princeton University Press, 2009), 275–90, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt24hr44.15.
[53] Pierre Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*, trans. Nicholas Elliott, Translation edition (Harvard University Press, 2015), 45-50.

negotiations for peace.[54] These assumptions were a miscalculation on the part of Saddam and his government. Saddam's offensive was not particularly decisive and was only able to occupy the towns of Abadan and Khorramshahr before being ground to a halt. The Iraqi army found itself incapable of mounting effective assaults against major population centers. The Iranian government perceived the attacks as existential threats to the revolution and refused to negotiate with the Iraqi government. Upon the mobilization of the Iranian army, and a newly formed Revolutionary Guard the war ground to a stalemate with the Iraqi army being unable to move deeper into Iranian territory.

The war remained a stalemate until 1982, when the Iranian military conducted a counter offensive against Iraq. This counter attack would lead to Saddam generally being on the defensive until the end of the war in 1988, and the events of the offensive would undermine the foundations of the Iraqi state, particularly regarding Saddam's control over officers in the military and regarding the sustainability of the patronage network that had been built since the Ba'ath coup.[55] The counter offensive led to the Iraqi military being expelled from all vital Iranian territory that had been occupied and the war being brought to Iraqi soil. It is at this point in which the war becomes extremely costly for the Iraqi regime. As the defending power, and a revolutionary regime, justification for the continued prosecution of the war at this point was not particularly jeopardizing to the Iranian government. However, for the Iraqi government, the counter offensive, the inability to get Iran to negotiate and the increasing costs in both lives and on the economy shed doubt on Saddam's decision to go to war. In the two years that the war had

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[54] Pierre Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*, trans. Nicholas Elliott, Translation edition (Harvard University Press, 2015), 45-50.
[55] Abbas Alnasrawi, "Economic Consequences of the Iraq-Iran War," *Third World Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (1986): 869–95.

been going on Iraq went from being a creditor country to being around $30 billion in debt.[56] In 1980, Saddam decreed that all strategic decisions regarding the war would have to go through the highest levels of the political leadership, namely the RCC. The counter offensive of 1982, and the erratic decision making of Saddam on military affairs led to a strain between the officer corps and the political leadership that would not be resolved until extremely late in the war. Saddam and the officers did agree on one goal however, namely that the occupation of Iranian territory and revising the terms of the Algiers Agreement were no longer priorities. The survival of Saddam's regime became the main priority in continuing the war.

In response to the large Iranian counter offensive, Iraq conducted purchases of military equipment, not only from the Soviet Union but also from Western governments such as France, the US, and the United Kingdom. These purchases included the precursor materials necessary for the creation of chemical and biological weapons.[57] The war was taking its toll on the finances of the government and many of these purchases were bankrolled by the Arab states of the Gulf such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The war on the ground by 1983-1984 saw neither side being able to make significant gains. Saddam therefore altered his strategy in an attempt to get Iran to agree to an end to the war. Among the purchases of Iraqi government beginning in 1982, was the acquisition of ballistic missiles. Saddam's new strategy was to use these missiles to strike directly at Iranian cities in the hope that inflicting pain on the Iranian public would pressure the government into ending the war. The result was opposite of the intent, with Iran striking Iraqi cities in return raising the costs for the Iraqi government. Soon these bombings extended away from cities and towards oil facilities to reduce each other's economic potential to continue the

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[56] Ibid, 869-95
[57] Rachel Schmidt, "Global Arms Exports to Iraq," *RAND*, accessed April 20, 2020, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/notes/2009/N3248.pdf.

war.[58] Iran did not limit its strikes to only Iraqi oil facilities, extending them to Iraq's Gulf allies in particular against Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. This decision led to direct American involvement in 1987, with the US navy protecting Gulf Arab oil tankers, destroying Iranian oil infrastructure and destroying what remained of Iran's surface fleet.

The end of the war led to no major changes in territory held by either Iraq or Iran. Neither country was able to achieve its goal. Saddam was unable to achieve his annexation of oil rich areas in Iran's south, nor topple the revolutionary government. The Iranians were unable to topple the Ba'athist government or occupy Basra, one of their main strategic concerns. Iran however did receive a powerful political tool that would come to play a major role in Iraq in the post-2003 era. The Al Dawa party and other Iraqi Shia dissidents fled the country as a result of increased repression during the war. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard would train the Iraqi dissidents into organized political entities, that included their own armed militias. During the course of the Iran-Iraq War they would make little progress on the ground but the power vacuum at the end of the Saddam era would provide the opportunity they needed.[59] The amount of resources lost in the course of the war was immense for both sides. The once thriving Iraqi economy was in ruins and the drafting of at least a million men into the armed forces had taken its toll on the Iraqi labor force. Furthermore, the oil infrastructure had been reduced to ruins by Iranian air and rocket attacks. Despite the end of the war economic recovery would be almost nonexistent, reduced oil proceeds meant a longer path to recovery whereas the costs for maintenance of the large patronage system, and the administration of the state were always increasing. In this regard, following the war Saddam would drop his system of patronage almost

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[58] Pierre Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*, trans. Nicholas Elliott, Translation edition (Harvard University Press, 2015), 302-319

[59] Nader Uskowi, *Temperature Rising: Iran's Revolutionary Guards and Wars in the Middle East* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2018), 25-26

entirely extending it only to his family members and inner circle, and began to rely almost entirely on military repression to maintain power. Between 1988 and 1990, Saddam faced a trilemma of interrelated issues, stemming from the failure of the economy, increasing unrest among marginalized ethnic and sectarian groups, and a mobilized million-and-a-half-man army that had no objective.[60]

B. The Post-War Period and the Invasion of Kuwait

Attempts were made by Saddam to initiate an economic recovery program following the war, focused mainly on debt relief, and economic liberalization. The policy did not end in success and led to the creation of additional economic and social problems. Economic problems brought with it social strain among the ethnic, and sectarian groups. This unrest was suppressed by Saddam's police state in the case of the Kurds, and through a combination of co-option and repression among the Iraqi Shia.[61] As the war ended the viability of these solutions began to deteriorate, particularly among the Iraqi Shia, whose financial incentives and patronage began to become economically unsustainable. In regard to the military, there was an attempt at demobilization, however it soon became apparent following a period of rioting of demobilized soldiers, that demobilization would be impossible due to the debilitating economic effects that it would have.[62] Another outlet was needed that would be capable of managing the needs of the vast military prior to a full economic recovery of Iraq.

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[60] Abbas Alnasrawi, "Economic Consequences of the Iraq-Iran War," *Third World Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (1986): 869–95
[61] Charles Tripp, "The Consequences of the Iran-Iraq War for Iraqi Politics," in *The Iran-Iraq War: Impact and Implications*, ed. Efraim Karsh (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1989), 58–77, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-20050-4_5.
[62] Kilic Kanat, "Diversionary Foreign Policy in Authoritarian States: The Use of Multiple Diversionary Strategies by Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War," *Journal of Strategic Security* 7 (March 1, 2014): 16–32, https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.7.1.2.

Despite the clear concerns regarding the military, Saddam's main concern was the state of the Iraqi economy. His government became increasingly worried that if the economic situation remained stagnant more opportunities would present themselves for resistance to their rule and an increased likelihood their government would be swept away. Saddam's initial economic recovery program was a failure. Investors were wary of putting their money into a country that had just come out of a major war and where property rights were almost meaningless. The only results to come of the privatization program was massive inflation and the enrichment of a few individuals at the top of the social ladder.[63] Furthermore, Iraq's recovery was held back due to the vast amounts of loans that Iraq had outstanding, particularly to the Gulf states of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, reaching the tens of billions of dollars. Following the failure of the privatization program the Iraqi government came to the conclusion that the only path to economic recovery would be through a global increase in the price of oil, something they sought to negotiate with OPEC through the use of production quotas. Additionally, Saddam petitioned the governments of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to write off the debt that Iraq owed them in its entirety, and that they should give additional infusions of capital in order to help rebuild Iraq. These demands were immediately rejected.

Iraq's failure to receive concessions from both OPEC and the neighboring Gulf countries led to Saddam increasingly contemplating the use of force to achieve what he could not through negotiations. Saddam's army at the end of the Iran-Iraq War was one of the most powerful in the region and among the largest in the world. This fact led Saddam to believe he could deal with his economic woes and establish Iraq as the clear political leader of the Arab world in one decisive maneuver. Saddam decided the use his vast military to invade neighboring Kuwait, writing off

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[63] Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 3rd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 239-244.

any debt owed to the country, and using it as a threat to gain political concessions from the rest of the Gulf states.[64] Additionally, the large oil reserves of Kuwait would allow the Iraqi economy to rebuild itself. In taking such a bold action Saddam had to be sure that no interference from the Western powers, particularly the US would occur. Saddam personally visited the American ambassador, April Glaspie, to gain insight on the American perspective of an Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Leaving the meeting Saddam felt confident that an Iraqi invasion of Kuwait would not trigger an American military response, ordering his military to invade the country on the 2nd August 1990.

The international response to the invasion and annexation of Kuwait was not as acquiescent as the Iraqi government had assumed before embarking on their invasion. They found themselves condemned in both the Arab League and the United Nations, and formal sanctions were brought against Iraq preventing them from reliably exporting their oil. Additionally, the invasion did not lead to Saudi Arabia accepting political concessions as the Iraqi government had assumed and had instead led to the Saudi government asking the United States for military assistance in defending their country against the Iraqi military and the liberation of Kuwait from Iraqi occupation. The United States accepted on both matters. The Americans demanded that Iraq cease its aggression and remove its forces from Kuwait through the use of the UN, while at the same time stationing half a million men in Saudi Arabia in the case of Iraqi non-compliance, and built an international coalition to support a military campaign to liberate Kuwait should Iraq not comply. The UN's Resolution 678 stated that should the Iraqi military not withdraw from Kuwait by 15th January 1991, military force would be used to

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[64] Amatzia Raban and Barry Rubin, *Iraq's Road to War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996).

remove them.[65] Saddam did not withdraw his forces and the military campaign to liberate Kuwait, Desert Storm, was conducted. The Iraqi military collapsed in around four days from their positions in Kuwait unable to deal with the technological advantage of the US military. On the 28th of February Kuwait was liberated from Iraqi forces. The coalitions forces pushed into southern Iraq, but were ordered by the American president, George HW Bush, to withdraw as toppling the regime was beyond the mandate of the coalition and not in the American interest. They did however conduct a campaign of incitement, encouraging the local Iraqi's to revolt against the regime.

Following the Iraqi failure in annexing Kuwait, Saddam was beset by the largest rebellion against his rule since the Ba'ath party came to power in 1968. The defeat of the Iraqi military by the Coalition forces in Operation Desert Storm lead to the beginning of the disintegration of the power of the Iraqi state in the Kurdish provinces of the north. The primary characteristic of the uprisings was their sectarian and ethnic identity, and their opposition to the continued rule of Saddam Hussein.[66] The Shia revolts were spurred by the years of oppression under the Ba'athist rule, the end of the patronage system's extension to their communities and were largely conducted against the Iraqi Republican Guard. Significant numbers of Iraqi soldiers from the regular wings of the military, the majority of them being Shia, deserted and participated in the revolt against the government. The rebellion was brought under Saddam's control through violence, collective punishment and retaliation conducted mainly by the Republican Guard against the Shia regions which further splintered the society.

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[65] "Security Council Resolution 678 - UNSCR," accessed April 20, 2020, http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/678.
[66] Elaine Sciolino (New York Times), "AFTER THE WAR; Iraq's Shiite Majority: A Painful History of Revolt and Schism," *The New York Times*, March 30, 1991, sec. World, https://www.nytimes.com/1991/03/30/world/after-the-war-iraq-s-shiite-majority-a-painful-history-of-revolt-and-schism.html.

In the immediate aftermath of Desert Storm, Iran did not overtly support the rebellion of the southern provinces against Saddam. A small group of SCIRI fighters did join the revolt hailing Muhammad Baqir Al-Hakim as leader. Iran did not give outright support the rebellion as the presence of Iraqi based opposition groups in Iran led to the Islamic Republic to diplomatically restore relations between the two countries with the agreement that neither polity would promote dissent internally. The United States likewise did not attempt to give significant support to the rebellions feeling that the end of the Saddam regime in its entirety was a liability and provided no direct benefit to the concerns of the United States. The Coalition limited itself to the provision of a no-fly zone over areas in southern and northern Iraq which were rebelling against the government. This no-fly zone only covered the operation of fixed wing aircraft and did not cover the use of helicopters, which were used extensively to the advantage of Saddam's government, allowing him to eventually put down the rebellions by the end of the year.

It was during this period of rebellion under which the two Kurdish political movements the PUK and the KDP established the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), a unified political apparatus that would govern the territories of Iraqi Kurdistan. The KRG would maintain itself following the Saddam era and its relationship with the central government of contemporary Iraq is a vital aspect of modern Iraqi politics and national dialogue.[67] Following the popular revolts in the south of Iraq among the Iraqi Shia, the Kurdish Peshmerga went on an offensive in northern Iraq taking over the major towns and cities except for Mosul and Kirkuk. To prevent a repeat of the Al Anfal, campaign a no-fly zone over the northern provinces was announced by the Coalition as well. Despite this no-fly zone and the generally more organized rebellion of the Kurds in comparison to their Shia counterparts, the rebellion was put down by the Republican

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[67] Sherko Kirmanj, *Identity and Nation in Iraq* (Boulder, Colorado ; London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2013), 209-218.

Guard units, expelling Kurdish forces from all major cities and towns, and occupying Erbil the center of Iraqi Kurdistan. Despite this Saddam came to an agreement with the KDP, allowing the establishment of the Kurdish Regional Government and self-rule for the Kurds under Iraqi sovereignty.[68] Upon signing this deal the Iraqi military evacuated Kurdistan, allowing tensions between the KDP and PUK to resurface. Following an inconclusive election in the region in 1992, the two parties would engage in a war until 1996 that had no clear victor, only ending after American mediation.

C. The Sanctions Era

Following the rebellions of 1991, and the establishment of the no-fly zones by members of the international coalition, Iraq would be subjected to sanctions which crippled the Iraqi economy. These sanctions were put forward by the UN security council which stated they would be lifted only after Iraq had committed itself to the list of demands put forward by the UN.[69] In particular these were to give recognition of the state of Kuwait, to pay war reparations to the country, and to open all sites in Iraq that were used in the development of nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons to UN inspectors (UNSCOM) so that any remaining arsenal may be destroyed. It was also implied that failure to comply with the demands of the UN would lead to military action by the members of the Coalition to force compliance. Only after the UN deemed that Iraq had sufficiently complied with the demands of the security council would UN sanctions over Iraq be lifted.

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[68] Sherko Kirmanj, *Identity and Nation in Iraq* (Boulder, Colorado ; London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2013), 181-185.

[69] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Security Council Resolution 687 on Iraq-Kuwait," UNHCR, accessed April 20, 2020, https://www.unhcr.org/subsites/iraqcrisis/3e6877de4/security-council-resolution-687-iraq-kuwait.html.

The destruction of the civilian infrastructure in the Iran-Iraq War and the Gulf War, combined with the effects of sweeping sanctions by the UN led to mass shortages among the Iraqi public leading to outbreaks of disease, malnutrition, and the failure of electrical and water purification systems around the country.[70] The Iraqi government was unable to deal with these issues due to its inability to export oil on the international market. This also meant it was unable to make its payments both on debt accrued during the Iran-Iraq War and in war reparations demanded by the UN security council. The successive failures of Iraq to make good on its payments and the deteriorating situation among the Iraqi public led to the establishment of the Oil for Food Program by the UN in 1995.[71] The Oil for Food Program allowed Iraq to sell oil every six months at a fixed amount, one that increased year to year, under the direct supervision of the UN. The profits gained from sales would first be used by the UN to pay off war reparations, fund its UNSCOM staff, and pay the KRG, only then would remaining profits be given to the Iraqi government.[72] The Iraqi government was then permitted to use these funds to purchase food stuffs and medicine for the Iraqi public under supervision of the UN. Iraq's government found this program to be convenient in circumventing UN sanctions. The oil for food program would be used to offer large contracts to foreign entities and individuals in Iraqi oil exports, in exchange for a percentage of the profits going back to the Iraqi government. The main participants in this scheme following the release of Iraqi government documents in 2004 were the security council members of Russia and France. The program essentially allowed Iraq to once again become a major oil exporter and frustrated the ability for the United States to weaken

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[70] Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 3rd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 250-254
[71] "Security Council Resolution 986 - UNSCR," accessed April 20, 2020, http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/986.
[72] Adeed Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation* (Princeton University Press, 2009), 235-240

the Iraqi government through the use of sanctions with the hope that it would lead to the end of his government. The Iraqi government believed that the new relationships with France and Russia would eventually lead to the end of sanctions by the UN and the reemergence of Iraq into the world stage.[73] By 1998, the Iraqi government had once again opened its oil pipeline through Syria and had negotiated oil reexport deals with Iran. These events coupled with the oil for food program's development of illegal international oil contracts ensured that the Ba'ath government would not be cut off from a source of revenue, allowing Saddam to maintain his smaller patronage networks that kept the state together and government and economic elites loyal to him. On the other hand, it became clear to the UN that the sanctions in place disproportionally affected the Iraqi general public.

During the sanctions period in Iraq two secular political organizations would develop who opposed the rule of Saddam Hussein and sought the end of the regime. These two organizations were the Iraqi National Congress (INC), and the Iraqi National Accord (INA). For a time, these organizations would represent an alternative to the Shia Islamist opposition groups which were based out of Iran. The INC and the INA initially based their opposition movements out of Western countries and collaborated with Western governments, most importantly the United States to bring down the regime in Iraq.[74] The INC was established in 1992 and was led by the Iraqi banker Ahmed Chalabi. The INC was not a party in its own right but was a unification of various Iraqi opposition groups that included the KDP, PUK, and even some Islamist parties. Chalabi's leadership would be too weak to reconcile the differences between the different opposition parties and the group would be almost completely destroyed in 1996 with

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[73] Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 3rd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 250-254
[74] Adeed Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation* (Princeton University Press, 2009)

the KDP leaving and Iraqi troops capturing and executing much of the groups leadership still remaining in Iraq.[75] The INC would retain its relevance due to Chalabi's influence in Washington and many in the Pentagon saw him as a reliable partner on Iraq. The INA on the other hand was an organization that brought together dissident Ba'athists, and Arab nationalists opposed to the familial rule of Saddam Hussein and his patronage system. The INA was led by an ex-Ba'athist, Eyad Allawi, who sought to bring about the end of the regime from within. The organization was attractive to non-sectarian elements of the society and attractive among Sunni's despite being led by a Shia. The INA attempted infiltrate the regime in the 90s but was caught and decimated. The failures of the INC and INA during the mid-90s coupled with an inability of UN sanctions to significantly weaken Saddam's political hold of the country made any end to the regime from inside the country highly unlikely. These failures would contribute to the change in American strategy towards Iraq beginning in 1998.

The United States fully committed to unilateral measures in achieving the end of the Saddam regime in 1998, through the passage of the Iraq Liberation Act. International measures conducted through the UN designed to contain the WMD program of Iraq, and the sanctions regime to pressure it into compliance with the demands of the UN were deemed to be ineffective and inefficient in meeting American foreign policy goals in the region. The Iraq Liberation Act was the beginning of the policy of direct American action to remove Saddam Hussein and the Ba'ath party from power. The Iraq Liberation Act sought to achieve this through indirect means, namely through the release of significant funding to the American approved Iraqi opposition movements. These indirect means conducted through the 1998 Act were unable to make progress in bringing down the regime. Saddam's government remained resilient and the Iraqi opposition

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[75] Sherko Kirmanj, *Identity and Nation in Iraq* (Boulder, Colorado ; London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2013), 187-189

remained weak in its ability to affect outcomes in Iraq. Furthermore, Iraq's burgeoning

relationship with France and Russia, along with no evidence of a continued WMD program

found by UNSCOM made it increasingly likely that Iraq would eventually have its pariah status

on the world stage diminish. The achievement of "international rehabilitation" by Iraq was

increasingly seen by the US as a challenge to the credibility of American power.

In late 1999, the mandate for UNSCOM to continue inspections in Iraq regarding its

WMD program ended. This sparked concern among some security council members, namely the

United States and the United Kingdom. A new resolution was passed following the expiration of

inspections that would renew them under a new organization, the UN Monitoring, Verification,

and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC). Support for the continuation of inspections was not as

strong as it was following the Gulf War in the early 90s. The Ba'ath regime, aware of this

apprehension initially refused to allow UNMOVIC to conduct inspections until the UN removed

all sanctions that were placed on the country. The United States perceived this as being a sign

that the Iraqi government had once again restarted its WMD programs, with the greatest concern

being its nuclear program. The refusal of the Iraqi government to allow the inspectors back into

the country and the ambiguous nature on the status of their WMD program led to voices in the

United States demanding greater action, one that would involve the use of military. The move

towards war was initially championed by members of the Republican party who would win the

presidency in 2000.

The election of George Bush to the American presidency in 2000, saw the drafting of the

plans for the invasion of Iraq. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the plans for invasion would

be justified to the world as concern for the security of the United States due to the nature of

Iraq's WMD program and a necessity in securing American interests across the globe to enhance

their own security. By mid-2002 it became increasingly clear in the UN that the United States

was planning an invasion of Iraq, this led to the reversal of Iraq's previous position of denying

access to UN inspectors and a diplomatic outreach by Iraq to other regional countries such as

Saudi Arabia. By December 2002, the inspections teams had finished their reports on Iraq and

found no evidence that Iraq had maintained or advanced any form of WMD program. The US

had no intention of halting its invasion plans, citing the UN findings as unreliable. The US had

already secured the support of the United Kingdom, Spain, Australia, Italy, Poland and others to

invade and occupy Iraq. The US pushed for a mandate from the UN that would give them the

legal mandate to invade but were denied due to the spurious nature of American claims. The US

went ahead without a UN mandate and on March 20th, 2003 began the invasion of Iraq to

overthrow Saddam Hussein, bring an end to the Ba'ath party, and dismantle its WMD program.

Chapter 3: The Post-Saddam Era

The post-Saddam era established the rule of sectarianism in Iraq. The failure of the

Americans to establish a nation building process led to the dominance of sectarian political

actors in the new Iraqi government. A new system was built that prioritized the political

importance of sectarian identity in the country, leading the Shia to become the dominant force in

the country. A deterioration of sectarian relations between the Sunni's and Shia's in Iraq would

occur concurrently with a drift towards authoritarianism under the Prime Minister Nouri Al

Maliki. Ultimately this dynamic would lead to the rise of extremist groups in the Sunni provinces

and outright rejection of the new Iraqi state.

A. Invasion and American Occupation

The U.S invasion brought down the Ba'athist government with remarkable speed. The U.S

military began the invasion from bases in Kuwait on March 20th, 2003 and captured Baghdad on

April 9th. The U.S conducted the invasion of Iraq with around 175,000 men, a number far less than what was recommended by numerous American commanders as plans for the invasion were being drawn up.[76] Generally, there was an agreement between most commanders that the ideal number would have been between 300,000 to 500,000. The 175,000 used in the invasion initially appeared to have proved these commanders wrong with the speedy fall of the Ba'ath regime. However, it soon became apparent that this number was insufficient to maintain order in the country in the immediate aftermath of the governments collapse.

During the immediate period following the end of Saddam's government disorder prevailed in Iraq. Government buildings such as ministries, schools, hospitals, cultural sites, and other areas were looted for anything of value without deterrence from the coalition troops. The coalition's troops made very little attempts to guard these areas or to maintain order throughout the country. In most provinces around the country troops from the coalition did not maintain a significant presence and in some places, they were entirely absent. The Coalition decided that the security of its own troops was of the highest priority and that following the fall of the government the majority of the soldiers should be moved into bases rather than attempt to maintain order amongst the populace in Iraq.

The post-invasion political environment of Iraq was an issue that the Pentagon paid little attention to, being more focused on the development and execution of a plan for invasion of the country. It was only in January 2003, that the Pentagon decided a separate department to deal with the post-invasion environment was necessary, creating the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA). This department was led by an ex-military officer Jay Garner. Garner set two goals for the governance of Iraq following the invasion. Namely these were to

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[76] "Losing Iraq," FRONTLINE, 2014, accessed April 20, 2020.

attract as many administrators from the old regime as possible, allowing them to keep their

positions and salaries in order to keep the state apparatus going, and to set up local councils

where Iraqi's would debate the future and find amongst their communities the next generation of

political leadership. Garner's office was unable to achieve any of these objectives due to the

chaotic situation in Iraq in the aftermath of invasion, neglect by the Pentagon, and a constantly

evolving set of agendas in Washington over the future of Iraq.

Garner would only remain in his post for about a month before it was decided that the

Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), would be established as an interim government directly

managed by the U.S until they deemed that Iraq was ready for self-rule. The CPA would be led

by L. Paul Bremer who while an experienced diplomat had no experience regarding the Middle

East or the socio-political climate of Iraq. Early into his tenure as head of the CPA, Bremer made

two major decisions that had a profound effect on the development of a new Iraq. Bremer's two

orders were the dissolution of the Iraqi military, and the outlawing of the Ba'ath party preventing

its members, no matter their position in the old regime, from participating in the formation of

new governance and public life in general.[77] These orders released hundreds of thousands of

armed Iraqi soldiers back into society without pay and brought new grievances against the

Americans and the new system. These disgruntled Iraqi soldiers would be the fuel for an

increasingly organized insurgency developing against the American occupation and the new

system. Additionally, the ban on Ba'ath party members participating in public life prevented a

significant number of skilled individuals from being involved in the reformation of government.

Under Saddam's regime access to public goods and the allocation of jobs in the public sector was

often tied to being a member of the Ba'ath party. These restrictions made becoming a member of

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[77] Toby Dodge, *Iraq - From War to a New Authoritarianism*, 1st edition (London: Routledge, 2013), 76-80.

the Ba'ath party almost a vital goal for non-ideological but practical reasons. Preventing those individuals from involvement in public affairs and the reformation of government restricted the ability for the CPA to find skilled Iraqi individuals able to keep the ministries and old apparatus of the state working so that they could maintain order in Iraq.

The inability of the Americans to find local leadership in the country was the perfect opportunity for various Iraqi opposition groups to return to the country and attempt to insert themselves at the core of the newly forming system. The Iraqi dissident groups supported by the US while in exile, the INC and the INA, returned with American troops to Iraq following the occupation of Baghdad. Despite their popularity in Washington, Chalabi and Allawi, had little support among most Iraqi's and their support networks did not run deep. Shia Islamist groups such as the SCIRI and the Al Dawa party returned from Iran following the American invasion, seeing opportunity with the Ba'ath regime gone to advance an Islamist agenda. The SCIRI and the Al Dawa party had significant local support in the areas of southern Iraq among the Shia population. This support and the large population of Shia in the country made them possible to ignore for the Americans and they would be included in the CPA's, Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), an advisory body to the CPA that would be composed of major Iraqi social and political leaders to give a domestic appearance to the interim government and create a pool of potential candidates for a coming Iraqi democracy.

B. The Transition to Local Administration

Bremer decided that the IGC should be a reflection of the ethnosectarian divisions existing in the country. The IGC was made up of 13 Shia, five Sunni Arabs, five Kurds, and two to represent Turkmen and Assyrians. The intent of this measure was to have adequate representation for all of Iraq's major social groups after the almost continuous suppression of

Kurdish and Shia politics in the Saddam era. The result of the measure fell far short of what was intended, rather it began the process of institutionalizing ethnosectarian governance in Iraq in the contemporary era.[78] During the period of CPA governance, the IGC would draft an interim constitution known as the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), which assured citizens of basic rights provided under democratic governance such as freedom of speech, religion, and the press.

By early 2004, the coalition forces found themselves dealing with a large-scale insurgency, sparked initially by the De-Ba'athification procedures conducted by Paul Bremer. Furthermore, the President and his administration in Washington wanted to be done with the occupation of Iraq as fast as possible hoping to see it transform into a democracy friendly to the United States.[79] These two factors placed strain on the CPA, pressuring them to transfer sovereignty to the IGC earlier than what was originally planned. Originally scheduled for the 30th of June 2004, the transfer of sovereignty occurred two days earlier and without publicity representative of the fear and uncontrolled nature of the insurgency during this time. The IGC dissolved itself in June and formed a government under the leadership of Eyad Allawi.

Allawi retained the ethnosectarrian structure that was typical of the IGC. His government would be a caretaker government, expected to retain order, stability, and the provision of rights guaranteed by the TAL, as the country underwent its transition period. Elections were scheduled for January 2005 which would produce the democratically elected government and parliament who would draft the new Iraqi constitution and place it up for referendum. Allawi's government's ability to maintain order and stability in the country was as limited as the ability of

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[78] Toby Dodge, *Iraq - From War to a New Authoritarianism*, 1st edition (London: Routledge, 2013), 40-48.
[79] Adeed Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation* (Princeton University Press, 2009), 245-246.

the CPA. In the Sunni regions of Western Iraq, a large-scale insurgency was being conducted with the city of Fallujah as its center. The insurgency no longer remained limited to disgruntled Ba'athists unhappy over the De-Ba'athification program but was attracting foreign jihadists due to the American military occupation of the country. Furthermore, Muqtada Al Sadr, sought greater influence over politics in Baghdad, not being initially considered among the plans of the CPA, the IGC, or the various Iraqi politics parties and factions. In this regard Sadr unleashed his armed militia on his political enemies in Southern Iraq. His militias would attack coalition and Iraqi forces, stage rallies in support of Sadr, and conducted assassinations against individuals deemed to be standing against Muqtada's political aspirations.

Allawi's government opted to deal with Muqtada Al Sadr's militia as the first order of business. Coalition and Iraqi troops conducted a military operation against the militia in Southern Iraq that eroded the power of Al Sadr's armed forces.[80] Defeat at the hands of the Iraqi Security Forces and the American Army was a major setback for Sadr. By late 2004, disgruntled members of Sadr's militia led by the commander Qais Al Khazali would split from the group and create their own sectarian militia, Asaib Ahal Al Haq.

Almost simultaneously with the offensives being conducted in the south against Al Sadr, the American military sought to defeat the Sunni insurgency in the Anbar province, based out of Fallujah. Fallujah had long been a center for Sunni Islamist political thought even under the Saddam era.[81] It was clear from the composition of the IGC and the interim government formed by Allawi that the Sunni Arab social group would suffer massive political and economic losses. Unlike the two-week campaign needed to dislodge Al Sadr's militia, the campaign against the

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[80] Toby Dodge, *Iraq - From War to a New Authoritarianism*, 1st edition (London: Routledge, 2013), 101-106.
[81] Adeed Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation* (Princeton University Press, 2009), 247.

Sunni insurgency which included local jihadists, Al Qaeda affiliates, and disgruntled Ba'athists would continue until November 2004, when American troops were able to capture the city of Fallujah. This military victory did little to prevent the resurgence of the insurgency, with coalition troops remaining engaged in a back and forth battle with Sunni insurgents until the general withdrawal from Iraq in 2011.

The capture of Fallujah while a victory over the insurgency and demonstrating the commitment of the new government to retaining order in the country, brought with it political fallout. Sunni leaders stated that the capture of Fallujah came at a high price and that the government was unable to provide adequate levels of security after capturing the city. These leaders stated their desire to see the upcoming elections postponed as a result. On the other hand, the Shia political leaders, and parties, as well of those of the Kurds continued to push for an early 2005 election date. Shia leaders understood quite well that the upcoming elections would offer them control over the apparatus of the state due to their significant demographic majority, the generally organized nature of Shia political movements, and the unlikeliness of any organized coalition of the other ethnosectarian groups opposing them. Grand Ayatollah Ali Al Sistani would play a large role in mobilizing Iraqi Shia towards going to vote leading to extremely large turnout in Shia areas.[82] Elections would be held in January 2005. The results of the January 2005 parliamentary elections established that the new political order would be based on ethnosectarian identity despite the democratic organization of government. Iraqi's voted overwhelmingly on ethnosectarian lines with the Shia Islamist coalition, the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) receiving 51% of the seats, followed by the Kurdistan Alliance a coalition of the KDP and PUK receiving 75 seats, and the incumbent Prime Minister Allawi's non-sectarian Iraqi List receiving only 40

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[82] Elvire Corboz, *Guardians of Shi'ism: Sacred Authority and Transnational Family Networks* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 156-157

seats[83]. Arab Sunnis by and large boycotted the election due to Allawi's decision to go ahead

with the elections being scheduled for January. As a result, they had minimal to no

representation in the Iraqi parliament of 2005.

The remainder of 2005 would see the Shia political groups organizing government while

attempting to negotiate with the other ethnosectarian groups to receive their support. The only

group other than the Shia to receive political concessions in the redrafting of the constitution was

the Kurdish coalition representing the second largest grouping in the parliament. The Kurds were

able to secure the formal establishment of the KRG as an official form of regional government

maintaining its political control over its own territory and the maintenance of its armed forces.

The KRG was able to negotiate an expansion of its territory to include areas that by 2005 were

predominantly non-Kurdish such as Diyala, displaying an initial impetus for both the Kurdish

and Shia parties to compromise.[84] Furthermore, the federalization of Iraq was enshrined within

the Iraqi constitution outside of the Kurdish regions, a longtime goal of both Shia and Kurdish

parties. Both the expansion of the KRG and the enshrinement of the right of federalization in the

Iraqi constitution were vehemently opposed by the various Sunni political factions who due to

their boycott of the election had very little power to stop these conditions from being added.

The UIA-led government was headed by Ibrahim Al Jaafari the head of the Al Dawa

party. By and large the UIA's promises to form a national unity government of Kurds, Shia, and

Sunnis would end in failure. Many of the cabinet positions were given to individuals of the

various ethnosectarian groups, but Jaafari would prove himself unable to form the various

ministries into an organized government. The various ethnosectarian run ministries would

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[83] Adeed Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation* (Princeton University Press, 2009), 248-249.
[84] Toby Dodge, *Iraq - From War to a New Authoritarianism*, 1st edition (London: Routledge, 2013), 40-48.

conduct themselves as separate areas of authority only giving lip service to the directives of the Prime Minister. With such an inefficient administration, Jaafari's government was unable to combat the growing problems in Iraq, from the insurgency to the declining quality of living standards. The only major success to be achieved under the Jaafari government was the drafting and passage of the new constitution. The new constitution was passed with almost overwhelming support from the Shia and Kurdish segments of the society, and almost uniformly opposed by the Sunni segments.

Following the adoption of the constitution the country was scheduled to have its next elections in December 2005, that would establish the first legally recognized democratic government under the new constitution. This time around the Sunni groups did not attempt a boycott of the election following the previous boycott's inability to disrupt the previous governments or garner concessions from them. Elections would be organized along ethnosectarian lines. Parties would focus on gaining votes only in their respective ethnosectarian communities, with little to not attempts being made to appeal to other groups. Under such an environment it was clear that the secular groups with little to no sectarian appeal or agenda received the least number of votes.[85] The direction of democratic politics in Iraq would be solidified in this period as being based on ethnosectarian loyalties rather than on national unity or national restoration. In Sunni areas of the country their ability to participate in the elections was hindered due to the high levels of violence from the increasingly powerful insurgent groups and the increasingly hostile sectarian environment developing between the Sunni and Shia communities, with Sunni political figures often being assassinated prior to the election. The

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[85] Toby Dodge, *Iraq - From War to a New Authoritarianism*, 1st edition (London: Routledge, 2013), 43-48.

turnout for the election was exceptionally high and this time included large turnout among Sunni voters.

Regardless of any change in the turnout in Iraq, the UIA was able to secure a second victory in the December 2005 election. Following the election, a government was established in early 2006. Distribution of power in Iraq following the election began to look increasingly similar to the sectarian system that developed in Lebanon[86]. The presidency was occupied by a Kurd, the position of Prime Minister by a Shia, and the Speaker of the Assembly by a Sunni. This system would continue throughout the contemporary era and later elections. Following the election, the National Assembly nominated Nouri Al Maliki to be Prime Minister of Iraq. His candidacy was highly supported by both the USA and Iran due to his inexperience.

C. Maliki's Movement Towards Authoritarianism

Maliki went about appointing cabinet members on an ethnosectarian basis in an increasingly deteriorating security environment in Iraq. Coalition forces were unable to stop the escalation of insurgent activities in 2006. The political relevance of ethnosectarian identity in achieving political authority and the deteriorating security situation would push the country over the edge into civil war. By the summer of 2006, the Iraqi government and Coalition forces would have almost no control over the security situation with Shia and Sunni militia groups engaged in open warfare and the targeted extermination of communities.[87] The fief like nature of the various ministries in Iraq during the Jafari period would continue during 2006. Often times the sectarian ordered ministries would under provide services to areas controlled by the opposing sect such as the Ministry of Water and Electricity under providing services to the Sunni areas of Baghdad, or

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[86] Ranj Alaaldin, "Sectarianism, Governance, and Iraq's Future," (Brookings, 2018), 42.
[87] Toby Dodge, *Iraq - From War to a New Authoritarianism*, 1st edition (London: Routledge, 2013), 55-60.

would at times outright endorse the massive levels of sectarian violence occurring in the street, such as the Ministry of Interior conducting state sponsored sectarian death squads. The election of December 2005, the massive levels of violence that occurred in 2006, as well as the sectarian organization of the new system ensured the development of a new socio-political structure in Iraq based almost entirely off of sectarian identity rather than party identity as was common in the pre-Saddam era, or familial ties as was the norm in the later periods of the Saddam era.

Despite Maliki's roots in the Al Dawa party, and a commitment to the maintenance of the new ethnosectarian political and social system in Iraq, he sought early on to develop close ties with the United States due to the role that the hundreds of thousands of Coalition troops played in maintaining the survival of the new Iraqi state and the undeniable power that the US held as long as it remained heavily invested in Iraq.[88]

Regardless of Maliki's close ties to the American government it was clear that following his election to the position of Prime Minister he was not interested in the end of ethnosectarianism in the country. From 2006 to 2007 Maliki's government would do very little in attempting to stop the massive levels of sectarian violence raging between the Sunni and Shia Arab communities. Maliki and his government's reluctance to end ethnosectarian policy is clear through their inaction to stop the civil war during 2006, and at times certain ministries outright commitment to Shia militias plans for demographic change.

As ethnosectarian war was raging in Baghdad between the Sunni and Shia communities increasing levels of intra-Sunni violence were occurring in the Anbar province. Al Qaeda had increased its authority over the province and many of the Sunni tribal groups and ex-Ba'athists resented their increasing control over their province and their commitment to a war with the

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[88] "Losing Iraq," FRONTLINE, accessed April 20, 2020.

Shia.[89] In 2006, the government in Baghdad was virtually unable to utilize the Iraqi armed forces to effectively combat the terrorist group in the region and was unwilling to assist any defecting Sunni militant group fighting Al Qaeda.

The Bush administration was unhappy with the state of affairs in Iraq, particularly the events of 2006. The Iraqi government proved itself to be incompetent in managing the affairs of the country in all aspects, particularly those of security, and the American military was unable to effectively control the country with its current resources and strategy. The Bush administration decided in early 2007 to replace the existing commander of US forces in Iraq, George Casey, with the general David Petraeus, and commit an additional 20 to 30 thousand soldiers to combat the violence unfolding in Iraq. Petraeus was willing to conduct peace deals with various insurgent groups in the Sunni provinces in order to combat Al Qaeda. Whereas Casey was unwilling to negotiate with the tribal insurgents, Petraeus offered them ceasefires and salaries should they join the American effort to destroy Al Qaeda in the country. Petraeus's strategy was effective with the surge in American troops and change in strategy boosting combat efficiency and the alliance with Sunni tribal groups known as the Anbar Awakening, giving them information on the activities of Al Qaeda.[90] The changes made by the US in 2007 were extremely effective, essentially driving Al Qaeda underground in Iraq by the fall of the same year. In the areas around Baghdad, the large increase in American troops and the change to a more visible role among the Iraqi public significantly reduced the level of sectarian violence in the city, albeit after much of the city's inhabitants had been uprooted in the sectarian violence of the previous year.

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[89] Stephen Biddle, Jeffrey A. Friedman, and Jacob N. Shapiro, "Testing the Surge: Why Did Violence Decline in Iraq in 2007?," *International Security* 37, no. 1 (July 1, 2012): 7–40, https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00087.
[90] Ibid, 7-40.

The surge of the American military in Iraq increased the power that Maliki could muster vis a vi the various militia groups in the country who following his election believed him to be nothing more than a figurehead. In 2008, taking advantage of the heavier and more effective American presence, Maliki conducted an offensive against Muqtada Al Sadr's militia, the Mahdi Army. The military campaign supported by the Americans and the British was a success. Following the 2008 offensive against the Mahdi Army, Maliki's personal power and control over the Iraqi state increased significantly. He began reforming the officer corps of the Iraqi military appointing members that were directly loyal to him rather than to the various factions of Iraqi politics such as the militias or secular political parties. Furthermore, he established direct control over the activities of the Iraqi military through the establishment of the Office of the Commander in Chief (OCINC), a department that exerted command and control over the various regional commands of the Iraqi military and reported directly to Maliki.[91] By 2011, Maliki had ensured his control over the security forces in the country offering him significant levels of personal power and allowing his government to emerge as the strongest political authority in the country a feat that eluded the government under both Allawi and Jafari. Maliki began to exert political control over the judicial and legislative branches of the government increasing the power of the Prime Minister through controversial court rulings while limiting the powers of the parliament. The best example of this is the court ruling that a vote of no confidence against the Prime Minister would only be considered valid if there was indisputable evidence that the Prime Minister had conducted illegal activities, despite the Iraqi constitution stating otherwise.[92] From 2008, until his resignation in 2014 Maliki would be staunchly supported by both his American

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[91] Marisa Sullivan, "Maliki's Authoritarian Regime," April 2013, 1-37.
http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Malikis-Authoritarian-Regime-Web.pdf.
[92] Ibid, 1-37.

and Iranian allies bolstering his political position in the country despite his clear efforts the erode the democratic process and personalize power in his own hands. The interests of both the Americans and the Iranians did not warrant action against Maliki regardless of these concerns.

By 2009, much of the large scale and consistent violence in Iraq had subsided which gave rise to the emergence of alternative political parties in which ethnic and sectarian identities remained the main factor. In provincial elections, these trends were clearly seen. Another issue determining the future of Iraq in this period was the distancing of any concept of federalism held by some parties and a move to a strong centralized government as desired by Maliki. In response to the increasing sectarianization of the state under Maliki, the Sunni provinces of the country sought federalized status so as to more effectively govern themselves without interference from the central government.[93] To Maliki's government this was perceived as a challenge to their authority and represented a threat to the authority of government through the possibility that it would also spark federalization bids in Shia areas of the country.[94] Maliki therefore took a hardline stance against any attempts to federalize by Sunni Iraqi provinces. This trend was reinforced in the national elections in 2010. Maliki withdrew from the UIA and formed his own coalition the State of Law Coalition (SOL), with other various minor parties including his Al Dawa party and other minor parties. The Iraqiyya party headed by Allawi reflected the most secular platform as it did not adopt a solely sectarian tone, and therefore represented a challenge to the new political order based on sectarian identity and representation. There was a general discontent among the greater population that the Shia sectarian parties that held power had not delivered adequate services and security in the state, so the Iraqiyya party under Allawi gained

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[93] Fanar Haddad, "A Sectarian Awakening: Reinventing Sunni Identity in Iraq After 2003," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology; Washington* 17 (August 2014): 70-101,176.
[94] Ibid, 70-101.

popularity. The Sunnis voted overwhelmingly for Iraqiyya and there was a fractionalization among the Shia groups which lead to a dispute as to which political group or bloc held the majority to form a new government. Briefly, this dispute centered on what determined the winning bloc in the election, which seemed according to the Iraqi constitution to fall to the Iraqiyya group as they were the single largest party.[95] Maliki and his cohorts argued the largest coalition that would come to power after the elections and held the majority of the seats in the parliament following the election should form the government. The situation was based on varied interpretations of the Iraqi constitution. This dispute lasted for almost a year but with pressure from Iran on the alternative Shia groups to bind firmly the SOL with the INA during this long drawn out contest, Prime Minister Maliki was given the right to form a cabinet in December 2010.[96] This decision returned Maliki to the position of prime minister. In the second Maliki era, an authoritarian sectarian government with Maliki as head developed with his almost complete monopoly of the institutions of the state.

Maliki's regime was supported by both the United States and Iran from 2006 through 2014 for the goals of their foreign policy. The United States acquiesced to Maliki for regional interests and policy goals as it had for decades with the Ba'ath government of Saddam Hussein. In addition, the relative security of Iraq under Maliki during 2011 allowed for the USA to withdraw the majority of its troops per the plan devised in 2007. Iran supported Maliki as it ensured the expansion of their transnational Shia policy goals and guaranteed the protection and expansion of its armed militias under Iranian support of the Quds Force to insure no viable opposition to their interests in various Arab countries across the Middle East.

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[95] Marisa Sullivan, "Maliki's Authoritarian Regime," April 2013, 30-33.
[96] Ibdid, 11-12.

Through his consolidation of the institutional structures of the government, Maliki was both Prime Minister and Commander in Chief, with high levels of control over the security apparatus of the State. He thereby had subverted both governmental and civilian freedoms which made it almost impossible for other ethnosectarian groups such as Sunnis or Kurds to participate in a national discourse or unitary political formation or organization.[97]

Maliki's highly sectarian policies would lead to large levels of resistance among the Sunni areas of Iraq. By 2011, the Americans had begun their military withdrawal and the Arab Spring was beginning across North Africa and the Middle East. Iraq was not untouched by the sentiments of the Arab Spring which manifested itself as large anti-government demonstrations in the Sunni areas of the country. The central government under Maliki had refused all bids for federalization of their territories and had disbanded the Awakening tribal militias who had combated Al Qaeda alongside the US in favor of direct military control. The army then conducted a military occupation of the Sunni regions of the country with arbitrary detention, discrimination, checkpoints, and the restriction of movement. A desire to end to this discrimination was the initial impetus for the movement in the Sunni areas of the country, but as the Arab Spring continued into 2012 and 2013 it grew to calls for the end of the Maliki government. The Iraqi military responded to the protest movement with violence, hoping that the security forces could suppress it. Rather than suppress the movement these actions turned the population of the region against the Iraqi government. It is under these conditions that the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) would emerge.

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[97] Harith Hasan Al-Qarawee, "From Maliki to Abadi: The Challenge of Being Iraq's Prime Minister," 2016, 8.

D. A Weak Iraqi State and the Rise of ISIS

By December 2013, the central government had lost control of the situation regarding the protest movements in northern Iraq. Maliki had ordered concessions such as the releasee of prisoners and the withdrawal of military troops from certain areas to no avail. Maliki therefore doubled down on the military option still hoping they would be able to suppress the movement. Meanwhile, ISIS had forged alliances with many of the large tribal groups in the Sunni regions of the country, and with the remnants of the Ba'athist resistance in the form of the Naqshbandi Army, many of whose members would join ISIS as experienced military commanders. Towards the end of December 2013, the protest movement had devolved into warfare between the Iraqi armed forces and ISIS in the Sunni provinces. Entering January 2014, Maliki's armed forces immediately lost control of the cities of Ramadi and Fallujah and would lose the rest of Anbar province by June 2014. The month of June saw the Iraqi government lost not only the Anbar province but also the city of Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq. Maliki's sectarian military, organized to prevent challenges to his authority, was unprepared to deal with a threat of this scale, involving a well-funded and entrenched terrorist group, initially supported by a significant number of the Sunni community in the face of sectarian hostility by the government. The Iraqi army was unable to mount any effective counter offensive against ISIS by July 2014. Maliki would lose his position as prime minister and the Shia militias would come to play an even more dominant role in Iraqi politics.[98] In response to the failure and virtual collapse of the Iraqi army in the face of ISIS, Shia clerics throughout the country, most importantly Ali Al Sistani, issued a fatwa that able bodied men should join militias in defense of Iraq. Following this the militias would change their title invoking an umbrella term known as the Popular Mobilization Units

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[98] Nader Uskowi, *Temperature Rising: Iran's Revolutionary Guards and Wars in the Middle East* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2018), 56-59.

(PMU), swell their ranks with new recruits, and receive large amounts of support from the IRGC

to combat ISIS, becoming the main forces on combating the group until 2017.[99]

By mid-2014, the majority of the Shia political organizations in Iraq including the

Sadrists, the PMU, Ayatollah Ali Al Sistani, the Dawa Party, this time with tacit Iranian

acquiescence, considered the authoritarian government of Maliki as divisive of national goals

and incapable of curtailing the rising power of ISIS.[100] Likewise, the US backed the removal of

Maliki's authoritarian regime, it was considered too weak to coalesce the country against the

growing threat from ISIS and was responsible for fragmenting the cohesion of the country. By

2014, the Iraqi national military had been overcome by ISIS and the PMU, had to step in with the

Kurdish Peshmerga to combat the expansion of the extremist movement. Both the US and Iran

lent military strength and backed the PMU fighters in the campaign to defeat ISIS. Maliki would

resign from the office of prime minister in September 2014 due to pressure from the public and

the Iraqi National Assembly, being replaced by the deputy leader of the Dawa party, Haider Al

Abadi.

Haider Al-Abadi led a more inclusive governmental program with goals of reforming

national institutions centralized by Maliki in his authoritarian state. Abadi was granted support

by Ali Al Sistani and the various Shia political parties to implement a radical reform of the

institutional corruption conducted under Maliki's government. Furthermore, he was tasked with

reforming the government toward a more inclusive structure to counter support for ISIS. It

should be noted that these reforms never went as far as a complete rehabilitation of the sectarian

system in Iraq, only a relief of some of the more extreme policies of the Maliki era such as the

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[99] Nader Uskowi, *Temperature Rising: Iran's Revolutionary Guards and Wars in the Middle East* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2018), 104-108.
[100] Harith Hasan Al-Qarawee, "From Maliki to Abadi: The Challenge of Being Iraq's Prime Minister," 2016.

complete Shia structure of the Iraqi Armed Forces and public sector as well as the end to

Maliki's personal control of the security forces.[101] The limited scope of the reforms came from

the pressure of parties in the National Assembly and the unwillingness to truly forego the

sectarian political order despite the consequences they had shown. The National Assembly was

supportive of the reforms regarding the security forces and employment in the public sector as

they believed they had a large role in leading the Sunni's to ultimately support ISIS over the

central government.

Abadi remained as Prime Minister throughout the War with ISIS and was Prime Minister

in 2017 when the defeat of ISIS and the end of the Iraqi Civil War was proclaimed. The end of

the war would see the reestablishment of Iraqi authority over all territory lost in 2014. However,

the Peshmerga was able to take areas not considered to be a part of the KRG as defined by the

Iraqi constitution, leading to an escalating conflict between the central government and the KRG

in the end of 2017. The KRG under Masoud Barzani believed itself to be in a more powerful

position than the Iraqi government and went forward with a referendum that would decide

whether the KRG would secede from Iraq. The referendum was an overwhelmingly in favor of

secession but was rejected by the central government as illegitimate. The PUK party sided with

the central government and assisted their military forces, particularly when they sought to

reestablish central authority over the vital city of Kirkuk. The crisis in Kurdistan was ended

when the US did not support the secession movement as Barzani believed would be the case, and

the regional powers of Turkey and Iran stated they would not accept the secession of the KRG

from Iraq. In response to the crisis and the failure of the secession policy Masoud Barzani

tendered his resignation.

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[101] Harith Hasan Al-Qarawee, "From Maliki to Abadi: The Challenge of Being Iraq's Prime Minister," 2016.

Chapter 4: The Impact of Foreign Interventions

Foreign intervention in Iraq established a pattern of politically motivated ethnosectarian identity in the country with transnational linkages. Ethnosectarianism led to a rivalry which established the power of the Shia over the government. The dominance of sectarianism in politics led to a divide with Arab Sunni's who endeavored to establish their own political identity. The lack of any foundation for nation building is reinforced by the regional Kurdish government, which maintains its own military forces and international relations. The weakness of the Iraqi central government means there is little that can be done to foster any type of nation building process with the Kurdish region.

A. Foreign Occupation

It is clear that domestic factors have played a large role in the outcomes of nation-building in Iraq, the decisions taken under the monarchy, republican government, and the Ba'ath era all have contributed to the failure of national development in the country. However, it is the position of this thesis that the domestic factors at play in the country throughout Iraqi history are insufficient in explaining the total failure of the Iraqi national project and the development of Iraq into a failed state. The development of the Hashemite monarchy is a direct by product of the occupation conducted by the British not only on the direct outcome of national development but also upon the domestic structures that emerged in the country at different periods of Iraq's history. Additionally, domestic factors are insufficient as they do not take into account the role that transitional movements play in the society of Iraq. These transnational movements at different periods of time have been extremely powerful, often more so than the government of Iraq itself. They have prevented the creation of an inclusive Iraqi national project be it Shia Islamism, Sunni Islamism, or Arab nationalism. These transnational movements are correlated

with domestic factors, often gaining in strength as a response to the failures of governance. Additionally, the existence of sub-state entities that are reinforced by the interests of foreign powers is another concern. This can mainly be seen in the case of the Kurds, where their national project is bolstered by the interests of the United States at the expense of state control and a commitment to a unified Iraq. Thus the structures of governance in the country at different periods of the country's history being foreign constructs, the existence of powerful transnational ideologies and movements in Iraqi society, and the interests of foreign powers in the sub-state politics of the country prevent an entirely domestic analysis from being valuable. Foreign interference and intervention must be part of the analysis in conjunction with an acknowledgement of the failures of Iraqi government's domestically.

The American and British occupations of Iraq while occurring at different points in the country's history have significantly affected the outcomes in determining the future of Iraq. In 1917 the British still retained their colonial empire. The establishment of the League of Nations and adherence to the mandate system, made it clear that the days of outright occupation and colonization of territories in international politics had come to an end. As a result, the British took this into account and occupied the country under the assumption that they would not retain a permanent governing role, clearly shown through the obligations under the mandate system. Similarly, the American occupation in 2003, was done with a recognition that administration of Iraq would go back to Iraqis as soon as the country was stable enough for transition into democratic structures. The non-permanent nature of direct rule by the United Kingdom and the United States in their approach to Iraq had profound effects upon the decision-making calculus of both countries when dealing with the political situation Iraq. Both the United States and the United Kingdom sought a stable, self-governing Iraq that did not need large amounts of direct

input and expenditure on the part of the US and British governments. Both powers wrestled with the cost minimization/commitment dichotomy throughout the occupation periods, throwing the political reconstruction of the country in both eras into disarray. Direct rule by Iraqis was the main goal in cost minimization in the country for both powers and would profoundly affect the course of the occupations with the final result being neither an Iraq capable of reliable self-governance nor one that was remotely stable.

The British and American occupations occurred at differing points in time almost a century apart, but there are elements of similarity between the two that are of importance in determining the outcomes for Iraq in the post-occupation environments. They were initially conducted with a significant presence by the respective occupying power's, often taking political decision-making into their own hands and radically altering the existing status quo in the country at the time. Despite this, it is clear that in both instances the occupation periods brought great instability and attempts at substantial political and social change in Iraq. Old socio-political structures were dismantled with little in the way of sustainable alternatives being put forward by either of the occupying powers creating a vacuum that could and would be filled by different actors and ideologies representing the different ethno-sectarian groupings in the country.

The American author Kenneth Pollack offers a compelling model on the decision-making calculus that needed to be made upon the American occupation of the country, one that through an analysis of the British experience also fits their experience. In Pollack's book *The Threatening Storm: The Case for Invading Iraq* he notes that the United States had two options available to it in managing its occupation after the existing government was removed from power. Pollack labels these as the reformulation strategy of occupation and the pragmatic strategy of occupation. The reformulation strategy would involve the investment of significant

resources on the part of the occupying government in order to secure the population's security and create robust political institutions for a stable transition to local politicians after the period of instability following the occupation had ended.[102] In essence the reformulation strategy would not take into account political timetables or a limited budget and would be focused entirely on a direct approach taken by the occupying power through military, economic, and administrative forces until the country was deemed to be sufficiently secured and stable by the occupying power. The alternative strategy for occupation, the pragmatic approach, was the opposite of the former. It eschews the long and costly investments by the occupying power in favor of maintaining a minimal level of security, ensuring the country does not fall into anarchy. The strategy supports moving towards a transfer of power to friendly local elements as soon as possible to avoid large economic and military commitments for long periods of time. In his book Pollack asserts that the adoption of the pragmatic approach would not lead to a sustainable future for Iraq and would put it on the path to anarchy, asserting his support for the reformulation approach.

The British approach undertaken in the aftermath of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire up to the revolt of 1920 can be said to follow a strategy highly similar to that of the reformulation approach. The British maintained a large military presence in the country from 1917 to 1920 and maintained direct control over the political, economic, and social affairs of the country as was possible. The British attempted to depart from the decentralized structures of the Ottoman period. Unsurprisingly this approach was met with resistance from many segments of Iraq's society, ranging from the tribal sheikhs to religious figures. These socio-political groups resented the loss of their almost supreme control over their own affairs as was common in the

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[102] Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Threatening Storm: The Case for Invading Iraq*, 1 edition (New York: Random House, 2002), 388-395.

Ottoman period. The resentment of increased centralization by the British led directly to the revolt of 1920, which while successfully put down led to a fundamental reorganization of the British occupation strategy. While the first three years of the occupation by the British can be seen to be following the reformulation strategy the costs of such an approach became too much for the British to bear. This is clear through the speeches given by Winston Churchill in the aftermath of the revolt during which he states that while Britain should be committed to its responsibilities under the mandate system it must begin to draw down its direct presence in the county and should hand over governance of the country to an Arab leader rather than maintain direct control.[103] It is at this point with the handing over of administration of the country to the Hashemite dynasty, that the reformulation strategy was scrapped, and the pragmatic approach adopted.

The shift by the British to a more centralized control of the territory and the creation of a British run administration were the beginnings of organized political structures in the territory that had otherwise not existed. The British did away with the Ottoman style of administration in favor of a colonial administration similar to that adopted in India. Whereas under the Ottoman administration these figures were largely independent, providing a small amount of tax income to the Ottoman officials, the British began to erode the independent political authority of these figures. The tribal and religious elite were expected to follow the new administrative practices of the British colonial administration and go through the British administrators for matters of political importance rather than the local councils of the Ottoman era. It can reasonably be said that these changes to the political environment of the region were the first occurrence of basic political structures over all of Iraq's territory, beginning the shift from the regionalization of

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[103] Stacy E. Holden, *A Documentary History of Modern Iraq* (University Press of Florida, 2012), 69-74.

politics to a centralization of Iraq as a whole. The policy of direct centralization by the British was not continued as a result of the 1920s' revolt so conclusions cannot be made about what the result of a complete and stable administration created by the occupying power would be. It is valuable however to note that these events did signify an initial British commitment to a reformulation approach to Iraq. The decisions made in the aftermath of the 1920's revolt expose the dichotomy between commitment to the development of Iraq's political structures and the political desire in London to minimize expenditure and loss. The inefficient and incomplete application of both approaches would lead to failure in creating durable political structures for Iraq, stable political leadership, and very few paths forward in creating an Iraqi national identity.

A major theme of the British occupation and one that would be mirrored in the American experience was the implementation of policies directly resulting in a sectarianization of politics in the country. The British when attempting their centralization policies prior to the 1920 revolt, did not attempt to create a different social structure of the local Iraqi bureaucracy. Officials from the Ottoman era were held onto, albeit at positions under British administrators, but major changes to the structure of the Iraqi bureaucratic elite that would one day be in charge of the country upon British departure were not attempted. In essence this created British approval for the creation of a Sunni Arab hegemony over the rest of the country. As noted in the historical section, Shia resentment of Sunni political control was commonplace in the Ottoman period, and the British did not alleviate these sentiments. Upon British departure from direct administration of Iraq, the reins of power were handed to a foreign Sunni Arab dynasty further exacerbating the situation. The lack of any attempt by the British to foster political and social relations between the different sectarian groups of Iraq, and the approval of existing societal relationships between the sectarian groups would set the tone for future negative relations between the Shia and Sunni

Arabs. Unlike the paradigm shift in its approach to Iraq following the 1920 revolt, this approach was commonplace for the British from the onset of the occupation and was viewed with relative unimportance a major misstep when attempting to undergo the reformulation strategy. British support and involvement in changing the socio-political relations between sect through integration was a necessity. The power structures that would develop in Iraq upon achieving its independence were entirely determined by the interests of the established Sunni political elite without input from the Shia Arab segment of society, or their localized political groups. This created the foundation for the sectarianization of politics through the rejection of the legitimacy of Iraq's central governments as a Sunni domination. A clear example of this is the Shia rejection of an Arabization policy in education put forward by government in Baghdad in the late 1920's. Kurdish rejection of this is a given considering their status as a different ethnic group, however it was also rejected by the Shia. The author Liora Lukitz cites this rejection as being a result of "Shia resentment of the Sunni elite in Baghdad who had been educated in Ottoman institutions".[104] Despite being of the same ethnic group and speaking the same language, the Shia rejected the Arabization advances in education directly as a result of it being put forward by what they saw as a Sunni dominated government.

The revolt of 1920 came as a surprise to the British and directly led to the movement away from the reformulation strategy. The increased centralization of the British administration was a decisive cause of the revolt for which the British military forces stationed in Iraq were wholly unprepared. In putting down the revolt the British paid a cost in men and capital that London was unwilling to continue going forward. The direct control of Iraq would be cut short and the administration of the country was handed over to their Hashemite ally. It is clear from

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[104] Liora Lukitz, *Iraq: The Search for National Identity*, 1st edition (London ; Portland, Ore: Routledge, 1995), 114.

the British surprise to the revolt and the lack of a significant military presence in the country capable of containing the revolt early on that they had unrealistic expectations on their ability to maintain order in the country. The revolt made it clear that the costs of maintaining order in Iraq, an area without a recent history of central government would be high and a British military presence would have to be substantial for an undetermined period of time. The government in London was unwilling to maintain an open-ended commitment to centralizing control, building political structures, and maintaining local order in the country under such circumstances. Commitment to the formulation of Iraqi political structures under the League of Nations mandate would have to be abandoned in the name of reducing costs and administration of the country turned over to a local government despite being unready for effective self-rule at that period in time.

The inconsistencies between the interests of the British administrators in Iraq and the interests of politicians at home prevented the development of coherent policy. Even among their own compatriots' administrators never saw eye to eye on what the best path forward was for the creation of Iraqi political structures. The internal politics of the British foreign service would often lead to competition among administrators for promotions and enhanced prestige in their own organization rather than foster cooperation towards developing Iraq's political future. This can best be illustrated with the primary source information outlining the conflict between approaches in Iraq between Sir Percy Cox and John Philby prior to the ascension of Faisal Al Hashemi. Philby backed the powerful Minister of Interior under the British administration, Saiyid Talib Pasha, a holdover from the Ottoman era, whereas Cox had been pushing for acceptance of Hashemite rule in the country.[105] Cox would ultimately win out in this struggle

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[105] Stacy E. Holden, *A Documentary History of Modern Iraq* (University Press of Florida, 2012), 74-78.

leading not only to the banishment of Pasha but also to that of Philby from the country. Other

cases of this can be seen with the outright refusal of some British figures in Iraq to campaign or

go through with elections in favor of Al Hashemi in the territories they were responsible for.

Notably, a Major Marshall of the British military refused orders to persuade the Kurds to vote for

Hashemi, due to political concerns over the region he was given charge over.[106] This is another

clear example of the disjointed policy between British administrators in Iraq and the interests of

politicians in London. While the interests of London would ultimately win out in forming a new

government in Iraq, the factionalized nature of the British administration did not foster a unified

position on how to proceed in the country, but developed one based off of competition and horse

trading in specific candidates. British administrators were often asked for specific timetables and

measures of progress on Iraq's development by politicians in London who even prior to the

1920's revolt had been mainly concerned with reducing expenditure in the British Empire.

Pressure from London was a factor that always needed to be contented with by the administrators

and would lead to disjointed policy, rather than consistency when approaching administration of

the territory. Pressures that come from London on the best path forward may not be consistent

with realities on the ground and are judged solely on the immediate concerns of the British

Empire as a whole rather than on the specificities of Iraq. The best examples of this are the

abandonment of direct administration after 1920, and most importantly the decision to place a

foreign dynasty as the rulers of Iraq as they were tried and tested British partners.

     The British experience in the post 1920 environment was one of maintaining the

authority of the Hashemite monarchy through limited military support and the use of advisors. It

is clear from the British maintaining a military presence in the region and a substantial number of

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[106] Stacy E. Holden, *A Documentary History of Modern Iraq* (University Press of Florida, 2012), 74-78.

advisors in the new government that they were unsure the new government could ensure

stability, calling the decision to shift towards self-rule as early as 1920 into question. The coups

of the 1930s by Bakr Sidqi and in the 1940s by Rashid Ali Gaylani are clear indicators that the

country was unready for self-rule. A solid political foundation had not been built by the British

during their period of direct rule and the monarchy would be unable to manage its own affairs

without constant protection and threat of intervention by British military forces. It is clear from

these developments that the country was unready for self-rule and that the political structures that

had been set up were wholly inadequate. The Hashemite monarchy was unable to utilize these

institutions to any great effectiveness with the military being the only wing of government with

any significant effectiveness. Additionally, the survival of the regime was predicated on the

existence of continued British support, rather than through the creation of a robust local Iraqi

government as had been the original plan. The regime had little to no ability to survive on its

own demonstrated by the coup of 1941, and the 1958 revolution. Ultimately the decision to

transfer authority to local governance in 1920 despite the country being unprepared was made

out of a desire to minimize costs on the part of the British, cutting the reformulation strategy

short, and implementing a pragmatic approach towards Iraq. The dynamic of initially taking a

reformulation strategy but balking at costs and hastily shifting towards the pragmatic approach

would also occur under the American occupation with similar costs to Iraq in its ability to

maintain order, foster strong political institutions, and develop an Iraqi national identity.

       The American approach to Iraq during its occupation took a similar strategy in regard to

direct administration and the formation of government. Initially it can be said that there was a

commitment to the reformulation approach by the CPA and Washington, however following less

than a year of administration it was decided that the costs of maintaining such an approach were

unfeasible, and costly leading to the hasty creation of an Iraqi government. The American approach led to a parallel outcome as that of the British in regard to the stability of the new state. The new Iraqi state found itself unable to effectively govern its own territory, provide security for the public, foster national unity, or even defend itself from attack without the support of foreign entities.

The American occupation suffered from similar setbacks to the British and undertook a similar decision-making calculus. The creation of a task force by the Pentagon to locate potential sources of local Iraqi authority to be figures in a new Iraqi government under the general Jay Garner and later the CPA in the post-invasion environment is compelling evidence that the Americans sought to directly manage the political and security environment of the country to prepare it for a stable transition to self-rule. Furthermore, the statements of Donald Rumsfeld ensuring that the US was committed to the creation of a stable and democratic Iraq is further evidence of the Bush administration's initial desire to undertake a reformulation approach in the occupation of Iraq. Measures were undertaken by the CPA to dismantle the previous structures of governance in the country and the officials of the old regime were prevented from being engaged in any formalized political capacity. The CPA was tasked by the American government to maintain a provisional government until a stable transition to a local government could be ensured, and the security environment in the country was deemed to be sufficient. However, similar to the experience of the British, the US military and CPA was unprepared for the task ahead of it. The beginning of a large-scale insurgency was an event the Americans were unwilling to bear the costs of, in a similar vein to the 1920 revolt for the British. The CPA did away with open ended timetables and ensuring the stable transition to a local Iraqi government, handing over administration to a provisional Iraqi government only a year after the occupation.

American efforts then moved into ensuring that the new Iraqi government did not collapse under the insurgencies and training a new military so that Iraq could defend itself. The failure of the CPA and the transition to a hastily created local Iraqi government in 2004 is representative of a transition away from the reformulation approach and towards the pragmatic approach of occupation. In both the American and British cases, we see an initial attempt at the reformulation strategy only for the occupying powers to realize that they are unwilling to bear its costs. The reasons for this are varied, with the overall transition to the pragmatic strategy having dire consequences for national development in Iraq in both occupation periods.

At the onset the American occupation took a hands-on approach to reforming Iraq's political structures, in a similar manner to the approach by the British pre-1920. The setbacks that the US would suffer when undertaking this approach led to the change in priorities for Washington and the shift to the pragmatic approach. The overall experience of the American occupation has a number of parallels with that of the British in both management and the effects of the occupation. Similar to the British experience the American occupation suffered from unrealistic expectations on the ability to maintain order in the country without the existence of an Iraqi central government, it contributed to the sectarianization politics in the new Iraq, and found itself suffering from inconsistencies between the interests of American officials in Iraq and the interest of politicians at home preventing the development of a robust strategy in occupying Iraq that could have helped to foster stable political structures.

One of the most significant setbacks of the American occupation was the sectarianization of politics in the country. The British promoted a sectarianization of politics through the promotion of the Sunni elite, whereas the American occupation promoted a Shia political elite through the creation of new political structures based off of sectarian and ethnic groups

populations. The CPA's decision to form an Iraqi governing council on the basis of sectarian demographics after entirely disbanding the Ba'athist government and preventing any of its members from participation in the new political process essentially ensured that politics in the new Iraq would be based off of sectarian identity rather than commitment to a national process. The CPA's decisions disproportionately affected the political status of Sunni Arabs in Iraqi society, and ensured that the largest Shia parties, who overwhelmingly had sectarian agendas would receive the lion's share of political power in the governing council. This is supported by Toby Dodge who notes that "once governing institutions were tentatively set up, their senior ranks quickly filled with formerly exiled politicians and parties that actively asserted the centrality of their Shia religious beliefs to the country's new politics".[107] Furthermore, the head of the CPA, Paul Bremer himself stated that he met with Ahmad Chalabi who asserted that the Grand Ayatollah Ali Al Sistani represented the majority of the Shia and that they sought majority control in the Iraqi governing council on the basis that they were the largest sectarian group in the country.[108] This is a clear indication that the Shia political parties returning to Iraq sought to reform the country on sectarian grounds rather than develop national identity and integration in the country. The American administration's decision to accept the organization of the governing council on the basis of sectarian identity set up the country for the entire reorganization of politics on the basis of that identity, fostering further conflict in the country and preventing the establishment of a new governance in Iraq based on an Iraqi national project. The decisions on De-Ba'athification and a prioritization on achieving what amounted to sectarian quotas in the new governing council contributed to the development of political mobilization and organization

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[107] Toby Dodge, *Iraq - From War to a New Authoritarianism*, 1st edition (London: Routledge, 2013), 36.
[108] "Lost Year in Iraq," PBS, October 17, 2006.

on the basis of sect in Iraq as has been the case in the overwhelming majority of Iraq's elections between 2004 and 2017.

The American occupation also suffered from inconsistencies between the interests and recommendations of administrators in Iraq and the interests of politicians in Washington. This dynamic affected the ability to create coherent policy on the ground when directly administrating the country and developing policy decisions that ultimately had a negative effect on the security environment and the creation of stable governance in the country. Despite the Bush administrations stated commitment to preparing Iraq for self-rule through the creation of stable political institutions and a reformulation of Iraq's political structures, it is clear that following the defeat of Saddam and the occupation of the country that the main concern for the administration in Washington was the minimization of cost and the timely reformation of self-rule in Iraq. General Jay Garner was initially given the task of preparing Iraq for self-rule, by the Pentagon. Garner noted that the damage the Ba'athist era had done in regard to independent political leadership was significant and that it would take time for new local leaders to emerge in the country.[109] Garner recommended that the country would need to be administrated directly by the United States until such a time that Iraqis could overcome the trauma of the Saddam era, and feel safe in their new environment so that individuals could feel confident in nominating themselves for political positions without fear of violence. Garner also noted that his plans to help facilitate the emergence of new Iraqi leadership, would need additional funds and staff from Washington as well as an open ended American military presence in the region that saw an increase in the number of soldiers. Garner asserted these all were necessary in bringing stability back to the country in preparation for the reformulation approach. Washington did not agree with this

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[109] Kenneth M. Pollack, "The Seven Deadly Sins of Failure in Iraq: A Retrospective Analysis of the Reconstruction," *Brookings* (blog), November 30, 2006.

assessment or the approach of Garner and his staff, ignored his findings and placed their hopes into putting power in the hands of the Iraqi exiles they were familiar with, despite warnings from their own administrators in Iraq that the exiles were incapable of running the country. Essentially, the administration had tasked Garner with finding the best ways to reformulate stable governance and political structures in Iraq but were unwilling to act on them if they did not suite their immediate interests, namely cost minimization. By ignoring the concerns and needs of Garner's administration no avenues for local political leadership in the country were opened up. Through establishing the Iraqi exiles known to the US, as a new political class, the American occupation enforced a top down approach to new leadership in the country who did not hold recognition from the wider Iraqi public. Furthermore, the decisions to ignore the military's findings on the need to increase the American presence in the country allowed for disorder to reign in the aftermath of the invasion, creating the image among Iraqi's that the Americans were not in control of the situation. None of the recommendations from Garner and his team were heeded by Washington creating conditions in the country that were impossible to surmount for the occupation. Without the funds and tools necessary to conduct a plan for finding new Iraqi leadership, and the prevalence of disorder in the country, work on reformulation of a new stable Iraqi state could not begin or was met with insurmountable difficulties. Washington and Garner's team from the Pentagon were working towards entirely different objectives, one with the objective of reformulation and the other towards cost minimization.

The administration in Washington found Garner's recommendations in approaching the occupation to be unacceptable with their interests and appointed Paul Bremer as the new administrator of Iraq. For the purposes of this thesis Bremer will be considered to be an extension of Washington policy, as it has been noted by those who worked alongside and under him that he

would enact directives that came directly from Washington, rather than heed the recommendations of advisors or other administrators on the ground in Iraq. The policies adopted by Bremer were at odds with the findings and concerns of Garner's previous administration and were utterly concerned with enacting the will of Washington. Over 100 directives from the Department of Defense were given to Bremer and his administration that they would have to enact.[110] They involved virtually no input from the officials on the ground in Iraq and were to be enacted as given in the directives. The two major directives of Bremer's tenure included the De-Ba'athification of the political structure in Iraq, and the demobilization and disbandment of the military. These were both given as directives by Washington rather than on the advice of administrators on the ground or his own independent assessments.

In implementing the de-Ba'athification directive, Bremer created a position that would exclude the Sunni Arabs from meaningful participation in the political process of creating a new Iraqi state. When Washington was drawing up the plans for the De-Ba'athification policy, the head of the INC, Ahmed Chalabi was a major figure in coming up with the exact terms. Administrators in Iraq and the intelligence community opposed the influence of Chalabi in decision making and his role in the political process. They noted that he was unreliable, potentially playing both sides, sought to maximize his own personal power, and was not known or respected in the wider Iraqi society. Washington ignored the concerns of the administrators and intelligence community and allowed Chalabi's participation and turned over De-Ba'athification policy to him personally. The directive laid off virtually all government staff who had been maintaining the infrastructure and basic levels of services for Iraqis, virtually disbanding any form of governance that remained in the country. This approach to a De-

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[110] Adeed Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation* (Princeton University Press, 2009), 244-246.

Ba'athification of the state was condemned by most American administrators in Iraq as being too deep. Individuals were laid off who only had minor and ideologically meaningless attachments to the Ba'ath party. The policy was mainly conducted as political showmanship by Washington to demonstrate the end of an "evil" party for their own political interests, namely ensuring that Chalabi could emerge as a powerful political figure in the new Iraq. Paul Bremer himself would acknowledge the failure of De-Ba'athification as a result of Washington's choices noting "the mistake I made was turning it over to the Governing Council, I should have turned it over instead to a judicial body of some kind".[111] Chalabi was able to secure positions for his close followers and dominate the IGC as a result of Washington's favor but did nothing to advance the political process in reforming the country, serving only as an obstacle to the needs of the administrators. On the ground in Iraq, the policy was disastrous, disbanding what remained of central governance and creating grievances towards the American occupation among people who previously had none.

Demobilization and disbandment of the Iraqi security forces went against all advice given by American administrators on the ground such as General Garner, and intelligence officials. Nonetheless, Bremer would enact the directive to disband the Iraqi security forces under direct orders from Washington. General Garner notes that by the time that Bremer arrived as his replacement the Iraqi military had largely demobilized of its own volition and returned to their homes.[112] It was the belief of Garner and his staff that the existing Iraqi military would have to be brought back to fill in the security vacuum that had been created as a result of the low number of coalition forces. Plans between Garner, and the head of American military forces in Iraq,

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[111] "Lost Year in Iraq," October 17, 2006.
[112] Ibid.

Tommy Franks, involved the use of the Iraqi military as an additional source of manpower to supplement the minimal number of American troops. It is noted by Garner that these additional troops would have been vital to maintaining security in the country.[113] Washington's unwillingness to listen to the advice of its personnel on the ground in Iraq, and decision to follow its own interests prevented the reformation of the Iraqi military denying access to hundreds of thousands of potential troops that were calculated in the occupation plans of administrators on the ground. The directive also stipulated that the members of the armed forces were not to receive pay and none of their weapons were accounted for. These additional stipulations exacerbated the situation from one of having to deal with a large number of manpower being denied, to creating grievances between the American occupation administration and the ex-soldiers who were now denied the ability to economically sustain themselves and prevented from any meaningful participation in the new system. The disbanded soldiers under Washington's policy served as the initial recruits for the insurgency that would develop in the country creating additional security problems that the occupation was unable to contain, throwing the stability and potential success of any political process into doubt. Additionally, the lack of Iraqi manpower to supplement the coalition troops mean that the occupation forces could not adequately defend vital areas, leading to infiltration of the Iraqi borders by non-state actors and the prevalence of lawlessness in the country. The decision to disband the Iraqi armed forces, was a unilateral decision by Washington that contrasted with the advice of the advisors on the ground. The inconsistencies between the needs of the personnel on the ground and the interests of Washington caused a deterioration of the security environment. The occupation forces factored in the return of the Iraqi armed forces as a necessity in their occupation plans but were denied

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[113] "Lost Year in Iraq," October 17, 2006.

this opportunity by Washington. By not seeing eye to eye with the advice of the administrators in Iraq, Washington's interference created more hurdles for the occupation by denying the manpower needed from the Iraqi army and fueling the creation of an organized insurgency.

A major commonality between the American and British occupations that left unsustainable foundations for the development of a stable new state and political processes necessary to foster national identity was the unrealistic expectations the powers had going into the occupation period. Particularly the occupying powers underestimated the level of security that their own forces would have to provide in the absence of a central authority. In regard to the British, Iraq was occupied for two main reasons none of which had the reformation a stable Iraqi state as the primary objective in mind. The British sought the occupation and control over the port of Basra for easier access to their colonies in the Indian subcontinent, whereas the rest of Iraq was occupied in order to achieve victory over the Ottoman Empire in the First World War. The British prior to the occupation of the entire territory of Iraq did not have plans to reform a state in the area and plans for the continued occupation were only developed following the expulsion of Ottoman forces from the region and the granting of the League of Nations mandate. It is clear from the violent events during the occupation, particularly the revolt of 1920, and the British administration's inability to maintain control over the tribal areas of Iraq, that they did not maintain an adequate level of a security presence in the country. Despite their own characterization of their occupation as a liberation of Iraq from the domination of the Ottoman Empire, a robust security structure was needed in the area in order to provide stability in the aftermath of the Ottoman Empire's demise. The British were unable to provide this due to their unrealistic expectations over how much an investment control over their new mandate would require. Administrative reforms such as increased centralization by making Baghdad the capital

of the previously three administrative provinces, the creation of an artificial elite based off of a single ethno-sectarian group and increased taxation were not met with commensurate levels of a British security presence leading to a lawlessness outside of the large urban centers, the outbreak of revolts led by local religious and tribal leaders, and a lack of authority by the monarchy when the reins of power were handed over. The British were largely unable to secure consistent obedience from the public in regard to their security infrastructure, and as is clear from the earlier paragraphs of this section their administrative programs were largely inadequate. The failure of both the British security and administrative structures provided an unsuitable foundation for a new Iraqi state, as is clear from the impotent nature of the monarchy following the departure of direct British control.

The Americans were similarly over optimistic and held unrealistic expectations in their approach to the occupation of Iraq. When drawing up plans for the invasion and occupation of Iraq, the Pentagon was almost entirely concerned with the invasion period, namely on what the best strategy overcome the military of Saddam Hussein was. Little attention was paid to what the American military and government would need to provide in the aftermath of the invasion, despite their political goals of shifting Iraq towards a stable democratic system. The highest levels of the American administration, namely the Secretary of Defense, did not believe a significant preoccupation with planning for the post-invasion environment was necessary, as the American military would be welcomed as liberators and heroes by the Iraqi public. It is only one month prior the execution of the invasion that Garner and his team are tasked with leading the post-invasion occupation process. These events show unrealistic beliefs on the part of the administration over what would be necessary in the post-invasion environment. Regardless of the image that Iraqi's would have of the American military upon their occupation of the country,

without a well thought out strategy planned beforehand, procedures in the post-invasion period would be ad hoc, piecemeal and would not efficiently bring to bear the resources necessary to secure and control a country of around twenty five million people. This is evidenced by the events which occurred in the aftermath of the invasion. Without a clear plan for what the military should be doing in the following Saddam's defeat, American soldiers were ordered into bases by their commanders due to a lack of any coherent strategy.[114] Lawlessness and looting prevailed in Iraq as a result. Without any central authority, and a diminished American presence the populace was in anarchy, engaging in looting of public buildings and enhancing the potential for underground criminal activity. The lack of an American presence to maintain order in the aftermath, gave the image to many Iraqi's that the Americans could not control the country. The events of this early period would set back the Americans in their occupation of the country as instead of transitioning control from the Ba'ath regime into their own hands smoothly, they had to work to reestablish order across the country before any reconstruction process could begin. The Americans had to contend with a populace that began to see them as unreliable and unable to maintain control. Had more realistic expectations been held by the administration and more attention been given to the post-invasion period by the Pentagon, it is possible that government structures which disintegrated early on could have been maintained, lessening the burden on American administrators.[115]

The American administration also held unrealistic expectations on the level of soldiers needed to adequately secure the country and maintain order. Officers in the US military asserted that they would need upwards of three hundred thousand men to adequately secure Iraq and

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[114] "Losing Iraq," FRONTLINE, 2014, accessed April 20, 2020

[115] "Lost Year in Iraq," October 17, 2006.

ensure order.[116] The administration asserted that the 175 thousand were more than adequate for the occupation of the country and were unwilling to commit any additional investment. The reality on the ground was in line with the reasoning of the officers, the unsuitable number of troops hampered the ability of the Americans to provide security which led to the development of insurgencies among the Sunni and Shia communities, rampant levels of crime among the Iraqi populace, and the creation of an image of the Americans among Iraqis that they were unable to protect them and that they could not control the deteriorating political situation. It has been asserted numerous times by American officers such as General Garner, and General Franks that the troop figures desired by the administration were unreasonable and unrealistic, and that with such figures securing the entire country would have been impossible.

A common feature between the American and British occupations was the final result of creating Iraqi states that were ultimately exclusionary in nature and placed power in the hands of one or two ethno-sectarian groups to the detriment of the others. It is clear from the paragraphs analyzing the occupations themselves that the Americans and British were unable to recreate stable and inclusive governance in the country. The course of the British occupation assisted in establishing the domination of the Sunni Arab sectarian group over the rest of Iraqi society. The domination of the Sunni Arabs over Iraq was ended with the subsequent American invasion and occupation, which replaced the structure of domination with one led by Shia Arabs. This result is clear in determining that the Americans were unprepared for the occupation period and unable to institute their goal of a stable and inclusive democratic governance. Other than the domination of a single sectarian group over the entire society, both occupations led to the creation of frail institutional structures that were incapable of efficient governance and organization. These failed

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[116] Kenneth M. Pollack, "The Seven Deadly Sins of Failure in Iraq: A Retrospective Analysis of the Reconstruction," *Brookings* (blog), November 30, 2006.

institutions ensured the existence of a weak state, alongside powerful and influential sub state entities. The monarchy established in the aftermath of the British occupation was incapable of creating robust institutional structures that had positive effects on the Iraqi populace. Institutions under the monarchy were inefficient, an example being the total failure of standardized education due to rejection by local forces in the Shia south and the Kurdish regions.[117] Additionally, the governments institutions were incapable of administrating and centralizing the agricultural countryside for tax purposes. The state institutions found themselves incapable of replacing the religious and tribal structures common throughout the country. These failures ensured the monarchy would rely on violence and the military in order to remain in power, a strategy which would end in failure in the 40s and in 1958, heralding the end of the state. The administration formed in the aftermath of the American occupation follows a similar dynamic. The institutions of the new Iraqi Republic have consistently been found to be mired in corruption and underproviding their services. Examples include the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works being unable to deal with deteriorating water quality and pollution in Basra by 2018 leading to the hospitalization of hundreds of thousands.[118] Furthermore, the crisis was not acknowledged by the Ministry of Health who stated that water quality in the region was adequate and that they had no recorded hospitalizations. Weak institutions can also be seen in the case of the Iraqi military, which has consistently been unable to provide security for the Iraqi public since its inception in 2004. The most telling evidence comes from the fact that the majority of successes against ISIS in the country came from the Kurdish Peshmerga or Shia militias, both sub-state entities. Similar to the case of the British the weak institutions allowed for the

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[117] Liora Lukitz, *Iraq: The Search for National Identity*, 1st edition (London ; Portland, Ore: Routledge, 1995), 107-121.
[118] Human Rights Watch, "Basra Is Thirsty | Iraq's Failure to Manage the Water Crisis," Human Rights Watch, New York, July 22, 2019.

continued existence of powerful sub-state actors such as religious entities like the Al Khui foundation which provide services, such as education, that the state is inefficient in providing, or armed militias tasked with the protection of the public in place of the Ministries of Interior and Defense. The state the country was left in following the departure of the occupying powers was an overall unsuitable foundation for state and national development as is evidenced by the failed state status under the monarchy and the modern Iraqi state. Under the conditions outlined above national identity and national development cannot be advanced by the state in any meaningful manner due to its impotence and these concerns take a backseat to ethnic and sectarian interests championed by sub-state actors.

B. Transnational Shia Islam

Foreign interference's effect on the development of national identity development in Iraq is not only represented through direct occupation and administration by foreign forces. Influence of political forces in the country and the support of entities that do not seek the development of a politically unified Iraq also play a large role. Direct occupation and administration of the country negatively affected the development of national identity in the country by developing weak political foundations and institutions. Direct occupation played a large role in the unsatisfactory development of institutions and structures leading to a weak state. On the other hand, the influence and support of different entities by foreign powers, ultimate goal is to take advantage of the weak nature of the Iraqi state and fragmented nature of its politics in order to advance their own agenda. Rather than attempting to reform the nature of the Iraqi state transnational influences seek to either overturn the concept of "Iraq" as a nation in its entirety or enforce a particularistic definition of nationalism in the country that is not conducive to developing a coherent national identity for the all segments of Iraqi society. The foreign influence over the

political direction of Iraq in this manner comes from both states and non-state actors. In particular this section will deal with the transnational nature of Shia Islam on the politics of Iraq and the negative effect it has on the development of a unified national identity.

Since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime through the American occupation of Iraq in 2003, politics in Iraq has been based on sectarian differences which constitute the power structure, and organization of institutions in the country. The various rivalries within Iraq are not only ethnic or sectarian such as through Sunni-Shia rivalries but also involve struggle and cooperation between a variety of Shia groups ranging from militias supported by foreign powers to a religious political elite whose organizations were formed in exile while in Iran. The pattern of leadership in the Iraqi National Assembly and the results of elections to the premiership exemplify this pattern. In most cases delegates from Shia areas of the country to the National Assembly come from either the political wing of a state sanctioned sectarian militia, or from a Shia Islamist political party such as Al Dawa. This pattern of leadership makes it clear that our analysis of foreign influence and interference in Iraqi politics should not be limited to major events such as occupations, but also the transnational influence that political Shia Islam places on the country through the relationship with Iran and the wider world of Shia Islamism.

The transnational nature of Shia Islam has been evident since the beginning of Islam by which the descendants of the prophet Muhammad challenged the legitimacy of the Umayyad dynasty following the death of the Rashidun caliphs. The tension between the two opposing views of leadership of the Islamic ummah can be traced through the history of Islam with various Shia dynasties gaining power in regions over the Sunni majority and maintaining a cohesive theology and structure. Shia Islam however is more than a religious movement or a government institution and through the centuries has become a cultural and societal communal identity for

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communities in diverse regions from the Levant to Pakistan. Iraq, ethnically an Arab majority

state, maintained strong transnational communal and societal relationships with Shia worldwide

through the holiest of Shia cities, Karbala and Najaf, and through the international structure of

the Hawza, Shi'a Muslim seminaries, as well as the institution of the Marjiyya Al-Taqlid (the

source of emulation, the highest Shia authority to be followed) and their networks which

symbolically unite them in their faith based communities. Corboz, in her book on transnational

Shia Islam in Iraq lays out three areas accounting for Shia authority networking, charity, and

political activism.[119]

The establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979 introduced a new brand of

Islamist government to Shia societies by institutionalizing a specific type of Islamic rule, based

on the concept of Wilayat Al Faqih, or Guardianship of the Jurist. This concept entailed that the

new head of state in Iran, the Supreme Leader, was the highest authority of Islamic doctrine in

the absence of the prophet and the return of the Shia Imam. Whether the guiding principles of

Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of the new movement, were fully accepted or modified, was a

matter of lesser importance, as the rise in power of a Shia state strengthened the transnational

aspect of Shia Islamism. The central principles of this new state were revolutionary, promising a

Shia revolution across the Middle East from the Levant, to the Arabian Peninsula, to

Afghanistan.[120] In Iraq, the repressed Shia Islamist political groups under Saddam Hussein had

found new allies in their opposition to the state. The social ties between prominent figures of

Shia Islam in Iraq and Iran go further back than the revolution, but the revolution placed the

religious elite in control of Iran's politics. This in turn strengthened the political ties among Shia

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[119] Elvire Corboz, *Guardians of Shi'ism: Sacred Authority and Transnational Family Networks* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 1-13.
[120] Harith Hasan Al-Qarawee, "From Maliki to Abadi: The Challenge of Being Iraq's Prime Minister," 2016.

groups based in Iraq with the new Iranian state, many of whom such Al Dawa moved their base of operations to the country, and others such as SCIRI were formed with the financial and political backing of the revolutionary Iranian state. These social ties, and political alliances ensured that Iran would have significant control over the political direction of Iraq as these specific parties went on to become the ruling elite of the country in the post-2003 environment. Naturally, the direction the Islamist parties in Iraq sought to take the country was one that placed over Iraq a firmly Shia identity, an agenda that has been heavily supported and subsidized through direct material aid from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Shia Islamist political actors within Iraq are not a homogeneous block and are represented through alternative political forms, goals and methods. However, the issue of vital importance for this paper is that each of their discourses are similar in that they seek to maintain a sectarian ordered society, with Shia political authority at the highest levels of power and seek to block any alternative nation building program that would cause them to lose their hold on power. This agenda by the Shia parties in Iraq is one that is informed based on their commonality of being sectarian Islamist parties. Ordering Iraq politically in this manner suits the agenda of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who see a friendly Iraq as a vital necessity for their national security interests based off of the experiences of the Iran-Iraq War. Iran has therefore provided vast levels of support to the Iraqi Shia political parties to ensure their success and indebt them. This support includes things such as providing arms to the militias of the various Shia factions, providing electricity to the Shia areas of Iraq due to the country's unreliable power grid, and outright defense of the existing government through deployment of its own military forces against ISIS. These vital levels of support ensure that Iran maintains significant leverage over the Shia political forces in the country and by extension over the Iraqi state itself. This leverage can best

be demonstrated by the activities of the former general of the Quds Force, Qasem Soleimani, who would actively involve himself in the domestic politics of Iraq serving as an advisor for the state. Furthermore, it can be seen in the large influence that Iran has over Iraq's politicians directly such as pressuring members of the National Assembly to vote in a certain manner, such as rejecting a candidate for the premiership or demanding the expulsion of American troops from the country.

There are a number of groups and institutions in Iraq that are transnational in nature and ensure the continued high levels of foreign control from Iraq and contribute to the lack of an agenda by government to foster Iraqi national unity. An analysis of all Shia transnational groups in Iraq would require a separate paper in its own right and is unnecessary to the point of this section, which is to show the strength that transnational ties in the Shia community have towards undermining the development of national identity. Rather an analysis of the most powerful of these actors and their activities is sufficient in demonstrating this trend.

There is a strong clerical faction in the south of Iraq, centered in Najaf, presently lead by Ayatollah Ali Al Sistani, who himself is an Iranian by birth, and who since 2014 has maintained his own Shia militias. Al Sistani is seen by a majority of Iraqis, as well as other Shia Arabs in the Middle East as the highest figure of religious authority and is their source of "reference" for religious affairs. Al Sistani and his foundation are also widely respected for the social services that they provide in Iraq and their views on politics. Sistani is often seen to be the figure among the Iraqi Shia elite that has the least attachment to Iran and sought a democratic structure for Iraq in the post-occupation period. Nonetheless, while Iran may be the largest figure representing transnational ties it is not the only source that the Shia elite can call upon. Al Sistani's foundation is supported by donations or "Khums" from Shia across the world which due to his status, often

being seen as the highest religious authority, provides him with vast amounts of resources.[121] In

this regard Al Sistani's foundation can maintain itself regardless of the particular situations

occurring within Iraq, as is demonstrated through its resilience during Sistani's time in exile in

the United Kingdom. The international nature of Sistani's foundation is also a form of

transnationalism as it allows him large degrees of independence from the Iraqi government while

retaining a large influence over social development programs, contributing to his political

influence. This is relevant, as under these circumstances Al Sistani's constituency is first and

foremost the Shia community, not the communities of Iraq in their entirety and this has been

demonstrated in numerous occasions. Some of the most telling examples include Al Sistani's

support for the creation of a religious state, and his rejection of the 2/3 governate approval for

passing the constitution. While, Al Sistani does not support the presence of clerics in politics, on

numerous occasions he has voiced his opinion that Iraq should be a democratic state that has its

laws rooted in the principles of Shia Islam.[122] This demonstrates that Al Sistani's community is

first and foremost the Shia community, as it is clear that the Arab Sunni's, the Kurds, Assyrians,

and other smaller ethno-sectarian groups would reject such a situation. None of the concerns of

these communities were taken into account when advancing his agenda of seeking a Shia

Islamist state. Furthermore, Sistani demonstrates his commitment to the Shia community through

his statements on passing the Iraqi constitution. The Americans had stipulated in the TAL that

for a new constitution to be passed it would require a two-thirds majority in all Iraqi governates.

Al Sistani opposed this under the grounds that Arab Sunnis could reject the new constitution if

their governates voted against it and therefore advocated for national referendum rather than

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[121] Harith Hasan Al-Qarawee, "The 'Formal' Marjaʿ: Shiʿi Clerical Authority and the State in Post-2003 Iraq," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 46, no. 3 (May 27, 2019): 481–97.
[122] Ibid, 481-97.

through the referendum by governate, a plan that would offer an advantage to the Shia

community due to them representing around 60% of the country.[123] These examples clearly show

that Al Sistani retains a significant bias in the community that he is representing. Al Sistani does

not engage with the other sectors of Iraqi society to the same degree that he is among Iraqi Shia

and the majority of the financial support for his organization comes from Shia around the world.

Al Sistani' status as a Shia cleric and the influence of transnational sources of income prevent

Sistani from advocating for a unified Iraqi national identity, and move him towards satisfying the

concerns of the Shia community and strengthening their position in the society if albeit in a less

extreme, oppressive or violent manner than other Shia transnational actors.

Muqtada Al-Sadr, mentioned above, is one of the surviving sons of the martyred

Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr and, also the son in law of the martyred Grand Ayatollah

Muhammad Baqir Al Sadr. He inherited his family's clerical legitimacy as well as an extensive

social network among the Shia poor. His base is largely among the urbanized poor, throughout

Iraq, especially in the slums of Baghdad known as Sadr City, Basra and also reaching to the Shia

areas in Kirkuk.[124] Although not a Marja due to his young age, and lack of in depth theological

training, he rose to power early on, through his use of militant tactics establishing his personal

militia, the Mahdi Army, which from 2003 aimed attacks at the occupying US and coalition

forces. He has been closely aligned to the Dawa party and its leadership while opposed to the

power of the Al-Hakim family, and the ISCI. He has used the narrative that the Al-Hakims and

others who fled Iraq for Iran in the 80s abandoned the Iraqi Shia, while he and has family,

remained in Iraq, to be persecuted and martyred for their goal of establishing an Iraqi Shia

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[123] Adeed Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation* (Princeton University Press, 2009), 248.

[124] Leslie C. Longtin, "Restoring Medinat Al-Salaam: The Rise of Muqtada al-Sadr's Jaysh al-Mahdi," *Program of Liberal Studies, Masters Dissertations,* (Georgetown University, 2010).

State. Muqtada Al-Sadr has consistently used the mobilizing theme of martyrdom in his family under the context of Iraqi Shia symbolism.[125] Sadr's goal with this strategy has been to gain power over other Shia factions who chose to lead the opposition from foreign countries within the Shia transnational framework. His father and the Al-Sadr factions consistently used the theme of nationalism to appeal to their constituency. However, Al Sadr's status as a clerical leader and a representative for the Shia place Shia Islamist, and tribalism as a basis of their revolutionary programs. Al Sadr's calls for a nationalist Iraq ring hollow and should generally be seen as a strategy to gain more power vis-a-vi the other Shia actors who maintain more robust transnational ties. Al Sadr's mere lip service to the idea of nationalism is clear upon taking into account the Mahdi Army's violent sectarian activities in 2005 and 2006, where they were actively involved in running sectarian death squads in the Arab Sunni areas of Baghdad.[126] Al Sadr has made no attempts to appeal to the other ethno-sectarian groups in the country and maintains influence primarily in the Shia areas of the country. After the 2005 elections which gave a majority to the INC alliance in parliament, Al Sadr adopted a conciliatory position and in later years has formed alliances with the ISCI and accepted the clerical authority of Al-Sistani. Muqtada has chosen to mix Shia Islam with rhetoric of an Iraqi nationalist movement, but which in no way is inclusive or focused on building a nation state. Although not within the circle of close proxies of the Iranian Quds force, as many in the PMU are, Muqtada has accepted Iranian support in a transnational context and defers to their decisions in critical affairs particularly after his military defeat in 2005 by the central government.[127]

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[125] Elvire Corboz, *Guardians of Shi'ism: Sacred Authority and Transnational Family Networks* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 123-32.

[126] Toby Dodge, *Iraq - From War to a New Authoritarianism*, 1st edition (London: Routledge, 2013), 63-64.

[127] Nader Uskowi, *Temperature Rising: Iran's Revolutionary Guards and Wars in the Middle East* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2018), 53-54.

Another clerical network is represented by the Hakim family, descendants of the Grand Ayatollah Munson al Hakim. The Hakim family are most important for their founding of the SCIRI while in exile during the Iran-Iraq War (now the ISCI in the Iraqi parliament) with the support of the Iranian government. The support of Iran allowed the SCIRI to maintain itself as the largest opposition group to Saddam Hussein from the 80s until the collapse of the regime. However, its value as a political force has declined as the parties that used to constitute its membership began to break off and advance their own agendas. The SCIRI's armed wing was established as the Badr Brigade which had been fighting in Iraq since the era of the Iran-Iraq War but is no longer affiliated with the Al Hakim family due to positional changes on political leadership. This armed wing maintains itself as one of the most powerful sectarian militias in the country, notable maintaining control over the Ministry of Interior in order to advance its political authority.[128] The Badr Brigades received training and equipment from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard during the Iran-Iraq War and maintain their cooperation in the present day seen through consistent transfers of weaponry and high-profile visits between the leadership of the Quds Force and the militia leadership.

The Al Khoei foundation is another Shia clerical institution with transnational networks. Rather than maintaining militarized groups and political parties on the ground in Iraq, the Al Khoei foundation maintains the importance of the transactional relationship between leader and clients as a central principle with charitable networks throughout the Shia region from the Middle East to Malaysia.[129] Al Khoei was recognized worldwide prior to his death in 1992 as the predominant Shia religious authority, the position Al Sistani now occupies. His political-

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[128] Toby Dodge, *Iraq - From War to a New Authoritarianism*, 1st edition (London: Routledge, 2013), 63-64
[129] Elvire Corboz, *Guardians of Shi'ism: Sacred Authority and Transnational Family Networks* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 177-180.

theological position stipulated the primacy of the Shia ummah with its religious elite as guides

and rejected the concept of the rule of a single infallible leader taught by al Khomeini and

followed by clerics in Qom. Despite this major theological dispute, transnational ties with Iran

are strongly maintained under, Khamenei. In sum, rather than maintaining an activist on the

ground in Iraq, as done by Al Sistani, the Al Khoei foundation remains an extremely well-funded

intermediary for the transnational clerical system of the Shia religious elite.[130]

The position of clerical Shia power of the Marjaiya Al Taqlid, which is embedded in Shia

Islam reaches out across borders, but it does not have a recognized constitutional authority or

uniform political hierarchy. The clerical leadership which has become stronger over the past

decade exists alongside the formal government.[131] The structure of the Iraqi government was laid

out in the Constitution adopted in 2005. The constitution defined Iraq as a single representative

sovereign parliamentary state of multiple nationalities and religions. However, this structure

enabled the non-clerical Shia Islamist parties to gain and maintain majority rule in the country

through a sectarian system and presently sustained linkage to a defined international Shia system.

The rise to governance by the non-cleric Shia Islamist political parties is the second channel of

transnational political activism within Iraq as relates to the Shia community and is closely tied to

the Shia paramilitary forces, representing a third Shia transnational actor.

The third transnational actor in Iraq's Shia political landscape are the many paramilitary

groups that have gained legitimacy through popular, religious and state support. In some cases,

the groups are affiliated with a recognized Iraqi political party and, in other cases, are

independent political forces. These groups are socio- political movements within Iraq in their

[130] Elvire Corboz, *Guardians of Shi'ism: Sacred Authority and Transnational Family Networks* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 177-180.

[131] Harith Hasan Al-Qarawee, "The 'Formal' Marjaʿ: Shiʿi Clerical Authority and the State in Post-2003 Iraq," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 46, no. 3 (May 27, 2019): 481–97.

own right. Shia militias, by nature, are transnational with varying degrees of, Iraqi national

support but also, serve as proxies of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The support of Shia armed

groups abroad is a main facet of Iranian security policy is led by the IRGC Quds force, active

across the Middle East.[132] Iraq is not the first or only case where this dynamic has been seen, the

most successful example being Hezbollah in Lebanon. The Quds force provides financial and

armed support to their groups, in order to advance Iranian security interests in Middle Eastern

states which range, for example having Iraqi militias cross into Syria in order to support the

Assad regime in its war and combating ISIS from 2014 to 2017. More importantly, the political

strategy of the Quds force, reaches beyond armed conflict, and aims to promote the leadership of

the members of their Shia proxies in order for them to seize political positions in the government

of the countries they penetrate. They finance and promote their chosen candidates to win seats in

parliament, gain security positions or oversight of the military administration. The effect that this

has on Iraq's politics is profound with the Iran dominated Shia militias making up the second

largest political coalition in the National Assembly and establishing themselves as members of

the ruling government. By and large their actions have become shielded from the accountability

of government and despite attempts to subordinate them into the military command structure

they retain their own command structures, and agendas separate from that of the Iraqi state. The

Badr Organization is an example of an Iraqi paramilitary unit melding together the transnational

elements of Shia Islam. From 2003 to 2005 with the demobilization of the Iraqi military and de-

Ba'athification program under the CPA, the Badr Organization with the backing of the Quds

Force, were able to access the Iraqi security forces, the Minister of Interior position being handed

over to them. According to Nasr Uskowi, the Quds force used its senior operatives in the Iraqi

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[132] Nader Uskowi, *Temperature Rising: Iran's Revolutionary Guards and Wars in the Middle East* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2018), 49-63.

Security Forces to politicize and subordinate this institution of the Iraqi government to the whims of the paramilitary group and by extension an Iranian agenda.[133]

The strengthening of Shia political parties in the governance of Iraq has resulted in a new socio-political order, reconfiguring the state away from the idea of a multi-ethnic nationalism regardless of what is said in the constitution, to a political system dominated by sectarian agendas and allegiances. This system is bolstered and maintained by the transnational programs and ties that the parties and political actors maintain. Each Shia Islamist parliamentary party in Iraq has its origins as a Shia program with linkages through decades with Iran. The ISCI, from its roots under the Al-Hakim brothers in Iran during the Iran-Iraq War, to the present, remain in governmental positions with linkage to Iran. For example, the Al-Hakim family have dominated the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, heading the ISCI-led Shia coalition in the 2014 elections and remaining in government under both Haider Al Abadi and Abdul Mahdi. The Sadrist Movement under Muqtada Al- Sadr, has been a leading party within the Iraqi parliament from its first ventures with the Mahdi Army. Although, Muqtada Al-Sadr relies on a rhetoric and program which presents his movement as an Iraqi Arab based nationalism, overall his program of state building is Shia centered authority with close ties to Iran for support and financing.[134] This is clear through his alliances with political figures that seek to maintain the existing sectarian system at different points in time such as Nouri Al Maliki during the early period of his premiership and forming a coalition government with the Fatah Alliance, a coalition of the political wings of the sectarian Shia militias, trained and funded by the Iranian government.[135]

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[133] Nader Uskowi, *Temperature Rising: Iran's Revolutionary Guards and Wars in the Middle East* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2018), 49-63.

[134] Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), 185-211.

[135] Ibid, 185-211.

Ultimately, this demonstrates that like the Al Hakim family, the Dawa, and the militias that the Sadrist Movement is committed to upholding the political system of sectarian domination and allegiance rather than national development.

The Shia-centric state building project by local political forces including the clerical establishment, political parties and paramilitary group with transnational participation and support, most significantly from the Islamic Republic of Iran has contributed in preventing the development of nation building in Iraq since 2003. The control that the Shia have over the National Assembly and the vast influence Iran wields over political, religious, and security forces in the country ensures that the existing system will not change to become more inclusive. Enacting a program of Iraqi nationalism that downplays the importance of sectarian identity would be disruptive to the success of the existing political forces ruling government who have made their political careers upon a sectarian agenda, and would be unacceptable to Iranian interests who seek to maintain the existing system in Iraq due to their ability to influence political events on the ground and use it as a base to project power in the region. The Shia government has rejected any active Sunni identity or unity in the government process which has caused over the years a Sunni insurgency and civil war. Furthermore, the state itself has been found to be complicit in violence against the Sunni community in the massacres done by the Ministry of Interior in 2006, repression by the army for the duration of Maliki's rule, and violence by militias following liberation of Sunni areas from ISIS. Arab Sunnis over the last 13 years have rejected the Shia sectarian state project with many coming to adopt their own sectarian views of a new Iraq rooted in Sunni Islamism, contributing to the ease in which ISIS was able to take over half the country. The lack of inclusion of the Arab Sunni's in building the new Iraqi state or being included meaningfully in the new system has caused currents of

rejection, violence, acceptance and protest to the Shia state.[136] At this point in time the sectarian system has begun to lose popularity even among the mass of Iraqi Shia, but it remains durable due to the robust transnational ties that the political, religious, and security actors retain.

The political activities and social ties of the various Shia political paramilitary groups, foundations and individuals analyzed above shed light on the overarching importance of transnational relations in Iraq affecting political alignment, goals, and outcomes. In particular there are three elements of transnationalism among the Shia that play the largest role in preventing the development and institutionalization of nationalism. First and foremost, the breadth of transnationalism in the country frames the goals and policies of Shia political groups and leaders in terms of religion rather than in terms of the state. The framing of goals and policies has been conducted in this manner from the onset of transferring power from the CPA to the new Iraqi government. The most telling period that illustrates this dynamic can be seen from 2006 to 2011, under the administration of Nouri Al Maliki. During this period state institutions deemed most vital to the state were parceled out to the different Shia political groups and parties. For example, by 2006 the Ministry of Interior, under Baqr Jaber Al Zubeidi was staffed almost entirely with members of the Badr Brigades who set themselves up as sectarian death squads rather than the arbitrators of law and order.[137] These death squads' ultimate goal was to change the demographics around Baghdad from being majority Sunni to being majority Shia, whereas security for the population was largely abandoned in favor of advancing this sectarian agenda. This policy is one that is clearly motivated by religious and sectarian concerns rather than stabilizing the country under the new administration and restoring law and order. The Badr

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[136] Oula Kadhum, "The Transnational Politics of Iraq's Shia Diaspora," Carnegie Middle East Center, accessed April 26, 2019.

[137] Toby Dodge, *Iraq - From War to a New Authoritarianism*, 1st edition (London: Routledge, 2013), 64.

Brigades did not end their sectarian policy until after their agenda for demographic change was completed and received only mild complaints from the central government who made no use of the military forces to halt the program. Another example can be seen in the provision of services by the Iraqi government. In 2006, the Ministry of Water and Electricity was providing some level of services for the Shia areas of Baghdad, whereas Sunni areas in the western half of the city were denied service. When these areas were replaced with Shia inhabitants upon the success of the police forces sectarian program service was restored to these areas. These examples show a clear preoccupation with political goals rooted in maximization of benefit for their own religious group rather than goals at the national level. Due to their transnational ties pressure to work alongside or for the benefit of different constituencies is limited. Overwhelmingly, Shia structures provide the majority of political clout for these groups. Therefore, to maximize their political gains it is logical for them to advance a purely sectarian agenda as the value of reaching across the isle or compromise is inferior to that of sectarianism. Due to their transnational ties Shia political groups receive political funding from Shia actors outside of the state, and if in jeopardy will receive military support from their foreign benefactors in the form of military aid and direct intervention as is clear with Iranian intervention during the war against ISIS and the drafting of foreign Shia into Iraqi based militias.

The support that these groups receive when in jeopardy is vital to understanding the next element of transnationalism in Shia politics. The political clout of sectarian Shia leadership and their ability to exert control to a large extent is based off of ties and connections that exist outside of Iraq. In particular, Iran and the Quds Force of the IRGC play a large role in ensuring the continued political success of various sectarian Shia politicians and controlling the power dynamics of various paramilitary and political groups. A prime example can be seen in Iran's

ability to splinter the Sadrist faction and establish a secondary paramilitary group from its defectors that pledges their allegiance to the IRGC known as Asaib Ahl Al Haq (The League of Justice). In the early years of the new administration Muqtada Al Sadr was unwilling to toe the line to Iranian planning and coordination, portraying himself as an independent actor among the Shia. Sadr's defeat at the hands of the government in 2006 allowed Iran to exploit unrest in his ranks and form The League of Justice, run by Qais Al Khazali, an individual totally beholden to Iranian interest in order to retain his newfound political authority.[138] Another major feature of this dynamic can be seen with Iran's ability to rally consensus and exert direct control over Iraq's Shia members of parliament. Nouri Al Maliki was a generally disrespected figure among the majority of Shia political groups in the parliament during his term as Prime Minister due to his low-ranking status prior to occupying the position and perceptions of him being power hungry. To a large extent however, with the exception of the Sadrists, the Shia figures in the parliament did not break ranks with his policies as Iran viewed him favorably. It is only by 2011, where Maliki is increasingly viewed with distaste by Iran that he begins to lose the support of the National Assembly and upon total abandonment of Iranian favor in 2014 where he is forced to resign. Without a doubt Maliki's actions have a large role in explaining the opposition to him by members of the National Assembly, but what is most telling is that without Iranian support Maliki is unable to retain any form of consensus around his rule among the Shia parties. Another example of this dynamic can be seen more openly following the death of Qassim Soleimani whereupon at the behest of Iran all Shia members of the National Assembly voted for the expulsion of American troops from the country. This demonstrates the considerable control that Iran as a foreign actor has over the politicians and the Iraqi system. Voting to oust American

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[138] Nader Uskowi, *Temperature Rising: Iran's Revolutionary Guards and Wars in the Middle East* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2018), 53-54.

soldiers from the country provides no tangible benefit for Iraq and is a loss due to the valuable

role these soldiers have in training the Iraqi Armed Forces. The only tangible benefit in voting

them out would have gone to Iran who view them as a security threat. These examples clearly

demonstrate not only the significant influence that Iran wields among Shia politicians and groups

in the country but demonstrates that these transnational ties are strong enough that under

significant pressure Iraqi politicians will vote against the own interests of their country.

The third element of Shia transnationalism that plays a large role in hindering the

development and institutionalization of an Iraqi nationalism is the importance of the

transnational networks in developing institutions that exist parallel to the government which are

overtly sectarian in nature. In our analysis of the specific Shia transnational actors earlier in the

section it can be seen that all the groups from those of the clerical foundations to the paramilitary

groups operate their own institutional structures in addition to the ones of government. These

structures regularly provide social services such as the distribution of food and aid to the poor,

providing educational facilities, and security. As has been noted earlier in the section, Shia

transnational groups regularly receive funding from abroad either from individual donations or

through patronage by a foreign state benefactor. This ensures that the services provided by Shia

transnational groups is sustainable. On the other hand, services provided by the government are

widely seen as inadequate, from their ability to provide security, to the disposal of trash. This is

clear through the fact that it is the Shia militias who are seen by the majority of the Shia Iraqi

population as being responsible for the defeat of ISIS, and the inadequate treatment of water in

the southern areas of the country by government.[139] While these transnational actors

simultaneously operate these non-state institutions, they at the same time compose the

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[139] Human Rights Watch, "Basra Is Thirsty | Iraq's Failure to Manage the Water Crisis," Human Rights Watch, New York, July 22, 2019.

government itself. The Badr Organization operates its own social service programs under the militia and is at the same time a member of the ruling government. Recognizing that the goals of these groups are ultimately sectarian, they are positioned to advance a service oriented sectarian agenda through the use of their own organizations, while preventing the advancement of any project for Iraqi national dialogue or development at the level of government. The privileged political positions that the Shia transnational actors occupy in government essentially ensures that the services provided by their own non-state groups will remain viable in providing for Shia areas some level of basic services and that government does not attempt to institute national programs which would bring an end to the sectarian system in the country.

C. Foreign Relations and the Kurdistan Regional Government

The Kurds of Iraq have managed to establish and maintain an autonomous administration in most of the ethnically Kurdish areas of the country since the end of the Gulf War. As noted in the historical section of the paper, the political actors in Kurdistan dominated by the KDP and PUK have consistently sought the objective of Kurdish ethno-nationalism and an independent state. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) does not provide these actors with their ultimate goal of formal independence, but its establishment has offered autonomy, political institutions, and security independence for the Kurds of Iraq. It can reliably be said that the KRG essentially provides internal sovereignty over their own affairs without taking the final step of formal independence and requiring international recognition.[140] This dynamic of the KRG is of importance to the goal of demonstrating the effects the foreign actors on the development of national identity in Iraq through three interrelated factors. First, the KRG is a political entity that exists alongside the central government with its own security forces not under the purview of the

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[140] David Romano, "Iraqi Kurdistan and Turkey: Temporary Marriage?," *Middle East Policy* 22, no. 1 (2015): 89–101.

Iraqi military insulating the region from developments occurring around the rest of the country and preventing the development of shared experiences. Second, with the institutions in place for a separate state in almost everything but formal independence, the incentives towards working for Iraqi goals is foregone in favor of advancing Kurdish interests. These two factors create a situation where the existence of the KRG encourages an atmosphere whereupon foreign states can and will engage with the region as an international partner separate from that of Iraq hindering the ability of the Iraqi government to ensure continued compliance from the region. The overall result of this dynamic is an inability for any Iraqi government to be able to include Kurdish political forces in any nation building process due to the KRG's own national project and the power that being an international actor in their own right offers them. The 2017 independence referendum makes this clear.

An understanding of the structure of the Kurdistan Regional Government is necessary to further elaborate on the factors that lead to widespread foreign influence in the region. In 1991 as noted in the history section, Iraqi forces withdrew from Kurdistan and the KRG was established with its own political structures and security forces. The administration that was set up notably excluded areas such as Kirkuk and the surrounding oil rich areas, territory that had been claimed by the Kurds since 1974. Subsequently, the borders of Kurdistan have repeatedly been the scene and focus of foreign interests in the area. Since its establishment in 1991 the KRG has maintained its own security forces known as the Peshmerga. These Peshmerga are not a united force and maintain allegiance to one of the two dominant Kurdish political parties either the KDP or PUK. However, they are committed to the defense of Kurdistan's territorial integrity and the maintenance of the region's autonomy. Administration of the region is not entirely centralized. Prior military conflict and continued political disagreement between the KDP and

PUK ensures that each political party rules over and administers its own territory and strongholds. However, in dealing with the Iraqi government and foreign states in matters related to security and economic interest, as well as setting region wide standards to be upheld the regional level institutions of the KRG play a vital role. Other than the Peshmerga the KRG maintains its own parliament separate from that of the federal government and is able to legislate. Importantly, priority is given to the laws of the KRG inside its own borders even if it conflicts with a standard or law set by the Iraqi government, demonstrating a large amount of internal sovereignty. The KRG maintains 19 separate ministries responsible for managing the aspects of the region's affairs as diverse as security, to energy policy, to agriculture. The cabinet is chosen by the majority party in the parliament and is headed by a prime minister who shares executive powers with a president chosen through direct elections. Internal sovereignty over its own affairs is robust for the KRG the only limiting factor being a degree of financial power that Iraq's federal government has over the region. Iraq and the KRG maintain under the Regional Development Program that oil revenues from the region will first be entered into the national treasury and then distributed to the KRG based on the size of its population in proportion to the rest of Iraq's at the time of the treaty's negotiation.[141] This ensured that on paper Kurdistan would receive around 17% of the state's budget. This treaty should be simply seen as a legal standard as Baghdad has often withheld payments, underpaid, and the KRG have refused to transfer revenues from newly exploited oil resources developed after the agreement was established, preferring to negotiate direct deals with foreign actors namely Turkey. Overall, it can be said that the high level of autonomy and robust self-administration of the KRG makes it an effective political actor in its own right with the Iraqi federal government holding little power

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[141] María Lasa Aresti, "Oil and Gas Revenue Sharing in Iraq," 2015, 24.

over the region due to an absence of a monopoly on force and large levels of independence provided by the Iraqi constitution.

The borders of Kurdistan since 1991, through 2017 have all been the focus of foreign actors in Kurdish regional politics namely Turkey, the United States, and Iran each with their own security and economic concerns. The interests of these foreign actors in the region of Iraqi Kurdistan contribute to the highly autonomous nature of the KRG due to the entity being seen as a separate international actor from the Iraqi federal government. As noted above the KRG's ability to create separate partnerships at the internationals stage in regard to economic and security ties reduce the necessity and desirability for the Kurdistan region to continue any form of nation building project with Iraq due to their commitment to their own national aspirations. In achieving this goal, the KRG maintains its own diplomatic missions separate from those of Iraq in a number of countries including the United States, United Kingdom, Iran, Turkey, and other countries in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.[142] Furthermore, the KRG will often independently host foreign heads of state to Erbil and conduct international negotiations without consulting Baghdad.[143] These developments are clear indicators of Kurdish intentions seeking their own path forward rather than moving hand in glove with Baghdad.

Arguably the most important international actor for the KRG is neighboring Turkey. Turkey relies on the KRG for both vital economic needs in the form of petroleum and in countering the influence of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a militant separatist group focused on independence for the Kurdish regions of Turkey. Turkey is a net importer of petroleum resources which are vital for the continued growth of its economy. The relative

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[142] Yoosef Abbas Zadeh and Sherko Kirmanj, "The Para-Diplomacy of the Kurdistan Region in Iraq and the Kurdish Statehood Enterprise," *The Middle East Journal* 71, no. 4 (October 15, 2017): 587–606.
[143] Ibid.

stability of the Kurdistan region in the aftermath of the American invasion and the close

geographic proximity of the territory to Turkey made the KRG an extremely attractive partner in

procuring these resources. As a result, a direct pipeline from Kurdistan to Turkey was negotiated

between the two sides ensuring a consistent supply for the Turks and a longtime partner for the

sale of Kurdish oil.[144] Furthermore, Turkey has expanded investment in the KRG massively,

with 70% of all total investments in Iraq being in the Kurdistan region. The partnership between

the KRG and Turkey extended into the security environment deals and assurances by the KRG

that they would confront PKK elements in their own territory and cooperate with Turkish

security forces.[145] This cooperation between Turkey and a Kurdish political entity is atypical as

Turkey has traditionally seen powerful Kurdish political groups as a threat to its territorial

integrity and national security. The direct deals between the KRG and Turkey and continued

cooperation since the early 2000s highlights the value of the KRG as an independent

international actor.

The United States also sees value in the KRG as an international actor. Ties with the

KRG are mainly valued by the Americans in the realm of security. Prior to the invasion of Iraq,

the KRG made the decision to allow American soldiers to be stationed in their territory that

would then be used to assist the invasion of the country. Additionally, the Peshmerga was widely

seen by the Americans to be one of the best security partners in the region often assisting the

Americans in operations outside of the Kurdistan region following the occupation. During the

period in which ISIS was expanding the Peshmerga were recipients of major Western military

assistance in the form of arms sales and were labeled as a highly valued international partner in

[144] David Romano, "Iraqi Kurdistan and Turkey: Temporary Marriage?," *Middle East Policy* 22, no. 1 (2015): 89–101.
[145] Henri J Barkey, "Turkey's New Engagement in Iraq: Embracing Iraqi Kurdistan," 2010, 20.

combatting terrorism by the international coalition.[146] The Americans also maintain military bases in the Kurdistan region in order to maintain their presence the country in the face of the increasing political authority Iran holds over Baghdad, and the hostility of the Shia militias to the continued American military presence. While security concerns are the crux of the relationship between the KRG and the United States, there has also been expansion of direct economic ties without Baghdad as a middleman. The American oil company Chevron has conducted drilling operations in the Kurdistan region at the Sarta and Qara Dagh fields.[147] Other companies such as Exxon Mobil have conducted oil exploration ventures intermittently throughout the region. This direct cooperation with the Kurdistan region has been met with objection by the Iraqi federal government in Baghdad, who are otherwise unable to stop the continued direct partnership of the KRG with other international actors.[148]

Iran finds itself in partnership with the KRG mainly for security concerns while maintaining moderate economic ties and partnerships with the region. Iran seeks to maintain positive relations with the KRG as a means of leverage against its own Kurdish separatists, namely the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK). Having the KRG pressure the PJAK has not always been successful for the Iranians with members of the militant group often moving across borders straining the relationship. This has not ended the relationship nor soured the relationship to a large degree, as demonstrated by the continued direct economic ties between the KRG and Iran. Following Turkey, Iran is the largest direct investor in the KRG and the regions second largest trading partner. Trade is conducted directly between the Iranians and the Kurds without

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[146] Abbas Zadeh and Kirmanj, "The Para-Diplomacy of the Kurdistan Region in Iraq and the Kurdish Statehood Enterprise."
[147] Robin Mills, "Under the Mountains – Kurdish Oil and Regional Politics," 2016.
[148] Abbas Zadeh and Kirmanj, "The Para-Diplomacy of the Kurdistan Region in Iraq and the Kurdish Statehood Enterprise."

the mediation of Baghdad. This is clear through the Kurdish prime minister's visit to Tehran in 2018 to negotiate an expansion of border crossings for increased trade.[149] Furthermore, the KRG and Iran negotiated a proposed cross border pipeline that would supply Iranian natural gas to the KRG for its electricity needs. The actual construction of the pipeline has been halted due to the reapplication of American sanctions on Iran. Similar to the cases of Turkey and the United States, the KRG has demonstrated itself to be a valuable international partner in its own right to the Iranians without the need for Baghdad. The fact that foreign states are able to deal with this autonomous region as a separate partner in its own right has significant effects on the Iraqi government in Baghdad and the ability for the country to pursue any type of nation building projects. The following paragraphs will shed light on the consequences the high level of autonomy the Kurdish region and direct partnership with foreign forces has on the ability for the country to develop a national project.

The first consequence of unchecked Kurdish autonomy and independent foreign relations is that the region becomes isolated from developments occurring around the rest of the country preventing the development of shared experiences with the rest of the Iraqi population. These shared experiences are valuable in creating points of commonality between communities that are otherwise foreign to each other in ethnicity and language, something vital for nation building in a country as diverse as Iraq. The KRG's separate international policies and isolation from the rest of the country both geographically and politically create separate political experiences for the Kurds. This dynamic can best be illustrated through the fact that the nationwide protests which began in late 2019 against foreign interference in Iraq's affairs and high levels of corruption did not spread to the areas of the KRG. It can be reasonably concluded that the reasons for this are

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[149] "Iran, Iraqi Kurdistan Look to Bolster Trade," Financial Tribune, February 21, 2018.

that Kurdish citizens found themselves to be less concerned with direct Iranian influence due to their region's independent relationship with the country. Rather the citizens of Kurdistan are more concerned with corruption and tribalism at the local level of the KRG than at the federal level due to their relative independence from Baghdad gained as a result of their valuable international status.[150] It is clear that the high level of autonomy and its state like status in the international arena offers the region a large degree of insulation from what happens in the majority Arab areas of the country. The overall result is the continued focus on Kurdish national goals, and Kurdish political issues rather than on fostering national dialogue between the rest of Iraq and the Kurdistan region. The Iraqi state has almost no ability to stop this trend or engage with the Kurds on the matter of a common national identity. The KRG's maintenance of its own security forces ensures that Iraq is unable to maintain a monopoly on the use of force, and the KRG's international partners acceptance of the status quo means they are under no significant pressure to advance the interests or participate in any Iraqi nation building process. This dynamic ensures that Iraq is not only unable to attract the KRG to a nation building project but would be unable of pressuring them into dialogue on the matter.

With the institutions in place for a separate state in everything but formal independence the incentives towards working for an "Iraqi" goal are gone. The increased autonomy protected by the Iraqi constitution and the KRG's ability to conduct independent international actions without much consequence from Baghdad ensures that the government of the KRG finds no incentive towards working for an Iraqi goal, and finds new avenues in which it can advance its own goals of Kurdish nationalism and independence. The greatest illustration of this trend is the region's decision to hold an independence referendum in 2017, knowing full well that the results

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[150] "Kurdistan Politics at a Crossroads," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, accessed June 20, 2020.

would overwhelmingly be in favor of independence from Iraq. The KRG found the Iraqi government to be at its weakest point since 2003, the immediate security threat of ISIS was largely contained, and the KRG believed its international partners would be accepting of its decision to leave Iraq considering its significant ties in the security and economic realms with regional and international powers. The KRG did not anticipate that the international reaction to the independence referendum would be hostile, and internal conflicts between the PUK and KDP scuttled the success of the independence move. While this attempt at complete independence from Iraq was a failure it is clear that it remains the ultimate aspiration of the KRG. Its international partnerships only add impetus in moving towards this goal and preventing the possibility for Iraqi national development with Iraq. The KRG's independent foreign policy in the realms of security and energy make it a prime partner, and while its ties may not have been enough to turn international opinion in its favor in 2017 it has had a clear effect on the political calculations of the KRG who would have previously never attempted such bold action due to fears not only of Iraqi reprisal but also regional vulnerability from Turkey and Iran.

The existence of the highly autonomous zone of the KRG encourages an atmosphere whereupon foreign states can engage with this region as a partner separate from the Iraqi government, preventing the development of a robust central authority. The central government's own weakness and the valuable status of the KRG to international actors both contribute to this dynamic. The central government finds it protests to the KRG and international actors such as Turkey or Western multinational corporations ignored regarding direct relationships with the autonomous region. International actors will not cease cooperation with the region due to its significant value for both security and economic interests. This dynamic promotes a go it alone policy by the KRG as any possible punishment they could receive from Iraq would either be

rhetoric or extremely weak. This was the case regarding the direct sale of petroleum to Turkey. The Iraqi government demanded these sales' revenue would be shared with the central government, citing the constitution. The KRG made no attempt to comply with demands exporting oil directly to the Turkish port of Ceyhan and received no tangible consequences from Baghdad.[151] The existence of international partnerships directly with the KRG further weakens the Iraqi central authority giving them no capabilities to enforce any demands upon the KRG. With the exception of the 2017 independence referendum the KRG's independent authority has only increased with large expansions in its international ties and the rejection of a revenue sharing deal over newly found oil resources with the central government. Without any capability to enact its will upon the region the central government in Baghdad cannot reliably bring the representatives of the KRG into a project for national development, as for in almost everything but formal sovereignty the KRG manages its own affairs.

D. Iraq's Sunni's, Exclusion and Transnational Islamism

In the post-2003 environment sectarian relations between the Sunni Arabs and the Shia undertook a major shift. Party based politics, the crux of Iraq's political system from the Republican period was replaced with a dynamic of communal identity and the institutionalization of sectarianism in Iraq's political institutions. The Shia of Iraq developed a political importance for their sectarian identity prior to the restructuring of the Iraqi state dating back to the 50s. On the other hand, the Sunni's being the power holding class for the majority of Iraq's history, did not place political value to sect specific identities or institutions.[152] They attached political value

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[151] Özlem Kayhan Pusane, "The Role of Context in Desecuritization: Turkish Foreign Policy towards Northern Iraq (2008–2017)," *Turkish Studies* 21, no. 3 (May 26, 2020): 392–413.

[152] Fanar Haddad, "A Sectarian Awakening: Reinventing Sunni Identity in Iraq After 2003," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology; Washington* 17 (August 2014): 70-101,176.

mainly to party affiliation in the Republican era and tribal affiliation in the Ba'athist era. American failures in restructuring the foundation of Iraq and the consolidation of the power of Shia Islamist's at the highest levels of government in the new Iraq changed this dynamic. The new Shia governments increasingly made sectarian identity of political importance in Iraq, forcing the Sunni's to identify and mobilize politically with their sectarian affiliation and begin searching for sect specific methods of organization in order to consolidate themselves politically in an environment dominated by the Shia and for reasons they believed were for self-preservation.[153] The emergence of a sectarian mass group identity for the Sunni's in Iraq rejected pre-2003 concepts of Iraqi nationhood as presented by secular movements such as Arab nationalism and brought transnational ideologies into the Sunni Arab community.

By 2003 it became clear to the Sunni's that they were going be systematically excluded from meaningful participation in government through the policies of De-Ba'athification and the demobilization of the military, which disproportionately affected them. The Sunnis viewed the new state as being illegitimate and refused participation in its foundation. This is clear through the Sunni's overwhelming rejection of the new Iraqi constitution and their boycott of the 2005 Iraqi parliamentary elections. The exclusion of the Sunni's by the new administration and the United States, and their rejection of a new state based on sectarianism began to push the Sunni's towards their own form of transnational politics. Sunni areas became violent by late 2003, developing an insurgency against the Americans and the new government. This gave impetus for international Islamist groups to insert themselves in the political affairs of the disenfranchised Iraqi Sunnis. These international Islamist groups were epitomized by the growing power of Al Qaeda in the country. Al Qaeda offered to the Sunni's institutional organization on the basis of

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[153] Fanar Haddad, "A Sectarian Awakening: Reinventing Sunni Identity in Iraq After 2003," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology; Washington* 17 (August 2014): 70-101,176.

sect that their own local tribal leaders had been unable to create domestically. Al Qaeda's increasing hold and popularity among the body of the Sunni community from 2003 to 2007 represented the end of any concept of pluralism in the country, and the rise of a Sunni identity politics based on international concepts rather than national identity and included opposition to Shia Islam as sect.

The transnational ideology of Salafi Jihadism is based in international concerns for the creation of an Islamic state rather than national goals. It is an inherently anti-nationalistic ideology and by nature is sectarian and anti-Shia. It cannot be said that the Sunni community in its entirety began to subscribe to this ideology. However, it is clear that in a number of periods in Iraq's history from 2003, the mass of the Sunni community accepted rule by followers of this ideology due to the weakness and incapability of their own tribal leadership in the face of the new sectarian government in Baghdad. This dynamic is clearest in the periods from 2003 to 2007 and 2013 to 2017. The adoption of Salafi Jihadism among the Sunni community put an end to distinction between Iraqi Shia and foreign Shia, ending the possibility for cooperation between the two sides for national goals.

The policies of successive governments in the country since 2004 have been overtly sectarian in particular targeting the Sunni Arabs of the country. The policies of the government played a large role in pushing the Sunnis towards rejecting an Iraqi national identity and accepting transnational Islamism. The collapse of Saddam's regime did not lead to an immediate rejection of the new order, rather the leadership of the Sunni communities, mainly tribal leaders took a wait and see approach regarding the Americans and the potential of the new order.[154] The hope by the local Sunni leadership that they would occupy an equal status under the new

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[154] NAJIM ABED AL-JABOURI and STERLING JENSEN, "The Iraqi and AQI Roles in the Sunni Awakening," *PRISM* 2, no. 1 (2010): 3–18.

government was lost as the IGC and subsequently the Iraqi government became dominated by sectarian parties and interests. The Sunni's were unwilling to accept this knowing they would occupy an inferior status on the basis of their sect. Economic costs were significant among the Sunni community, with millions being laid off with no opportunity for work due to the directives of De-Ba'athification and demobilization. The rise of sectarian governance from 2003 to 2005 led to the predominance of international Jihadist movements in Sunni areas across the country. Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) became the most significant of these groups. The Sunni's lack of a political sectarian identity was patched over by the activities of Al Qaeda in Iraq and other Jihadist groups. AQI provided sectarian symbolism for the Sunni's and embedded themselves within local communities, establishing themselves as more powerful and more organized than the tribal leadership of the Sunni regions. AQI gave the Sunnis a context of a sectarian political identity that was previously unheard of. AQI from 2003 to 2005 gained significant support from the lower classes of Sunni Arab society outside of tribal structures, by labelling the rise of Iranian influence over Iraq and sectarian government as being the responsibility of the American occupation. AQI was the only political force available that was perceived as being able to provide security and a political outlet for the concerns of the Sunni Arab's.[155] AQI's increasing influence over the region from 2003 to 2005 under these conditions led to the end of secular political movements such as Arab Nationalism among the Sunni's, reluctance to participate in Iraq's new political processes, and overt hostility to the state and the American occupation. This trend in the Sunni community would only make it more difficult to engage in a national Iraqi project as international Jihadism gained a strong foothold in the region and promoted nonparticipation in the new Iraq. Eventually the international Jihadist forces would promote and

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[155] Fanar Haddad, "A Sectarian Awakening: Reinventing Sunni Identity in Iraq After 2003," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology; Washington* 17 (August 2014): 70-101,176.

instigate outright war between Iraq's sects ending any possibility for finding a pathway for an

Iraqi nationalism.

By 2006 Iraqi Sunni's increasingly opposed international Jihadist elements in their

territories. This dynamic would continue until the withdrawal of the majority of the American

forces in 2011. AQI made extreme demands over the Sunni population it governed through

extreme application of religious laws, the extrajudicial executions of Sunni politicians and tribal

leaders seeking participation in government, and the instigation of a sectarian war.[156] Iraqi

Sunni's began to perceive AQI and the international Jihadists as repressive as the sectarian

government. The civil war between the sects in Iraq led the Americans to conduct their surge of

troops into the country. The surge of American troops into the country to quell the insurgencies

across Iraq gave the Sunni community the opportunity to take advantage of American patronage

and escape domination by Jihadist elements. The tribal leaders of the Sunni communities became

more comfortable in leading uprisings against Al Qaeda and were able to find monetary,

logistical, and military support from the American army. In revolting against Al Qaeda, Sunni

communities established their own communal organizations dedicated to fighting Al Qaeda and

protecting their own communities. The movements as a whole became known as the Sons of

Anbar. In addition to American subsidies, the Sons of Anbar began to work with the government.

The government gave major concessions to the movement by funding them and giving them

positions in the federal police in Sunni provinces. Consequently, the process of "Sunnification"

or building a unique Iraqi Sunni identity was being completed in these areas. This period of

cooperation lasting to 2011 represented an end of Jihadist domination over Sunni areas and a

willingness to participate in Iraqi national politics. The participation of the Sunni's in national

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[156] NAJIM ABED AL-JABOURI and STERLING JENSEN, "The Iraqi and AQI Roles in the Sunni Awakening," *PRISM* 2, no. 1 (2010): 3–18.

politics remained sectarianized as a result of the Sunni's new institutions and political

organization being sect specific. As a result, Sunni's were not genuinely being integrated into

national politics as the state remained sectarian, and the tribal institutions that formed in Sunni

communities were never offered formal status in the Iraqi government in the same way that the

Shia militias would be in 2015. The Sons of Iraq movement represents a rejection of the foreign

Jihadists and the completion of a politically sectarian identity for the Sunni community focused

on representing Sunni political interests. At this point in time the political and social concerns of

the Sunni community in the new government were not adequately addressed, the rejection of

transnational Islamism coming about mainly as a result of the Sunni's greater grievances with the

groups and the shifting balance of power with the American surge.

During the period of 2007 to 2010 the Sunni electorate was divided into supporting two

different political coalitions. Support was divided between the Islamist coalition Tawafuq and

Eyad Allawi's secular Al Iraqqiya.[157] Support for the party represented a last attempt by Sunnis

to engage in a nationwide Iraqi identity project reaching across sectarian lines. Shia transnational

groups especially the State of Law Coalition and the growing sectarian militias saw Al Iraqiyya

as a threat to the existence of the sectarian system and rallied around Prime Minister Maliki.

Despite the party winning the elections of 2010, Maliki was given Iranian backing to unite the

Shia factions against it in order to safeguard the existing system. Following his reelection Maliki

promised the Sunni groups positions in the government and equal participation, opening up the

possibility for the continued cooperation between the political leaders of the two sects. Maliki's

actions two years into his term were the opposite of what had been promised. Maliki imprisoned

and forced Sunni leaders into exile under spurious criminal charges including members of his

[157] Fanar Haddad and Fanar Haddad, "Shia-Centric State Building and Sunni Rejection in Post-2003 Iraq," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, accessed May 2, 2019.

own government such as the vice president and the finance minister. He conducted what amount to military occupation of Sunni areas with daily detainments and imprisonment without criminal charges. Extrajudicial executions became commonplace and the Sons of Anbar militias were labeled as criminal organizations and disbanded. This outcome, along with rise of the Arab spring protests and active revolution in Syria against Bashar Al Assad, led to massive Sunni protests in 2012 and 2013. These protests demanded the reinstatement of their political leaders, and the end to arbitrary detainment and occupation.

The alternatives facing the Sunni's during this period was to continue negotiation with the government for inclusion, or to reject it and return to supporting transnational Jihadist movements. Maliki's government showed no signs of meeting the demands of the protestors. The Sunni insurgency which had been driven underground by the American surge of 2007 began to regain power as a result of the frustration of the Sunni community and their opportunism in participating in the Syrian Civil War. Maliki responded to the protests with violence, such as the elimination of major Sunni political figures and the use of the military and militias to put down the demonstrations. Maliki's decision to use force against the protestors ended the willingness of the Sunni's to continue negotiations with the government. It is at this point at which the Sunnis decide to accept the assistance of ISIS as a transnational Sunni Islamist group. Without the Americans to conduct a balancing act, as was done during the surge to give Sunni leaders viable political options, ISIS was able to establish total authority over Sunni regions of the country in months. The majority of the Sunni community which included economically disenfranchised people, ex-Ba'athists, and tribal elements systematically excluded from government participation were subsumed or coopted into the structure of ISIS, either adhering to their ideology or being eliminated. The unequal treatment of the Sunni community by the government caused the

Sunni's to initially remain passive towards ISIS due to the lack of any other political option presenting itself. The Sunni's turn towards ISIS during this period represents a wholesale rejection of the Iraqi state, and any continued drive towards participating in an Iraqi national project. The frustrations of the Sunnis under the sectarian system ultimately lead them towards accepting another sectarian method of political organization which fundamentally rejects the idea of state and nation in favor of restoring Khilafah on the basis of Islamic ummah.

E. ISIS' Opportunism in a Fragmented Society

ISIS, a Salafi jihadist group offered Sunni Arabs, both an ideological narrative and a socio-political and security network capable of replacing the Iraqi state. ISIS was the last and only alternative open to Sunnis in Iraq after their failure at both political and military integration efforts with the Shia and the subsequent repression in the second term of Maliki's premiership. ISIS as a structure was a comeback and continuation of the AQI program prevalent in the early years of the occupation. ISIS had transformed itself into a transnational organization administrating territory that went across international borders mainly in Iraq and Syria. The symbolic destruction of the borders between the two countries and the groups repeated rejection of the Sykes-Picot arrangement make it clear that national concepts of "Iraq" or "Syria" are illegitimate and that when used the terms are used only for geographical purposes. ISIS had a leadership composed of ex-Ba'athists, pre-occupation Iraqi military staff, and most importantly Sunni ideologues who has been radicalized to Salafi ideology while imprisoned by the USA. The departure of most American troops in 2011, eliminated the presence of the only force which had balanced Sunni and Shia sectarian violence. It was this presence that allowed the Sunni community to reject Al Qaeda in 2007 when many deemed AQI had become too extreme. The Americans presence and assistance to the Iraqi Sunni tribal forces ensured that AQI would be

unable in subsuming the Sunni community in its entirety. With the departure of a significant troop presence there was no alternative to the Arab Sunni community and tribal leaders but to revolt against the Iraqi state with a newly imprinted identity lent by ISIS.

ISIS is fervent in their rhetoric of upholding what they believe to be the only true Islam and consequently allows violence against any other Muslims who do not hold to their fundamentalist interpretation of the Shariah. They also openly declare, condemnation of any Muslim groups accepting democratic forms or secularism. ISIS further adopts narratives which expresses itself in its definition of the Khilafah and the ultimate objective of establishing a worldwide Islamic theocracy heralding the end of times.[158] This ideology is ultimately one that is incompatible with the idea of an Iraqi state or nation being entirely rooted in concept of the region that goes back to the early days of the Islamic empires. The initial willingness of many in the Sunni community to accept the assistance of this transnational ideology is representative of the complete breakdown in national dialogue between the sectarian groups in the country and the failure in creating national identity viewed as relatable to all of Iraq's ethnic and sectarian groups.

Ultimately, the Arab Sunni's experienced violent rejection by the Shia majority and came to adopt their own narrative of victimhood as their Sunni identity, placing less of an emphasis on their Arab nationalist and tribalistic past. This new identity would fundamentally be a sectarian one based on their characterization of being Sunni's in a now Shia state. This transformation gave them a social identity which was able to adapt to the ISIS transnational program. ISIS, through their social and economic programs, presented an opportunity to elevate the status of the Iraqi Sunni communities which had been repressed by Shia forces. Simultaneously with the

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[158] Katarzyna Jasko et al., "ISIS: Its History, Ideology, and Psychology," 2018.

rebranding of Sunni Iraqi identity the victories of ISIS fighters in Syria also fueled Sunni Iraqi acceptance of a Sunni Islamic ideology. It should be noted that the Iraqi Sunni's acceptance of ISIS was quite transient, however their rebranded identity is one that remains. ISIS as an entity began to be rejected by the Sunnis as the scale of their brutality on their own populations became clear. As the fight against the group accelerated Sunni tribes began to reenter negotiations with the government and assist them in driving ISIS from Iraq. Iraqi Sunni's do however maintain their identity of victimhood and maintain the emphasis on their distinct sectarian identity.

Sunni Arabs have been excluded from the state and power structures largely as a result of the sectarian ordering of the society in the post-Saddam political environment. Nonetheless, they have successfully developed their own political narratives and sectarian identity based off their own recent experiences of victimization by the ruling Shia. Sunnis in Iraq have had their own foreign backers depending on the political conditions. Ultimately, the most important influence in developing their sectarian identity has been the influence of the non-state actors of AQI and ISIS. The last two decades of the post-Saddam Iraq have solidified a new social identity among Sunni Arabs in Iraq based on sectarian relations. The political Sunni identity is an antithesis to the political Shia identity and leaves at present no door open to an inclusive Iraqi national program. Overall it has been the foreign Salafist movements hold over the Sunni community during times of desperation that has solidified their sectarian identity of victimization at the hands of the Shia. Transnational influences while different for the Shia and Sunnis have helped to entrench sectarian political thinking, ultimately preventing any meaningful movement towards a nation building program. These influences only serve to move Iraq in the opposite direction, towards conflict, as is clear through the Iraqi Civil War of 2006 and the civil war from 2013.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Post-Occupation Iraqi Politics

This thesis concludes that the intervention of foreign forces has shaped the Iraqi state from its beginning to the present. The imposition of new state structures multiple times by foreign forces resulted in an ethnosectarian identity for communal groups. This ethnosectarian identity has come to play the largest role in the formation of the government and political institutions as opposed to an incorporative process of establishing a unified modern nation state.[159] Iraq, itself was formed out of conquered territory by colonial interests to further their global empire. The establishment of the Arab Sunnis as the ruling class by the British ignored the group bargaining between Iraq's communal groups necessary to form a national identity capable of bringing unity to Iraqis. The pattern of Arab national identity developed in post-colonial Iraq was one of maintaining Arab Sunni dominance through specific Sunni tribal inclusion and the exclusion of others, namely the Arab Shia and Kurdish communities.

The invasion of the United States in 2003 not only erased the dominance of Arab Sunnis in Iraq but left a social and political vacuum to be filled in which ethnic and religious identity played the key role in political mobilization for state formation.[160] The Arab Shias and the Kurds by this time had established a political narrative and political identity for their communities in Iraq and established long term transnational ties with both state and non-state actors to advance their own interests. The Arab Sunnis had to generate their own new political identity or narrative as the political importance of Arab nationalism was no longer relevant. Their elevated status in the old regime largely led to them being excluded from governmental participation in the new state resulting from American and new Iraqi policies. As a result, transnational connections with

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[159] Toby Dodge, "Introduction: Between Wataniyya and Ta'ifia; Understanding the Relationship between State-Based Nationalism and Sectarian Identity in the Middle East," *Nations and Nationalism* 26, no. 1 (2020): 85–90.
[160] Toby Dodge, *Iraq - From War to a New Authoritarianism*, 1st edition (London: Routledge, 2013), 31-40.

non-state actors lent greater viability to political power for the Sunnis as they were continually repressed and stripped of any political or security participation by the state.

The American and British occupations are similar in that neither were committed to nation building process in the country. Rather both occupying powers sought to limit their own costs and ended up giving political dominance to a single ethnosectarian group. These actions eliminated the possibility of constructing a truly national culture necessary for the creation of Iraqi nationalism. The lack of political dialogue across sectarian lines led to the strengthening of their respective sectarian identities and its importance at the level of national politics.

The fall of Saddam Hussein and the lack of American commitment to a nation building process led to the empowerment of Shia authority over the central government. The sectarian rule that has emerged following the end of the occupation strengthened Shia transnational ties. These transnational linkages rely upon both the clerical networks and security ties to the IRGC, ensuring the maintenance of sectarian rule over the country.

The weakness of the Iraqi central government and the strengthening of the KRG as a semi-independent entity has led to a Kurdish disinterest in participation with any program for Iraqi nation building. Kurdish disinterest with Iraqi affairs stems from the fact that they are operating as a de-facto independent entity, albeit with the absence of formal external sovereignty. Their ability to maintain their own security forces, robust government, and official diplomatic relations with foreign states in both the region and with global powers, regarding economic and security interests disincentivizes any movement towards working for an Iraqi national identity. Rather their robust powers and the weakness of the Iraqi government allow the KRG to continue movement towards their own Kurdish nationalist goals.

Since the fall of the Ba'athist regime, Iraq has endured a series of sectarian conflicts fueled by the void of any viable Iraqi national identity. Rather sectarian and ethnic conflict has dominated the country with each group mobilizing militias and security forces for their own defense. Iraq's sectarian groups maintain transnational support which further entrenches the independent groups and diminishes the possibility of developing a cohesive state. Ultimately however it is the lack of any action by the state to counter these trends and its own desire for sectarianism in the country, which prevents even a path forward towards creating an Iraqi nationalism.

Iraq's weak state and institutions are ultimately unable to deal with the challenges of forming national unity and creating a project for nation building as foreign actors are more powerful than it. Non-state actors such as sectarian militias, and parties with sectarian and transnational goals dominate Iraq's politics. Among these groups there is consensus that a sectarian ordering of Iraq's politics will ensure their grip on power in the country. The result is an Iraqi government that views the sectarianization of the country with vested interest rather than as a problem to be solved. Any political force that attempts to reject this system in country finds the majority of Iraq's parties against it, as is clear with the case of Iraqiyya in 2010. Sectarian portioning of positions in the state is known as Muhasasa and has become the norm in the country since 2003.

While popular with Iraq's ruling Shia Islamist parties and their foreign backers the sectarian portioning of the state's institutions has become unpopular among many of Iraq's citizens, particularly its youth. The sectarian system coupled with the perception that outside powers hold too much influence over Iraq's political decision making has sparked off waves of protests from 2019 throughout Iraq by youth calling for the development of Iraqi nationalism and

the end to American and Iranian influence over Iraq's political affairs. The protesters in Iraq have found themselves having little to no support by figures in the government, but with the tacit approval of the Grand Ayatollah Ali Al Sistani. The government's response until the Spring of this year had been to violently crack down on the protests and turn a blind eye towards sectarian militias and foreign fighters from the IRGC who sought to end the movement through repression. These efforts to break the protest movement have largely been unsuccessful with demonstrations ebbing and flowing since 2019 to the present.

As of yet Iraq maintains the sectarian organization of its politics, but the protest movement has placed some level of strain on the system. This is most notable through the resignation of the Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi directly as a result of the protests and the approval of Mustafa Al Kadhimi as the prime minister by Iraq's national assembly. Al Kadhimi has placed militias with overt foreign ties under significant pressure and represents a departure from Iraq's previous leaders who ultimately maintained their allegiance to a sectarian agenda. The election of Al Kadhimi has not ended the protest movement and they seek to continue until the sectarianization of the country's political system is dismantled and the country's leadership is committed to building an Iraqi national identity and foreign forces power over their politics is curtailed. Whether or not this movement will be successful remains unknown, but what is clear is that the system governing Iraq since 2003 has begun to show cracks and is increasingly unpopular with Iraqis across the ethnosectarian divide. As it stands the foreign powers with significant authority over Iraq's politics and the country's own sectarian policies have been unable to stamp out this movement and have been presented with a challenge to the legitimacy of their rule.

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