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Geopolitics, Borders, and Federalism: Challenges for Post-War Iraq

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GEOPOLITICS, BORDERS, AND FEDERALISM:
CHALLENGES FOR POST-WAR IRAQ

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Geography and Geology
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

By
Paul Greg Lockhart


December 2014

**GEOPOLITICS, BORDERS, AND FEDERALISM:
CHALLENGES FOR POST-WAR IRAQ**

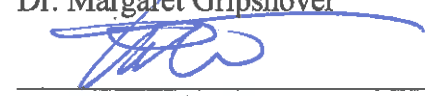
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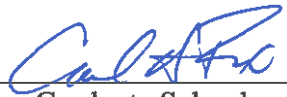
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GEOPOLITICS, BORDERS, AND FEDERALISM:
CHALLENGES FOR POST-WAR IRAQ

Paul Greg Lockhart

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The fall of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I enabled the victorious Western powers to implement the Sykes-Picot Treaty and reshape the geopolitical structure of the Middle East. The imposition of arbitrary borders on the Middle East region, specifically the state of Iraq, would lead to significant conflicts over the course of the 20th century. In 2003, a US-led invasion would further compound the instability and sectarian conflict within Iraq by completely dismantling the state. In the years after the invasion, the United States has been directly involved unsuccessfully in trying to rebuild and stabilize the state of Iraq.

The goal of this study is to propose and analyze four options for the future geopolitical structure of Iraq that, by design, could maintain the current geopolitical borders and possibly contribute to stability in the Middle East. A qualitative approach that examines the benefits of different models of government is used to identify themes that may apply to the state of Iraq. Because adoption of any of the proposed options depends on choices that must be made by the Iraqi government, this thesis presents only a theoretical argument about the country's likely future.

It is my contention that the most likely route to achieving long-term political stability within Iraq is implementation of a federalist model of government that resembles the Swiss model. The Swiss model provides a framework to create ethnic tolerance

through specific power devolution, internal cooperation, and conflict resolution between the different tribal and ethnic groups within each region, and external cooperation and adjudication of issues between the regions and the central government.

This study's results show that the different options analyzed all have positive and negative characteristics. The three-region Swiss model provided an exceptional framework and addressed a number of Iraq's problems, but elements of the other models could be implemented into the three-region model to create a more stable state. Further analysis is needed to determine the best model of government to stabilize Iraq.

Introduction

Borders, boundaries, and frontiers have played a critical role in the study of political states by geographers and others over the past 100 years. Conflicts, such as war, have constantly changed the world's political map and its geopolitical structure, thereby reinforcing the importance of borders in the political state system. Many political geographers mark the beginning of nation-states and nationalism with the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 (Brunet-Jailly 2005; Glassner 1996). This treaty effectively established the boundaries of England, France, Dutch-land, the German princedoms, Muscovy, Poland, Turkey, Spain, and Sweden, and "began a radical reduction in the number of States in Europe" (Glassner 1996, 64). War (both ideological and military) and treaties would continue to reshape the world map over the next few centuries, but not until World War I (WWI) would the world see the next major development of nation-states.

A reordering of states transpired post-WWI as new political states, which previously existed as only nations of people, were formed after the fall of the Ottoman and other empires. The world map grew from 55 states at the end of World War I to 165 states at the end of the Cold War in 1991, and to over 200 political states by 2014. Regional alliances formed with economic, political, and security interests. Their actions paved the way for more open economies with a common interest in spreading capitalism as well as maintaining strategic alliances for both political and economic gain. Cohen (2003, 54) theorized that the future world map could consist of over 250-275 political entities, and he attributed the proliferation of states to the consequence of "the drive of dependent territories for independence and the division of existing sovereign states."

Whatever the reasons, it is clear that the current geopolitical map could continue to change well into the future.

The Middle East is a prime example of a region that could experience the emergence of new nation-states in the near future. The region has been a hotbed of Western political maneuvering for over a century, as more dominant powers used their influence and geopolitical pressure to reshape the region. The West has been competing for influence in the Middle East since the 19th century (Henry 2003), and the weak economic infrastructure of the Ottoman Empire posed no barriers to Western penetration (Ismael and Ismael 1999, 132). With the fall of the Ottoman Empire after WWI, the political character of the Middle East became very different, as new geopolitical boundaries were imposed on the region at the Conference of al-Aqir in 1922. During the conference, the boundaries imposed by the British delineated the borders of Iraq, Kuwait, and Nejad, thereby introducing the concept of territorial sovereignty to the region.

The League of Nations further aided the process of regional fragmentation by creating a mandate system, which divided “the occupied territories of the defunct Ottoman Empire into political entities with boundaries designed and drawn to perpetuate political fragmentation in the face of Western economic and strategic interests” (Ismael and Ismael 1999,134). The mandate system and the imposition of formal geopolitical boundaries compounded an already present distrust of the Western powers by Arabs and others in the region. The imposition of these geopolitical boundaries led to the separation of multiple ethno-linguistic-religious groups, whose loyalties might be to the population of a different country or be spread across multiple countries. This created a barrier to the

political stability of the Middle Eastern regimes, which were already fragmented by internal struggles for independence.

With the political state emergent as the dominant entity in the region “it also enjoyed, early on, a legitimacy derived from the successful struggle against Western Imperialism in its various forms” (Hudson 2002, 66). Pro-Western regimes began to fall to nationalist-reformist movements “led by military officers and a professional, reform-minded middle class” (Hudson 2002, 66). In order to bring legitimacy to these nationalist state regimes, the leadership struggled to create a national-identity within the borders that were created by the Western powers. The geopolitical boundaries set forth by the British and the French became permanent fixtures in the Middle East and have shaped the political identity of the region. The instability created by arbitrarily imposed political borders has led to internal conflicts within these Middle East states and in the region as a whole.

One of the most recent conflicts within the Middle East and North Africa has been a political movement since 2010 known as the Arab Spring. This term was ascribed to a series of pro-democratic movements that erupted after a Tunisian fruit vendor named Mohamed Bouazizi “set himself on fire to protest the injustices of the status quo” (Ajami 2012, 57). The Arab uprisings moved like a political tsunami from North Africa through the Middle East, eventually toppling or challenging the leadership in Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Syria, Bahrain, and Yemen. Newly formed governments in several of these countries further fragmented the region, and the future of the region remains in flux in the aftermath of the events of the Arab Spring. It is clear that the diverse populations of the

Middle East desire political and social change, and many commentators and analysts are looking to Iraq to see if democracy is attainable and sustainable in the region.

Falling into a state of turmoil with the recent insurgent uprising in June, 2014, by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Iraq's status as a U.S.-proclaimed "stable democracy" continues to complicate further geopolitical stability within the region. The separation of ethno-linguistic-religious groups across geopolitical lines, which was a result of Western colonialism post-WWI, continues to play a significant role in the future of the country. After the withdrawal of U.S. forces in 2011, Iraq was left to its own devices to unify a country with three dominant ethno-linguistic-religious groups with differing political agendas. Iraq's current geopolitical struggle in the Middle East can be characterized as an attempt to conduct consequence management as a result of the past policies of Western powers. Iraq's borders, like the rest of the borders in the Middle East, follow no natural geographic features or ethnic-linguistic-religious lines. The Kurdish population in the north is dispersed across Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria and consists of Sunni and Shi'a Kurds. The Shi'a Arab population is spread across the border of Iran and Iraq. The smallest segment of the population, Sunni Arabs, is primarily located in central Iraq and across the borders of Jordan and Syria, and is intermixed with the Kurds to the north and the Shi'a to the south. The result for Iraq has been a history of numerous internal conflicts, as well as a series of regional wars that have driven the country to the brink of political and economic failure.

As a political state, Iraq epitomizes the challenges of ethno-linguistic-religious geopolitical diversity under one central government system. Failure to reach a stable geopolitical solution within Iraq could lead to shockwaves among the various ethno-

linguistic-religious groups that straddle the borders with Iraq's neighbor states, creating more instability in those states and in the Middle East region as a whole.

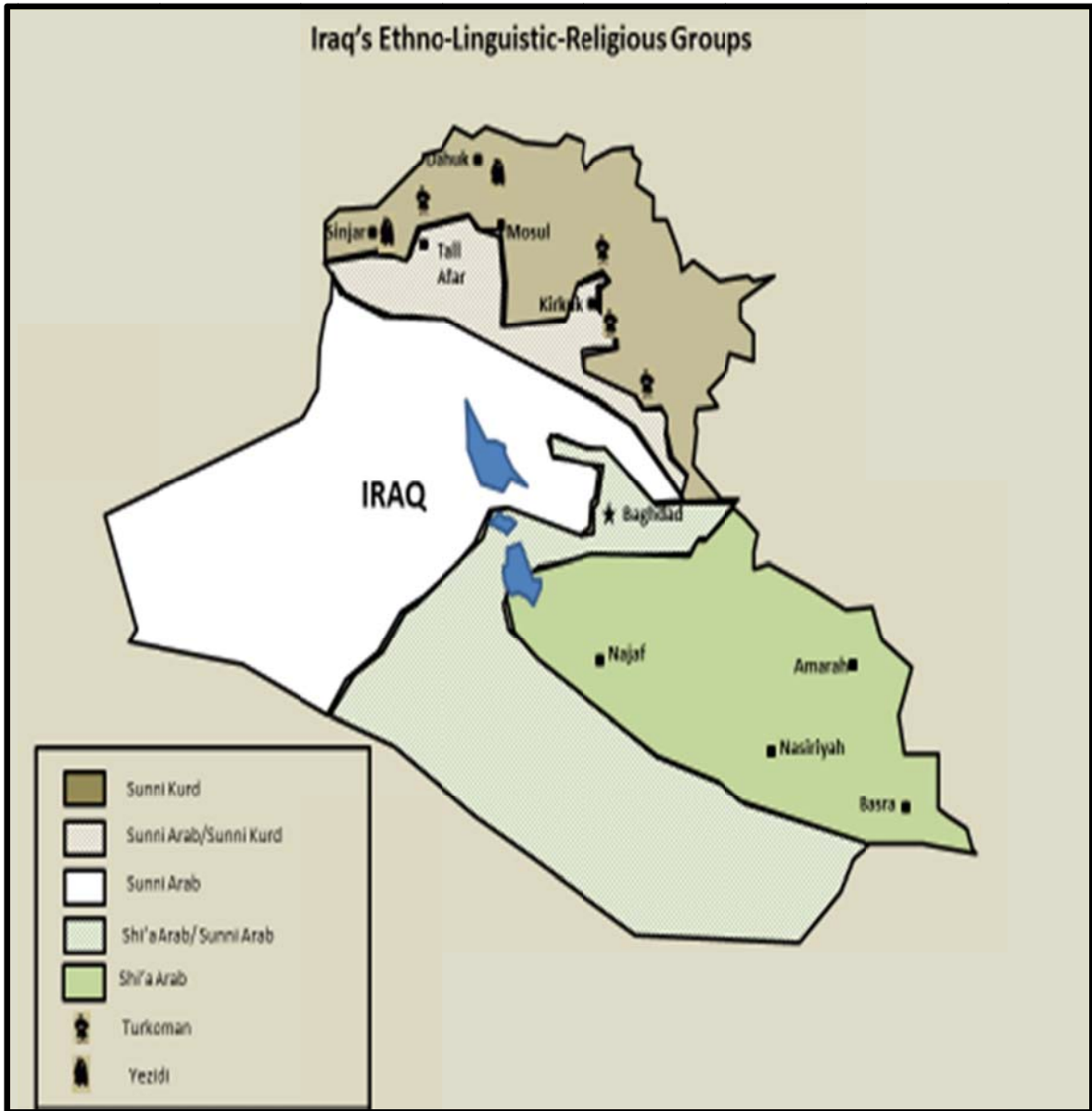


Figure 1: Map of Iraq's Ethno-Linguistic-Religious Groups
Source: Created by the author using CIA (1992) base map.

Research Approach

The goal of this thesis is to examine and analyze four options for the future geopolitical structure of Iraq, which by design could preserve the current geopolitical borders and possibly contribute to stability in the Middle East. Since Iraq has yet to develop a political state that can foster a stable coalition supported by its multiple ethno-linguistic-religious groups, it is imperative that options for Iraq to develop into a stable democracy are identified. Specifically, Iraq's future as a functional political state is dependent on its ability to withstand inward movements and outward influences, which are focused on tearing apart the gains of the current political system. For Iraq to remain a stable state, it would have to secure its borders and prevent insurgent groups from conducting attacks against its populations, develop economic policies from which all members of Iraqi society can benefit, and unite its people under an integrated political system. Clearly, there are limited geopolitical solutions to the question of Iraq's future governance:

1. Iraq could maintain its current governance structure, defined by a relatively ineffective central government;
2. Iraq could adopt a model of Federalism similar to the Swiss regional government structure, with three key regions whose borders would be defined along ethno-linguistic-religious lines;
3. Iraq could further decentralize into multiple regional governments (more than three) with few internally binding characteristics;
4. Iraq could collapse into multiple semi-independent regions.

This thesis' working argument is that the most likely route to achieving long-term political stability within Iraq is solution two: the implementation of a federalist model of government that resembles the Swiss model. The Swiss federal model can be

characterized by the government's ability to share and decentralize power with the Swiss Cantons, while the federal government focuses on issues of external stability and international relations. The Swiss model could allow Iraq to develop a central government focused on internal and external stability, while also uniting its population to repel external pressures and forces that are trying to destabilize the country. The Swiss Model could allow Iraq to develop provinces, much like the Swiss Cantons, with a significant amount of political autonomy to function as the necessary components to create a stable internal political climate. The Swiss model could provide a framework for developing a stronger sense of unity among Iraq's ethno-linguistic-religious groups by allowing them to maintain tribal, provincial, and state identities as demonstrated by the three levels of Swiss citizenship in the current Swiss state. More importantly, the Swiss model would enable Iraq to maintain its current internationally recognized borders, which is likely the most acceptable solution to Iraq's neighbors and the international community.

While no geopolitically constructed model is a perfect answer to Iraq's problems, my hypothesis is that a Swiss-type federalist model could provide the most viable option for future geopolitical stability within the country and the region. The Swiss model offers the Iraqi people the ability to unify under the current internationally recognized territorial boundaries of the country, and it offers a framework for creating autonomy arrangements to address the issues and concerns of a multi-ethnic-linguistic-religious society. Not only could this promote stability within the country but also throughout the Middle East region. However, based on recent events, it is apparent that Iraq's current government is not yet capable of maintaining the structural integrity of the state. This has been

demonstrated by its inability to prevent the advance of the insurgent Islamic State (ISIS), which is taking control of Iraqi territory as well as persecuting and killing groups of people within Iraq's multi-cultural society. Ultimately, if Iraq proves unable to maintain its current political structure with a strong central government, it is highly likely that the state would collapse. This would create shockwaves throughout the Middle East and force the international community to address the consequences of a failed state. Lastly, should Iraq resort to the third model of government, characterized by decentralization of power from the central government to multiple regional governments, it is possible that the country could fragment into tribal regions and risk territorial collapse (model four) due to the inability of the central government to maintain cohesion among the ethno-linguistic-religious groups, conceivably leading to secessionist movements and further bloodshed. Thus, solution two seems to be the only viable option for Iraq's territorial future.

Literature Review

Borders and boundaries are key elements in geopolitical conflict around the world. Borders are zones of insecurity for all states as well as for nations of people. In an effort to maintain current geopolitical borders, various types of political arrangements have been executed throughout the world to satisfy the nationalism and autonomy concerns of different groups. To better understand how borders and autonomy have affected the geopolitical structure of the world, a review of border theory and autonomous arrangements is crucial.

Borders

Glassner (1996, 71) argued that “all modern theories about states agree on one thing: a State must have territory.” In order for a political state to have a clearly defined territory, boundaries and borders must be demarcated. “When analyzing borders, it is important to consider both the features used in the delineation of boundaries and the role a border plays as a divider or promoter of exchange” (Reisser 2009, 233). Political boundaries or borders in the contemporary sense are political creations and human constructs. Borders may fall along natural or physical features, cultural fault lines, or be arbitrary lines drawn on a map, but the final determination of the border and the enforcement of that border are ultimately decided by government actions.

Early on, control of cities and territory was the primary concern of feudal societies. Borders were not fixed places on maps, but described as borderlands or frontiers separating different peoples. Geographers utilized mapping technology that would allow rulers to view their land possessions spatially, and “these early works of geographers and historians contributed to the formation of the modern political order” (Brunet-Jailly 2005, 635). As mentioned earlier, the Treaty of Westphalia marked the

beginning of the modern nation-state, which, in turn, sparked the study of borders and boundaries within the field of geography and other social sciences during the 19th and 20th centuries. As political geographers began studying borders, it became clear that there were widely different views regarding the demarcation, function, role, and nature of political borders. Much like the study of state formation, theorists such as Semple, Hartshorne, and Jones played a defining role in the study of political borders (Hartshorne 1950).

Much of the literature in the early 20th century concerning borders emerged during the two world wars or their aftermath, and “these studies were concerned with the nature of boundaries in terms of their being ‘good’ or ‘bad’ from the military point of view” (Minghi 1963, 408). For example, when the Sykes-Picot Agreement was reached between Britain and France during WWI, the British government’s primary concern was to create a buffer (France) between its Middle East interests and the Russians (Fromkin 2009). Agreements and treaties of this nature would shape the political landscape of regions, specifically the Middle East, into the modern states that exist today.

Another common viewpoint during this time period was espoused by Holdich (1916), who believed that boundaries served as barriers, and the best boundaries must be physical features such as lakes, deserts, or mountains (Minghi 1963). In contrast, Lyde (1915) argued that boundaries should act positively, encouraging peaceful relations, and he believed that boundaries should follow the paths of rivers as regional bonds. Many other scholars argued against the use of straight-line boundaries and their inability to demarcate the political state effectively. New theories then emerged to examine the cultural characteristics of political boundaries as the relevant factor in boundary creation.

One such theorist was geographer Isaiah Bowman (1928), who believed that lines of nationality should be considered when creating borders, because “people were more inclined to fight over issues of language, religion, and nationality than anything else” (Reisser 2009, 243). This has become evident by the numerous conflicts within Africa and the Middle East.

As the study of political boundaries matured, the criteria by which boundaries were drawn became less important, and the functions that boundaries served elevated in importance. For example, Spykman (Minghi 1963, 412) looked at drawing political borders in terms of power, and his “ultimate objective was to have the new boundaries drawn in such a way as to create states of equal strength.” Jones (Minghi 1963, 413) argued that “the only good boundary will be the one that strengthens the power structure of one’s own state.” Some analysts focused on the role of boundaries as barriers to economic trade, while others argued that boundaries served as economic and social zones of penetration. Despite the differences in border theory, both geographers and politicians played a major role in the way that boundaries and borders were developed post-1945.

Contemporary literature has focused on the lessening importance of borders to the political state, due to the impacts of globalization on the world economy. With advances in communication and transport, political borders are perceived as nuisances to multinational corporations. Globalization has fostered the view that the free movement of people, goods, information, and ideas across borders has weakened the role of political states; however, Nichol and Minghi (2005, 680) argued that:

Although they are continually being transgressed by far-reaching networks of people, capital and cultural connections, we have yet to see the national territories, boundaries, and sovereignty give way to the impact of globalizations.

Despite predictions that borders would become less important within a globalized world economy, this has yet to occur in a geopolitical context. For example, it could be argued that political states utilize globalization only as it benefits them, with borders critical to that effort. Another point of view could be that, with the advancement of new technologies, borders are more porous now than they were 50 years ago and thus require greater control. Witness Chinese and other governments' attempts to control access to global electronic information. In reality, technology has enabled political states to increase their ability to secure their borders more effectively through the utilization of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), advanced optical and ground sensors, as well as personnel scanning equipment.

Borders and Conflict

Identifying those political borders (both internal and external) more susceptible to conflict is crucial to anticipating potential instability in regions and states. Based on the high number of conflicts in the Middle East and Africa, it can be argued that borders implemented within the developing regions by colonial powers are the most prone to conflict today. The British and French were responsible for drawing nearly 40 percent of the political borders outside Europe, and “excluding Europe, approximately 60 percent of current envelopes [borders] are of external origin not having been drawn by the states adjoining them today” (Foucher 2000, 160).

The Middle East and Africa are two regions most affected by the political borders created by European powers. Populations of warring tribes and clans, as well as different ethno-linguistic-religious groups, were incorporated into political territories, whose borders were only as stable as the internal cohesion of their populations. Both Figure 2

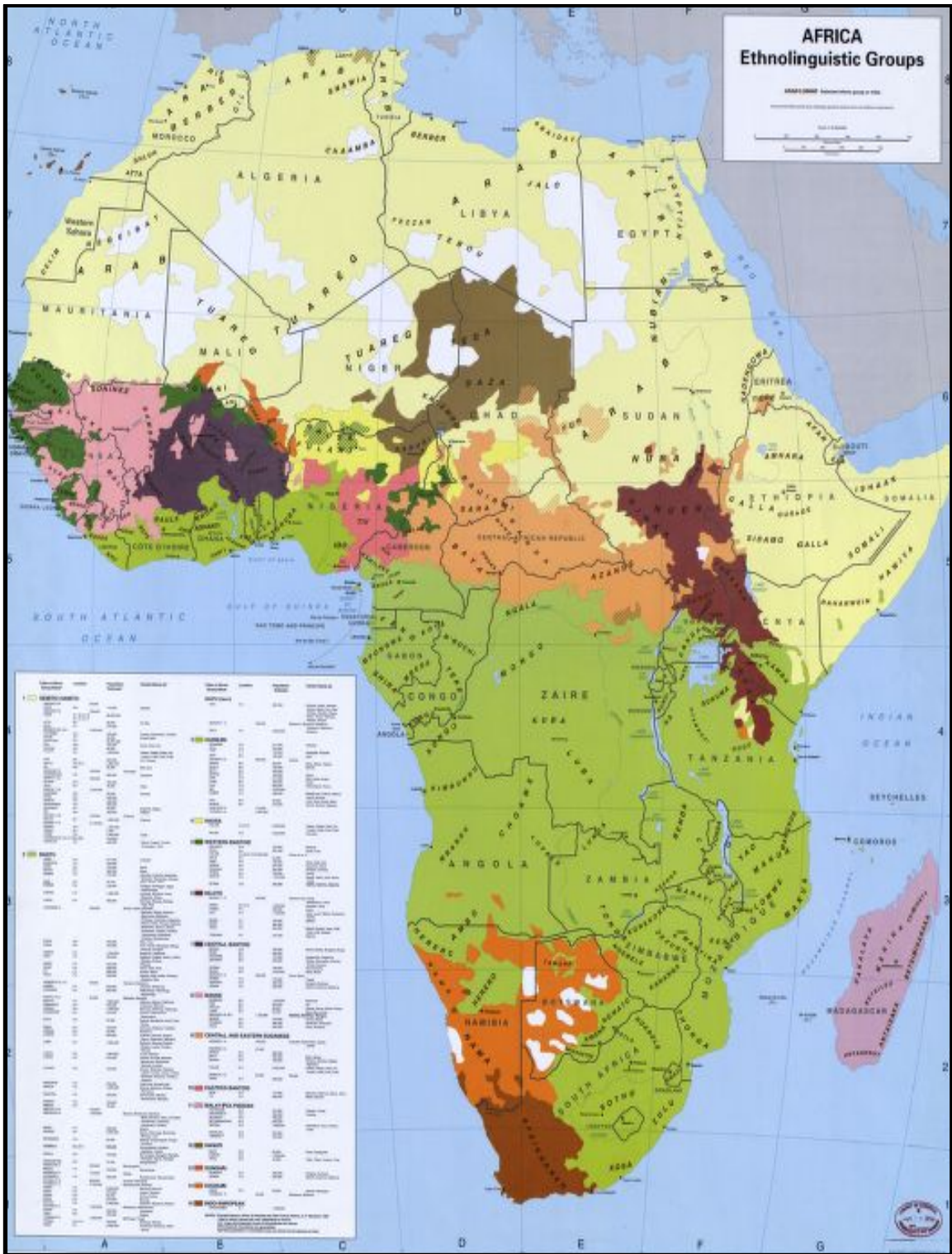


Figure 2: Africa Ethnolinguistic Groups
 Source: CIA (1996).

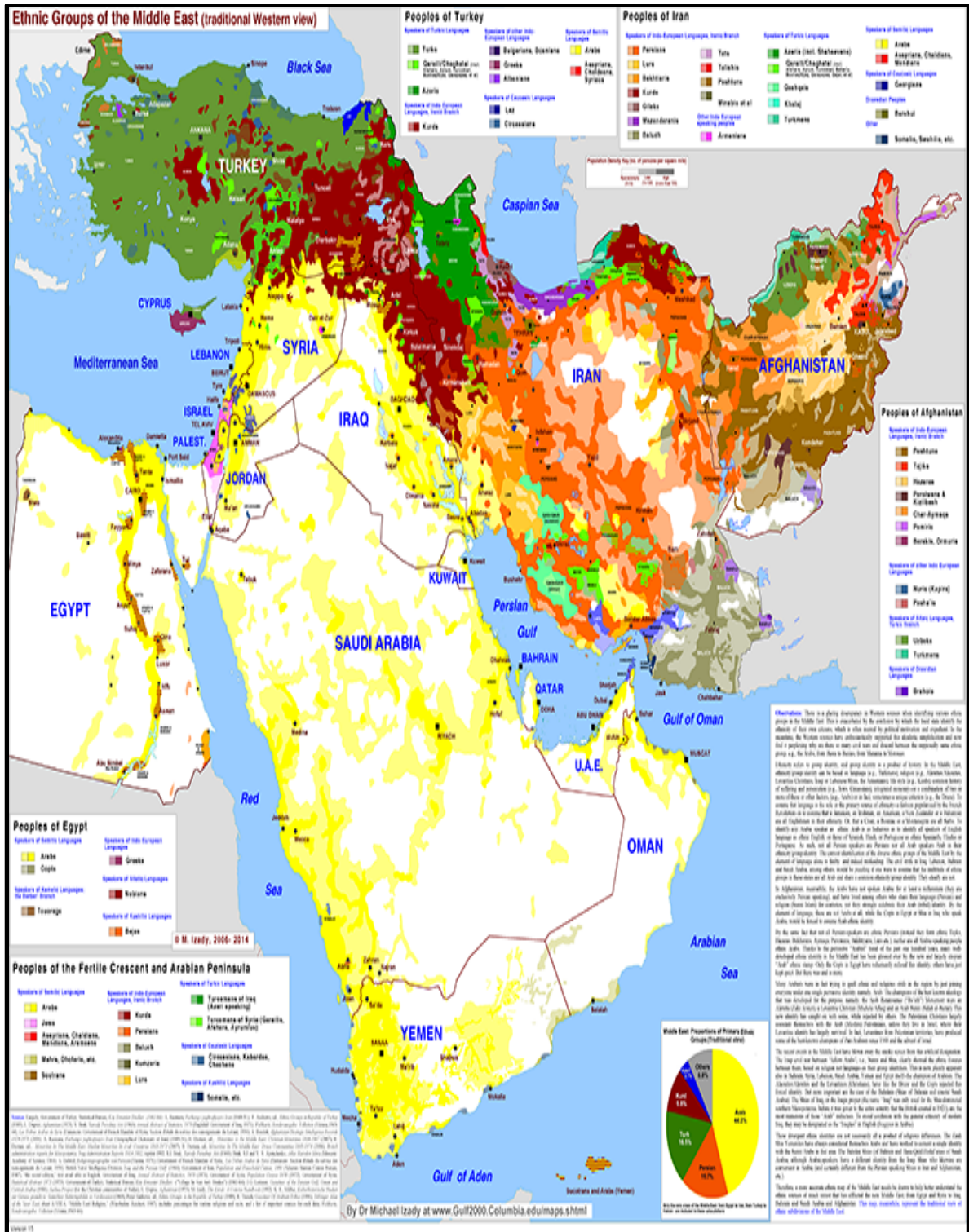


Figure 3: Ethnic Groups of the Middle East
Source: Izady (2013).

and Figure 3 effectively portray the ethno-linguistic groups separated by the modern boundaries of Africa and the Middle East.

The mandate system, implemented at the conclusion of WWI, established the borders of the modern Middle East in an attempt to manage the region politically to satisfy Western interests. According to Ismael and Ismael (1999, 133):

This concept [implementation of borders] was not only culturally alien to the tribal character of the area but also incompatible with the nature of the interior land trade economy... These borders were not based on natural geographic, ethnic, linguistic, or religious cleavages; they were political facts, not geographic or demographic, and were part of Britain's grand design to preclude any unity of Arabs by creating rival but pro-Western regimes in Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia.

The instability created by the colonial powers led to internal conflicts within the Middle East states and the region as a whole. More importantly, the separation of ethno-linguistic-religious groups across borders eventually would play a significant role in the current conflicts within the country of Iraq.

Autonomy and Territorial Arrangements

Borders and conflict cannot be discussed without understanding the concept of autonomy and territorial arrangements. "Whereas the creation of new states and large-scale border readjustments once held primacy in dealing with minority national groups in states, other tools, such as political autonomy within the state structure, are now considered more often" (Reisser 2009, 235). Autonomy, in recent history, has been used as a tool to settle internal as well as external territorial disputes that have been the result of territorial losses and border implementation during post-war periods, as well as in attempts to maintain current borders when faced with self-determination claims from minority populations. Benedikter (2009, 18) identified four approaches to autonomy:

1. Autonomy as a right to act upon one's own discretion in certain matters, whether the right is possessed by an individual or public body.
2. Autonomy as a synonym for more independence.
3. Autonomy as a synonym for decentralization.
4. Autonomy as a quality providing for exclusive powers of legislation, administration and adjudication in certain areas" (see also Lapidoth 1997).

Put simply, autonomy is the right of people or nations to exercise control and oversee specific aspects of their lives, whether they be personal, political, or cultural.

Furthermore, while no standardized definition for autonomy exists within the literature, as a concept it is understood that three types of autonomy exist: personal (individuals' right to make personal choices on religion and culture); functional or cultural ("recognizes the distinct identity of minorities" and "fosters the preservation and further development of that collective identity"); and territorial (refers to the "self-governance of a demographically distinct territorial unit within the state") (Weller and Nobbs 2010, 2-4; Benedikter 2009).

Autonomy of nations within empires or nation-states is not a new concept.

Ancient and recently dissolved empires utilized internal territorial arrangements to avoid opposition from subjugated communities to governance by a different ruling power.

According to Wolff (2010, 18):

As a tool of statecraft, autonomy has thus been a familiar, albeit not excessively implemented, mechanism for at least the past two centuries, one that always resulted in asymmetrical state designs. Yet, its significance as a conflict-preventing and conflict-resolving arrangement increased only over the course of the twentieth century.

Examples of autonomous and territorial arrangements throughout history include "a number of provinces in the Ottoman empire, most prominently in the Balkans, but

extending to Egypt and Lebanon as well, the Austrian Kronländer, and, after the 1867 compromise, Hungary, in the Hapsburg empire, and Finland in the Russian empire for most of the nineteenth century” (Wolff 2010, 18).

Autonomy and territorial arrangements increased in the twentieth century with the dissolution of empires post-WWI, the gradual handover of sovereignty to newly created nations in both Africa and the Middle East, as well as the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.) at the conclusion of the Cold War. As political boundaries changed and were redrawn over the course of the last century, a rise in nationalist and self-determination desires occurred as political ideologies became more important and influential. Nations of people began to desire their own territory, which created friction points across state borders and within states themselves. “Today, few violent conflicts are between multiple states, but rather occur within states due to tensions between state majorities, minority groups and peoples demanding respect for their fundamental individual and collective rights” (Benedikter 2009, 9). Important examples of these claims include the Kurdish population within Turkey, Iraq, and Iran, the multiple ethnic groups in South Sudan, and the Ogoni of Nigeria.

Autonomy and territorial arrangements have proved to be effective political tools to settle intrastate conflicts in non-violent ways, but the role of the state and its willingness to share power plays a major role in the level of violence experienced when minority groups seek autonomy and self-determination. A review of the literature revealed that most of the successful autonomous arrangements have occurred within Western Europe, while failed autonomous arrangements exist mostly in Africa and the Middle East (e.g., Kurdish autonomy was consistently violated and withdrawn by Iraq

under the rule of Saddam Husayn). Table 1 clarifies the differences between the various territorial arrangements, and identifies states currently organized under specific governmental structures.

Table 1: Autonomy Types

| Government Organization | Description of the Organization | Example States |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Associated State | A federal (treaty) where the smaller polity is linked to a larger state. It has substantial authority over its own affairs, but very little influence in affairs of the larger state. Usually either party may dissolve the relationship at any time. | Cook Islands, Puerto Rico |
| Condominium | A polity that is jointly ruled by two authorities in a way that permits substantial self-rule. | Andorra, New Hebrides |
| Confederation | A loose, but institutionalized cooperation of two or more independent states without federal constraints. | European Union |
| Reservation | Form of self-governance of a smaller people on a given territory, with separate citizenship as a legal member of the titular ethnic group of the reservation and almost no participation to general affairs of the state. | Navajo, Sioux, Hopi (USA), Miqmaq (Canada) |
| Federation | Two or more constituent entities enter into a constitutional framework with common institutions. Each member state retains certain delegated powers and the central government also retains powers over the member states. | Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, USA, India, Brazil, Canada |
| Regionalist state | A state with two levels of legislative powers, central and regional, with the national parliament retaining the sole legislative power over the member states. | Spain, Italy |
| Dependent Territory | Political dependency, defined under the UN-Charter, Article 73, not considered as part of the motherland or mainland of the governing state. | Gibraltar, Virgin Islands |
| Territorial autonomy | Particular, but integral parts of a political sovereign state which have legislative and executive powers entrenched by law. Specific solution for one or more units of a state, but not for the whole territorial state structure (except Spain). | Aaland Islands, Gagauzia, Aceh, Greenland |

Source: Created by the author from Benedikter (2009, 16)

In many cases, autonomy is used synonymously with federalism and other territorial arrangements. Benedikter (2009, 15) refers to this difference as a “blurring [of] boundaries,” but, simply put, autonomy refers to a “specific part of the territory [acquiring] a special status with specific characteristics,” as opposed to a federal structure where provinces “enjoy the same powers and substantially the same degree of self-government.” To better understand the differences between autonomy and territorial arrangements, an examination of specific resolutions over time is warranted.

Territorial Autonomy

Territorial autonomy is the act of granting an ethnic or minority group its own territory (under the umbrella of a sovereign state), as well as the power to guarantee the survival of its cultural heritage and the protection of minority or ethnic rights (Benedikter 2009). Territorial autonomy does not give full independence to the group, but it does provide executive and legislative powers, so members may manage their internal affairs as defined in the autonomous arrangement. This form of autonomy has been utilized as an instrument for settling self-determination conflicts.

One of the oldest and most-successful territorial autonomy arrangements, is the arrangement between the Åland Islands and Finland (Wolff 2010). The Åland Islands are a group of islands located between Sweden and Finland with a population that is both linguistically and culturally Swedish. Ruled by Sweden for over 700 years, the islands fell into Russian possession in 1809 and made part of the Grand Duchy of Finland in the Russian Empire (Wolff 2010). In 1917, Finland seceded from the Russian Empire and took with it the territory of the Åland Islands. The initial response of the Åland population was to exercise a claim to self-determination and re-unification with Sweden.

Finland rejected the Åland claim, while Sweden fully supported the re-unification. The dispute between Finland and Sweden would eventually be arbitrated by the League of Nations without the Åland population's consultation. In 1920, Finland "recognized the Ålanders' right to maintain their culture, language and traditions and to enjoy a demilitarized and autonomous status...[which under] the Autonomy Act of 1921 established the first official territory with autonomous status in Europe" (Benedikter 2009, 107).

The Åland Islands developed a legislative body that deals with the internal, political, and cultural matters of the islands, and this body is responsible for managing the finances of the islands through its ability to levy taxes on the population. The Åland Islands do rely on the Finnish judicial system to settle legal issues up to the Supreme Court. Finally, the Åland Islands have a limited ability to propose treaties and approve treaties that affect the islands at the international level. This is done through participation in the Nordic Council, as well as via a representative to the European Union as part of the Finnish delegation.

There were two revisions to the original autonomy act in 1951 and 1991. During the revisions, the Ålanders' autonomy was enhanced and its powers were further defined and cemented; furthermore, the revisions also created a regional citizenship as well as a provision for national symbols. Most importantly, both revisions ensured "that the autonomous powers and status of the Åland islands [under the Autonomy Act] cannot be changed in any way without the consent of the Ålanders themselves [and the Åland Assembly]" (Wolff (2010, 28-32).

The success of the Åland Islands' territorial autonomy arrangement with Finland can be linked to "the gradual development of autonomy based on compromise [and continued support] between the conflict parties" (Benedikter 2009, 111). More importantly, the design of the autonomous arrangement allows for the evolution of the arrangement between Finland's central government and the Åland Islands. The willingness of both communities to work together is clearly the driving force behind the stability of the territorial autonomous arrangement.

Regionalism and Regionalization

Regionalism or regionalization is an autonomous arrangement that has been used successfully to resolve ethnic conflicts within multi-ethnic states. A regional state is a territorial power-sharing arrangement where a state has "two levels of legislative powers, central and regional, with the national parliament retaining the sole legislative power on national and constitutional level" (Benedikter 2009, 16). According to Schrijver (2005, 275):

Various arguments for implementing regionalisation have been given, from resolving 'overloading' of the centralised state, and improving democracy and political participation to incentives of European integration. In many instances, making an arrangement to deal with demands of regionalist movements has been among the reasons for regionalisation.

Spain began a process of regionalization in an effort to democratize after the post-Franco transition in the late 1970s, and its efforts at decentralization resulted in a system of government resembling a federal state, but with regions having different levels of autonomy and power. Spain is often referred to as a federation in disguise; however, the word federal is not utilized in the Constitution or successive legislation (Moreno 2011;

Benedikter 2009). Spanish politicians and citizens refer to Spain as the “Estado de las Autonomías” or State of Autonomous Regions.

Initially, the Basques, Catalonians, and the Galicians were recognized as three historic nationalities under the 1978 Constitution. These three communities, along with 14 other communities, participated in the process of regionalization from 1978 to 1983, resulting in 17 communities with different levels of autonomy. The framers of the Constitution left the questions of regional autonomy up to the various historical and cultural groups within the country. If the groups opted to become an autonomous community “they had to choose which powers, listed in the constitution, they wanted to be in charge of” (Benedikter 2009, 82).

The central government exercises control over some aspects of the autonomous communities, such as “the organization of justice as well as all procedural, criminal, and commercial legislation” (Moreno and Colino 2010, 311). The autonomous communities control sectors of culture and language policy, tourism, health and social services, education, agriculture, territorial planning, and public infrastructure. Where conflict arises over aspects of control, the central state retains authority; however, disagreements can be brought before the Constitutional Court of Spain for arbitration.

Spain’s government continues to be successful in dealing with internal conflict through its system of regionalization and, interestingly, many of Spain’s citizens see themselves as having a dual identity both with their region and the country. A 2002 survey suggested that over 78% of the population viewed itself as both Spanish and a part of an autonomous community (e.g., both Catalanian and Spanish) (Moreno 2011). This duality illustrates the success of regionalization efforts by Spain to accommodate the

large plurality in society and the willingness of the citizens to accept the regional state form of government. Furthermore, “developments elsewhere [outside of Spain], such as the complete regionalization of the Belgian political party system, also suggest that the introduction of regional autonomy might add to the containment of separatism” [which Spain has seemed to accomplish with the Basque community] (Schrijver 2005, 284).

Federalism

Federalism and autonomy are often used synonymously. What needs to be understood is there are aspects of autonomy within federal states. More specifically, there are autonomous arrangements that occur under federal systems or states. Much like autonomy, federalism has become one of the go-to proposals for resolving conflicts in multi-ethnic states. “The theoretical justification is that it is possible for federal systems to combine self-rule with shared rule, leaving the federal state intact while recognizing territorial ethnic groups” (Iff 2013, 228).

What is interesting about federalism is that no two federal states are alike, and no state conforms to the perfect federal model. Federal states can be either symmetrical or asymmetrical. In a symmetrical federal state, “the scheme of power sharing affects all constituent units of the state,” as opposed to asymmetrical federations where “one or more regions (federated states) are vested with special powers not granted to other provinces” (Benedikter 2009, 14). What is common in all federal states is a sharing or decentralization of power, whereby the central government shares or devolves power to the regional governments. Typical power-sharing arrangements can range from education and religious freedoms to more specific government functions such as levying taxes, health care management, and internal security.

Switzerland provides a great example of a state that has used its federal structure to overcome internal conflict from its multiple ethno-linguistic-religious groups. Switzerland has four official languages (Figure 4): Swiss French, Swiss German, Swiss Italian, and Romansh (semi-official). In addition, Switzerland has two major religions: Roman Catholics and Protestants (there are also small populations of Jews and Muslims). The diversity of Switzerland plays a major role in the internal political climate of the country. In the beginning of the federation, religion was the main divisive force in the country. Over time, religion became less divisive and language came to the forefront of political debate.

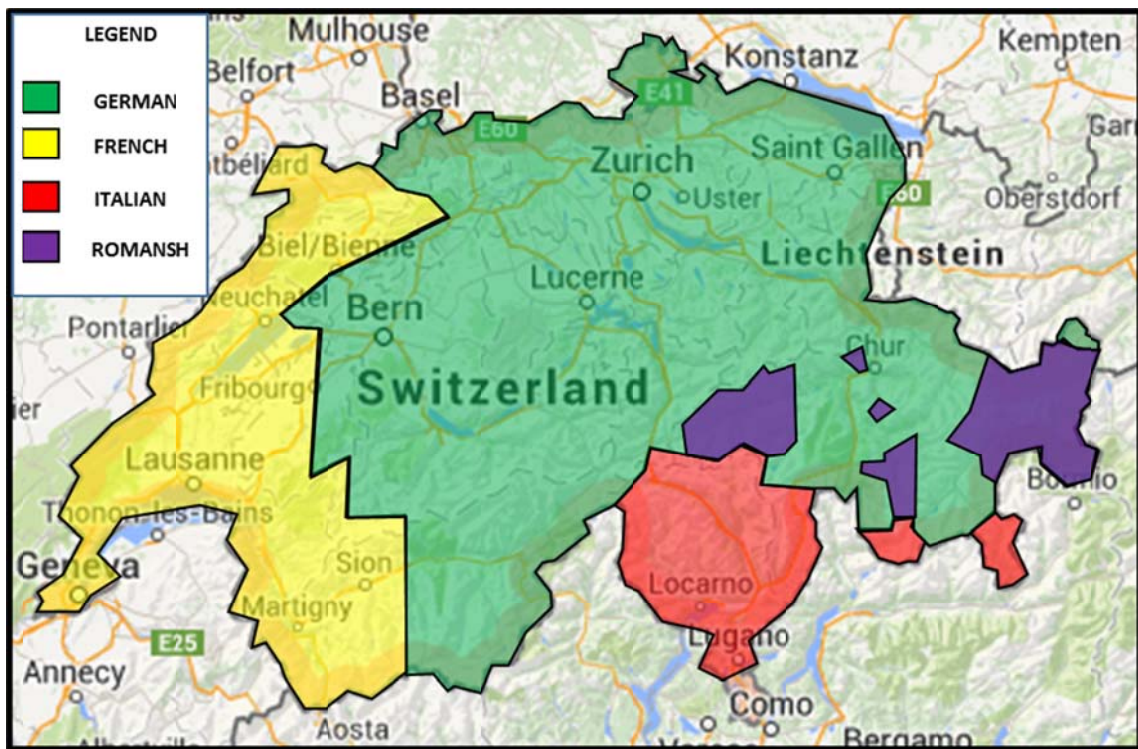


Figure 4: Map of Swiss Languages Imposed on Current Political Map
Source: Created by the author from Leclerc (2004) base map.

The Swiss federal state was founded in 1848, and is currently made up of 26 cantons (provinces) and half cantons. The first cantons created their own confederation

that was essentially an alliance between individual sovereign states that shared common values on democracy. The current federal arrangement resulted from a Swiss Civil War.

According to Fleiner and Hertig (2010, 322):

The federal structure was a compromise reached after a religiously motivated civil war (the Sonderbund war) that opposed the Protestant cantons – which, influenced by French liberalism, favoured a centralized liberal state – against the conservative Catholic cantons, which advocated a confederal arrangement.

The constitution developed at the end of the civil war addressed the need to develop a governmental system based on autonomy and shared power, with the individual cantons creating a heavily decentralized state. The merits of the Swiss federal model exist in the relationship between the central government and the cantons. Within the Swiss federal model, the central government devolved power to the Cantons, which, in turn, further devolved power to their municipalities. This is a long-standing tradition, and it has resulted in municipalities with different predominant languages and religion. Switzerland also recognizes three levels of citizenship: “every Swiss national simultaneously holds a federal, cantonal, and municipal citizenship, each of which reflects one of the three complementary identities” (Fleiner and Hertig 2010, 322).

The Swiss Constitution established a unique federal government. The Federal Council consists of seven members of equal power elected by the Federal Assembly. The Federal Assembly is composed of two chambers, the upper house and the lower house. The upper house represents the cantons, while the lower house represents the Swiss people. Each house is elected by the people. The Constitution has gone through two revisions since 1848. All amendments made to the Constitution, as well as the approval of new constitutions, have to be voted on by the Swiss people and the majority of the

cantons. The Swiss Constitution provides the cantons with organizational freedom of their regional governments, but all the cantons have “opted for a collegial political system” (Fleiner and Hertig 2010, 335). Most cantons have a unicameral parliament elected through a proportional voting system. To manage diversity, the cantons have conferred power and autonomy to their municipalities, which is protected by the federal Constitution. Cantons have the ability to manage and promote their own economic development through their ability to levy taxes on their populations. In addition, the federal Constitution provides guidelines for fiscal equality among the cantons, which, in turn, the cantons provide for the municipalities. The cantons have the ability to determine their own official language as well as define the language that their education systems will utilize. In the arena of healthcare, the federal government, as well as the canton, has constitutional responsibility; however, “the implementation of health policy, the prevention of disease, and the regulation, accreditation, and largely also the financing of hospitals lie with the cantons” (Fleiner and Hertig 2010, 342).

The devolution of power from the federal government to the cantons and further to the municipalities applies in various other arenas of the Swiss federal system. It is through the devolution of power and shared political ideals that the government overcomes the diversity and political conflicts that arise. The Swiss federal model represents a unique arrangement compared to other federal systems, where “a political culture [based on federalism and direct democracy] has been established that seems to hold the fragmented nation together” (Fleiner 2002, 123). This model of federalism may be applicable for other multi-cultural states seeking to develop a democracy based

system, while also maintaining autonomy in their cultural, religious, and linguistic character.

Failed Attempts of Federalism

While federalism has been touted as a grand solution to the settlement of conflict in multi-ethnic states, in recent history there have been failed attempts to implement federalism successfully. McGarry and O'Leary (2011, 191) argued that:

multinational federalism or multi-ethnic federations which have either broken down, or failed to remain democratic, have been largely in the communist world or the post-colonial world.

Examples of failed federations throughout the world include the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Nigeria. The circumstances through which these failed federations were created and later governed were the reason for their disintegration or failed stability; however, their failure doesn't mean federalism is unattainable in multi-ethnic societies. Switzerland and India are prime examples of federal states that have remained cohesive entities, but this is due, in large part, to their governmental structure as well as to their implementation of federal principles. It must also be noted that Switzerland and India have not been without internal conflict, yet the growth, maturation, and reorganization of their federal systems have been instrumental to their enduring success.

When examining failed federations, McGarry and O'Leary (2011) identify that numerous federations have failed to be successfully established or failed to remain democratic in the post-colonial world to include former colonies in the Caribbean (the West Indies Federation), the continent of Africa (Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria and Tanzania) and the continent of Asia (Indochina, Burma, and Pakistan). McGarry and O'Leary

(2011, 192) further state that “new multinational federations appear not to work as conflict-regulating devices – even where they allow a degree of minority self-government.” This proves to be a disturbing argument, especially in the case of Iraq, which is currently undergoing an internal struggle between its multiple ethno-linguistic-religious groups. If post-colonial federations are more prone to failure, then Iraq’s future as a state is in jeopardy. A deeper look at failed federal models in multi-ethnic societies is warranted to understand the dilemmas these countries face post-colonial rule.

Nigeria provides an excellent case study for a model of government in the post-colonial world that has failed to remain resilient and democratic in governance. The first Nigerian Federation (1960–1966) was a British generated model based on the “1954 British colonial Lyttelton Constitution” (Suberu 2010, 229). The first federation consisted of three regions separated by the three predominant ethnic groups within the country. This federal model lasted until 1966, when a military coup took control of the country due to “contradictions and imbalances built into the tri-regional colonial federal legacy” (Suberu 2005, 142). Military rule lasted from 1966 until 1979. During this period, the three original regions of the first federal system were subdivided, first, into 12 constituent states and later into 19 states. This process subdivided the three major ethnic groups. As Suberu (2010, 229) stated:

This was a process of political and economic centralization mounted by Nigeria’s politicized soldiers in order to contain the centrifugal pressures that had destabilized the First Republic and contributed to the outbreak of civil war.

Nigeria experienced three more phases of rule following the first military rule from 1966-1979. The Second Republic lasted from 1979-1983, followed by a period of military rule from 1984-1999. During the second and third phases of rule, Nigeria further

subdivided its states from 19 to 36. While this subdued ethnic and regional divisiveness, the government became highly centralized and rampant with political corruption. The current federal structure, the Fourth Republic, has been in place from 1999 to the present. Both corruption and centralization still exist under the Fourth Republic, as well as widespread discrimination. “Nigeria is so centralized that it has been described as a ‘hollow federation’ and ‘a unitary state in federal guise’” (McGarry and O’Leary 2011, 193), and “corruption and abuse of power are so pervasive that the rule of law can hardly be said to exist” (Suberu 2001; McGarry and O’Leary 2011, 193).

The failure of Nigeria to remain a democratic federation is not surprising. The first federal model was an imbalanced decentralist attempt at creating three ethnically diverse provinces within the country. This model was created by the British prior to Nigeria’s independence, and its foundation did not take into account the possibility of secession of the three principle ethnic groups. It was only through military force that the country’s borders remained solvent. The later forms of government were created to politically fragment the three principle ethnic groups within the country “to eliminate the existence of a core or geopolitically hegemonic regions” (Suberu 2010, 232). This created competition and discrimination among the provinces further fragmenting the unity of the country.

Nigeria’s climb to become Africa’s number one oil producer further complicated the country’s federal development. Suberu (2010, 234) noted that:

Aside from fueling the inter-regional conflict between resource-rich and resource-constrained regions and stimulating political corruption, Nigeria’s oil-centric economy has aborted the country’s initial hope of broad-based economic development in agriculture.

Nigeria's oil wealth has led to a polarization of the country's economy and further fueled political corruption. A clear distinction exists between the oil rich region and the rest of the country, and more importantly, the oil economy has not provided social or economic opportunities in the federation (Suberu 2010).

Nigeria's current governmental model has been successful at keeping ethnic conflict in check; however, its government has failed to reach a federal solution to further promote democracy to counter-act its over-centralization of power or to successfully utilize profits from oil production to promote socio-economic parity within the country's provinces. These political-economic issues complicate Nigeria's connotation as a federal model of government. Interestingly, the parallels that exist between Nigeria and Iraq are astonishing. Analysis of these similarities should prove beneficial when analyzing solutions to Iraq's current governmental and political shortcomings, hopefully, providing insight to create a federal model that will allow Iraq to endure as a political state.

Failed or Fragile States:

There has been extensive literature regarding failed and fragile states within recent history. According to Di John (2010, 10), as well as Cramer (2006), "this interest has been largely sparked by the urgency of understanding the factors behind political violence and civil war, and the growth of terrorist organizations in many less-developed countries." The definition of failed state has evolved over the last quarter century and has been redefined numerous times within the literature. Jabareen (2013, 111-112) postulated the following:

The failed state therefore emerges as a concept representing a set of negative qualities possessed by states: states that are apprehensive, deeply conflicted, dangerous, divided, fragmented, and insecure; states that have no political legitimacy, provide only limited political goods, and lack

democracy and an independent judiciary system; states that pose a supreme threat to global security and a safe-haven for terrorists and their organizations; states that pose a threat to the flow of neoliberal economic globalization; states that are corrupt and that provide strongholds for drug and arms traders, money launderers, and smugglers; states with pervasive economic inequalities and declining GDPs; states in which loyalties, security, and trust are based not on modern institutions but rather on kinship and tribal and sectarian systems.

While this appears to be an all-inclusive definition, it must be noted that not all states will embody all of these characteristics. Furthermore, existence of one or more of these characteristics within a state does not necessarily mean that state has failed. The analysis of a state's total characteristics is necessary to determine fragility or failure, and the Failed States Index has attempted to do that for the last decade.

The Failed States Index, recently renamed the Fragile States Index, attempts to apply a statistical methodology to determine the most fragile states by analyzing twelve primary social, economic, and political indicators. Table 2 lists and defines these twelve indicators and identifies the pressures and measures associated with each. Utilizing special software known as the Conflict Assessment System Tool (CAST), data are analyzed and then “converted into a score representing the significance of each of the various pressures for a given country,” with further analysis performed to ensure that the raw data have not been misinterpreted (GFP 2014, 1). What is important to note is that many post-colonial countries, whose borders were drawn by European powers, are located in the highest categories of fragile states, especially in the case of Africa and the Middle East. It can be argued that not only are the borders created by European powers most prone to conflict, but the states themselves are some of the most unstable or fragile in the world.

Table 2: Fragile States Index Indicators

| Social Indicators | |
|--|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Demographic Pressures</u></p> <p>Pressures on the population such as disease and natural disasters make it difficult for the government to protect its citizens or demonstrate a lack of capacity or will.</p> <p>Includes pressures and measures related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Natural Disasters -Disease -Environment -Pollution -Food Scarcity -Malnutrition -Water Scarcity -Population Growth -Youth Bulge -Mortality | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Refugees and IDPs</u></p> <p>Pressures associated with population displacement. This strains public services and has the potential to pose a security threat.</p> <p>Includes pressures and measures related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Displacement -Refugee Camps -IDP Camps -Disease related to Displacement -Refugees per capita -IDPs per capita -Absorption capacity |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Group Grievance</u></p> <p>When tension and violence exists between groups, the state's ability to provide security is undermined and fear and further violence may ensue.</p> <p>Includes pressures and measures related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Discrimination -Powerlessness -Ethnic Violence -Communal Violence -Sectarian Violence -Religious Violence | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Human Flight and Brain Drain</u></p> <p>When there is little opportunity, people migrate leaving a vacuum of human capital. Those with resources also often leave before, or just as, conflict erupts.</p> <p>Includes pressures and measures related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Migration per capita -Human Capital -Emigration of Educated population |
| Economic Indicators | |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Uneven Economic Development</u></p> <p>When there are ethnic, religious, or regional disparities, the government tend to be uneven in their commitment to the social contract.</p> <p>Includes pressures and measures related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -GINI Coefficient -Income Share of Highest 10% -Income Share of Lowest 10% -Urban-Rural Service Distribution -Access to improved Services -Slum Population | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Poverty and Economic Decline</u></p> <p>Poverty and economic decline strain the ability of the state to provide for its citizens if they cannot provide for themselves and can create friction between the "haves" and the "have nots".</p> <p>Includes pressures and measures related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Economic Deficit -Government Debt -Unemployment -Youth Employment -Purchasing power -GDP per capita -GDP Growth -Inflation |
| Political and Military Indicators | |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>State Legitimacy</u></p> <p>Corruption and a Lack of representativeness in the government directly undermine the social contract.</p> <p>Includes pressures and measures related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Corruption -Government Effectiveness -Political Participation Electoral Process -Level of Democracy -Illicit Economy -Drug Trade -Protests and Demonstrations -Power Struggles | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Public Services</u></p> <p>The provision of health, education, and sanitation services, among others, are key roles of the state.</p> <p>Includes pressures and measures related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Policing -Criminality -Education Provision -Literacy -Water & Sanitation -Infrastructure -Quality Healthcare -Telephony -Internet Access -Energy Reliability -Roads |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Human Rights and Rule of Law</u></p> <p>When human rights are violated or unevenly protected, the state is failing in its ultimate responsibility.</p> <p>Includes pressures and measures related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Press Freedom -Civil Liberties -Political Freedoms -Human Trafficking -Political Prisoners -Incarceration -Religious Persecution -Torture -Executions | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Security Apparatus</u></p> <p>The security apparatus should have a monopoly the use of legitimate force. The social contract is weakened where this is affected by competing groups. Includes pressures and measures related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Internal Conflict -Small Arms Proliferation -Riots and Protests -Fatalities from Conflict -Military Coups -Rebel Activity -Militancy -Bombings -Political Prisoners |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Fractionalized Elites</u></p> <p>When local and national leaders engage in deadlock and brinkmanship for political gain, thus undermines the social contract.</p> <p>Includes pressures and measures related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Power Struggles -Defectors -Flawed Elections -Political Competition | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>External Intervention</u></p> <p>When the state fails to meet its international or domestic obligations, external actors may intervene to provide services or to manipulate internal affairs.</p> <p>Includes pressures and measures related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Foreign Assistance -Presence of Peacekeepers -Presence of UN Missions -Foreign Military Intervention -Sanctions -Credit Rating |

Source: Created by the author using data from GFP (2014).

Iraq currently is ranked 13 on the Fragile States Index. Iraq has been on the index since 2005, reaching as high as second in 2007. It could be debated that, had the recent conflict with ISIS begun sooner, analysts would have placed Iraq higher on the index. It must be noted that Iraq has been a fragile state for much of its existence, and examination of Iraq's history is necessary to determine how it has evolved into this failed/fragile state status.

Iraq was created from the three Ottoman provinces of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra at the conclusion of WWI. These three provinces had never been governed as one cohesive unit, and the merging of these three provinces would prove problematic from Iraq's inception until the present day. "Of all the Ottoman provinces in the Middle East, those in Iraq had demonstrated a strong resistance to centralized rule... [and] the region was also one of the least developed in the empire" (Abdullah 2011, 93). Britain was at the heart of the creation of Iraq, which was an outcome of the Sykes-Picot agreement at the conclusion of WWI. Britain's interest in Iraq as a state was a political, strategic, and economic decision, indicative of the formation of the rest of the Middle East.

In an attempt to unify Iraq under a trusted agent, Britain installed King Feisal as the constitutional monarch of Iraq. A Sunni Arab, Feisal was not native to the original three provinces and his installation as monarch placed him in direct rule over multiple ethno-linguistic-religious groups, including Sunni Arabs, Shi'a Arabs, Kurds, Christians, Jews, Yazidis, and Turks. The imposition of a Sunni Arab leader would lead to an eventual Sunni Arab-dominated government, in which an ethnic group that made up approximately 20 percent of the state's multi-cultural population would rule the country for the remainder of the 20th century.

Despite the lop-sided rule of the Sunni elite over the rest of the Iraqi population, the monarchy did provide a period of stability for the state of Iraq. There were periods of dissent from various ethnic groups such as the Kurds, but the monarchy quickly dispatched these uprisings. Under the monarchy, “the state’s institutions were refined, the country’s borders clarified, material development progressed, national integration deepened and a new educated cadre came to hold important positions” (Abdullah 2011, 116). Despite these great achievements, there was a clear social polarization between the land-owning elite and the peasantry. Additionally, “the narrow base of the regime alienated the country’s growing number of educated middle classes, who aspired to a greater share of power and wealth” (Abdullah 2011, 117). The monarchy would eventually fall to a military coup led by General Abdul-Karim Qasim on 14 July, 1958.

The 1958 coup was orchestrated by a group of Iraqi military officers who had formed a secret organization named the Free Officers of Iraq. These officers based their coup on the liberation of the people of Iraq from the imperial puppet government of the monarchy. “The republic replaced the monarchy with a three-man Sovereignty Council taking the responsibilities of the president until such time as national elections could be held” (Abdullah 2011, 119). The first two years of the republic saw an increase in nationalism and the implementation of various reforms to include limiting the power of religious courts, urban development, land distribution, spending on social welfare programs, and investment in industry; however, an opposition bloc formed within the country and eventually exploited the differences between the Free Officers (Abdullah 2011). The instability created by the opposition bloc, failed coup attempts, as well as the war between the Iraqi Army and the Iraqi Kurds, eventually led to a repressive

government headed by Qasim. In turn, Qasim would later be overthrown by the Ba’thist party, with the help of a non-Ba’thist Army Officer, Abdul-Salam Arif. Arif’s military government pursued a policy of rapid nationalization of industry, which eventually led to the stagnation of the Iraqi economy. His death in 1966 led to another coup by the Ba’thist party and the eventual dictatorship of Saddam Husayn.

Under Ba’thist rule, the party’s ideology would be forced onto the population, so that “by the end of the 1970s, the distinction between party and government was blurred” (Abdullah 2011, 131). “The Ba’thist regime politicized the differences between Iraq’s communities through discrimination and ethnic favouritism” (Bouillon 2012, 283). Non-Ba’thists would be persecuted and were unable to hold positions in government and education. The population was under constant surveillance by Saddam’s security services, and dissent against the government was dealt with through torture and executions (Abdullah 2011; Marr 2012). In 1979, Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr resigned as the leader of Iraq, which led to the establishment of a totalitarian government led by Saddam Husayn.

Saddam Husayn would further destabilize the country over the course of the next two decades, but his regional politics would elevate Iraq to one of the most powerful regional players in the Middle East. Saddam’s dictatorship persecuted non-Ba’thist citizens as well as the Shi’a and Kurdish populations in Iraq, and he used chemical weapons against his own population to prevent them from rising up against his government. Saddam also committed his military to multiple regional conflicts, including a war with Iran, which lasted from 1980-1988, followed by war with Kuwait (the Gulf War) in 1990, which was quickly ended with U.S. military assistance. The Iraq-Iran War,

the Gulf War, international sanctions, and internal uprisings damaged and weakened the state and the “cohesiveness of the nation” (Marr 2012, 254). Ultimately, the dictator’s repressive regime and a change in U.S. foreign policy due to the terrorist attacks in September, 2001, eventually led to the invasion by U.S. Forces in 2003 and the fall of Saddam Husayn’s government.

Iraq’s current instability is a result of multiple factors over the history of the state’s existence. Imperialism and Western interests post-WWI, military coups in the mid-20th century and, finally, a ruthless dictatorship created deep divisions within the country’s population. The U.S. invasion in 2003 and the overthrow of Saddam Husayn’s regime further destabilized the country to the point of complete state failure. The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) established by the U.S. to govern the post-Saddam Iraq, and the policies and decisions made by the CPA during its tenure, played a direct role in destabilizing the already fragile state. “Ignorance led to numerous ill-advised decisions, and one of the most fateful was the order to abolish the army and the Ba’th Party” (Abdullah 2011, 163). The de-Ba’thification of Iraq effectively eliminated the Iraqi Bureaucracy and disbanded the military, bringing further disorder to the country. “More troubling, however, was that this campaign directed against the Ba’th regime’s foundations came to be viewed as a campaign against Sunni Arabs in general, adding fuel to the growing sectarian divide” (Abdullah 2011, 163).

Sectarian rifts proved to be a major hurdle for the remainder of the U.S. occupation. Elections were held, with politicians clearly elected along sectarian lines. Many Sunni’s refused to participate in the creation of the Iraqi Constitution, which led to more control and favorable policies towards the Shi’a and Kurdish communities.

Sectarian violence erupted in Iraq, killing thousands of Iraqis and creating large numbers of refugees. “The sectarian strife penetrated state institutions as the embryonic Iraqi security forces came to be divided into Sunni and Shi’i sections, each used to target the opposite community” (Abdullah 2011, 171-172). Additionally, insurgent groups based along sectarian lines further destabilized the government, creating havoc in Sunni and Shi’a communities.

According to Marr (2012), stabilization started to materialize in 2007 due to three main factors:

1. The U.S. government authorized a surge of 50,000 troops to Iraq, whose mission was to protect the Iraqi population. This new strategy fostered support for the U.S. troops and turned Iraqi citizens against the insurgency;
2. A movement known as the Sahwa (Awakening) emerged, and Sunni tribes turned against the al-Qa’ida insurgency;
3. The Shi’a insurgency in the south began to fracture, due to a political split between Maliki, the Iraqi Prime Minister, and the Sadrists.

These three factors, along with governmental and economic reforms, and a strengthening of the central government led to a brief stabilization of the Iraqi state and the eventual withdrawal of U.S. troops in 2011; however, Iraq would face a new threat in 2014 from an insurgent group known as ISIS.

The ISIS Advance:

In June, 2014, ISIS attacked and seized control of Mosul and Tikrit in the northwest region of Iraq. Primarily an ethnically Sunni region, ISIS encountered little resistance until its advance was countered by Kurdish forces. ISIS has critically

destabilized Iraq in recent months by taking territory and displacing elements of the Iraqi population and the Iraqi security forces. This has highlighted a clear lack of competency by the Iraqi security forces, as well as the inability of the current Iraqi government to protect its population adequately from external and internal threats. The government of Iraq has requested U.S. intervention to assist Iraqi security forces in combating ISIS but, even with U.S. airstrikes currently underway, ISIS is still advancing throughout Syria and Iraq (Figure 5).

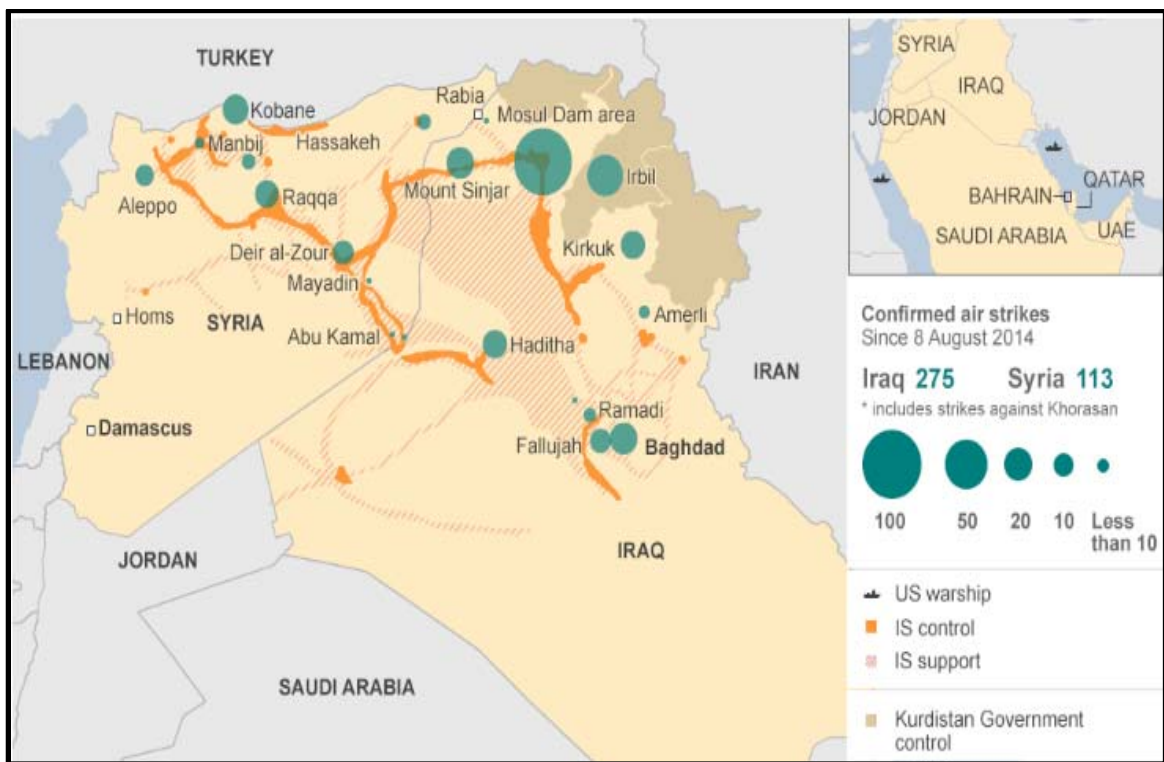


Figure 5: Map of ISIS-Controlled Areas and Coalition Air Strikes
Source: ISW (2014).

“ISIS’ stated goal is to restore the ‘caliphate’ – an Islamic state under the rule of a community of religious scholars guided by a supreme leader, the caliph or khalifah, which is generally taken to mean the successor of the Prophet Muhammad” (Johnson 2014, 1). The first caliph was established after the death of Muhammad, and the role of

the caliph has been the political, military, spiritual, and administrative leader of all Muslims. During the caliphate period, the Muslim culture flourished and excelled in the development of math, science, and art. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire post-WWI, the first President of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal, abolished the caliphate. Thereafter, the Middle East states attempted to advance state and Arab nationalism as opposed to Islamic unity, and this contributed to the development of Islamic Fundamentalist movements with the goal of restoring the caliphate in the Middle East (Eichenwald 2014).

ISIS is not a new organization, and its roots are founded in the Abu Mus'ab al Zarqawi's Islamic fundamentalist group Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (more commonly known as Al Qaeda in Iraq). Breaking from Al Qaeda due to ideological differences, the group evolved and merged with a Syrian organization, thus forming the current Islamic State. With extremist ideology based on bringing about the return of the caliphate to the Middle East and North Africa, ISIS militants have killed hundreds of civilians who refused to accept ISIS beliefs or convert to its form of Islam, with females and children sold into the sex trade. This is true of the Yezidi population as well as elements of the Kurdish population in Iraq and Syria. ISIS' advancement into and control over both Iraqi and Syrian territory have created a fissure of instability in the Middle East, and it is clear that, if Iraq does not successfully repel ISIS, the country could be fractured to the point of disintegration.

ISIS has already claimed the establishment of a caliphate in Iraq and Syria. In attempt to legitimize the organization, ISIS has developed a system of governance, opened closed roads, restored electricity, and started paying municipal workers. In addition, ISIS has established a presence through an online newspaper and social media.

The problem with maintaining these systems boils down to financial stability of the organization. ISIS is funded through the sale of illegal crude from captured oil fields, bank robbery, and crude taxation methods in controlled territories. ISIS' ability to establish and sustain a caliphate is dependent on future income. Some believe that ISIS will not be able to sustain itself and its governance of a caliphate economically (Caruso-Cabrera 2014). Without the ability to continue to pay workers and provide essential services, the likelihood of ISIS staying in control of its seized territory is minimal.

Another roadblock to ISIS' stability is its lack of support from Islamic leaders and the Muslim population. ISIS killing of innocent Muslims has discredited the organization and created opposition within the Islamic community. Islamic religious leaders have publicly criticized ISIS for its brutal tactics and establishment of what they describe as a false caliphate. The killing of innocent Muslims has also created an opposition movement in the ISIS-controlled territory of western Iraq. The Sunni Arab region of Iraq, where ISIS made its quickest military victories, has already begun to participate in operations to expel ISIS. The Sunni Arabs have requested U.S. assistance in countering ISIS militants in western Iraq, while the Kurdish peshmerga forces, Shi'a militias, and Iraqi security forces have been fighting ISIS militants in north and central Iraq. It will be difficult for ISIS to maintain its territorial control, especially if an Iraqi coalition develops to expel the ISIS militants from the state.

ISIS also faces the possibility of intervention by other Middle East states. Currently, most states, including Jordan and Saudi Arabia, have taken up a defensive posture. Iran has taken a more active role in assisting the Iraqi government with support to battle the ISIS militants. If the ISIS threat appears to be gaining ground outside of Iraq

and Syria, the prospect of military action is highly likely, which would make it extremely difficult for ISIS to maintain its foothold in Iraq.

Finally, while the permanent envelopment of Iraq into an ISIS caliphate is unlikely, the destabilization of Iraq created by the ISIS could lead to the possible disintegration of the state in its current structure. It is crucial that Iraq overcomes sectarian tensions and presents a unified front against ISIS. If the Shi'a-led Iraqi government cannot incorporate the Kurds and the Sunni Arabs into a coalition effort to expel ISIS, the risk exists that Iraq could disintegrate into a group of micro-states, creating significant instability in the region.

Methodology

The goal of the analysis is to examine three hypothesized models of government to determine a best-case model for the future stability of Iraq. This thesis utilizes a qualitative and policy driven approach to examine the relationship between the colonial-imposed borders of Iraq and the state-building required to create a viable political entity within the current geopolitical borders. Previous research notes that there is a negative relationship between borders imposed by colonial powers in the developing world and political-territorial stability; however, the implementation of the principle of *Uti Possidetis Juris* in decolonized regions of the world, including South America and Africa, has led to international acceptance of stabilizing decolonized countries by using colonial borders as geographical limits (Fromkin 2009, Vahlas 2013). This study applies these observations to the case of Iraq to determine what models of government might ensure the future viability of the geopolitical state within its current borders.

Qualitative research is utilized during this analysis due to the type of geopolitical solutions being proposed. When examining multiple ethno-linguistic-religious groups within one country, utilizing qualitative analysis to understand human behavior is necessary when determining the feasibility of a geopolitical model of government. More importantly, the conclusions reached during this research may only have applicability to the state of Iraq due to the specific characteristics and multi-cultural dynamics present within the state. The qualitative design of this research allows for the identification of themes within the literature through the analysis of similar case studies and policy initiatives to employ federalism as a tool for conflict management in multi-cultural states. Furthermore, it would be difficult to identify data sets that might capture effectively the

human dynamics necessary to identify which model of government best complements needs of the people of Iraq. This is why a quantitative approach is not being utilized to test the proposed geopolitical solutions. If the thesis were looking to answer a more specific question - such as, what model of government do the people of Iraq desire - then a quantitative approach would be warranted.

This analysis takes place in three stages:

1. Deconstruction of the human context of Iraq by examining the population, political culture, economy, and the centrifugal/centripetal forces within the state;
2. Review of the territorial policy debates in Iraq, both internal and regional issues, that have shaped and continue to shape Iraq's political climate; and
3. Proposal of three models for maintaining the current borders of Iraq through examples of state models that could work to unite the country's diverse populations.

The first stage of this study focuses on the deconstruction of the complex human spatial components of Iraq. This stage outlines the population's cultural and political differences and examines the country's economic activity in order to establish a framework for the research. Most studies of the political state, as noted by Hartshorne (1950), focus on the centrifugal forces within states that create political instability. Hartshorne (1950) believed that too much emphasis has been placed on forces that divide or disrupt political states, and that more focus should be placed on the centripetal forces that continue to bind the state. Consisting of multiple ethno-linguistic-religious groups, Iraq's population dynamics have been studied by scholars across multiple disciplines.

Specifically, scholars have examined the political, spatial, and communal relationships as well as the social interactions between the Sunni, Shi'a, and Kurdish populations.

Through these studies, a firm understanding of Iraq's centripetal and centrifugal forces has been established. Like Hartshorne's (1950) functional theory approach, the intent of stage one's analysis is to determine which centripetal forces Iraq has available to maintain the current borders. A comparative analysis of the centripetal forces in relation to the centrifugal forces must also be provided to determine the viability of the future geopolitical state. The utilization of maps in stage one to identify the spatial dimensions of each ethno-linguistic-religious group as well as the tribal groups helps in understanding the population dynamics within the country, as well as the centripetal and centrifugal forces that exist.

The second stage of analysis examines the current territorial policy debates and discussions relating to Iraq and the Middle East. Iraq's current geopolitical boundaries are a major factor in the stability of the Middle East region. A wide array of literature and commentary has been published in relation to Iraq's internal and external political borders and the creation of three micro-states as a solution to Iraq's sectarian divide. This stage applies this body of literature to examine the principle of *Uti Possidetis Juris* and the territorial debates both internal and external to Iraq. Furthermore, insight is provided on why it is important to maintain the current geopolitical borders of Iraq by exploring the impacts of border dissolution in relation to Iraq's international neighbors.

In the third stage of analysis, this study examines three solutions to developing a stable geopolitical structure for Iraq through examination of three different political models:

1. Iraq governed by a strong central government;
2. Development of a federal model with three key regions defined along ethno-linguistic-religious lines;
3. Iraq decentralized into multiple regional governments (more than three).

This section examines these three different models and attempts to proffer a political structure based on the current geopolitical climate that could serve to strengthen the state of Iraq. I argue that option two could have the highest probability of enduring success, but within specific constraints that must be explained in detail.

First, within the literature and commentary, there exists the belief that Iraq should be partitioned into three separate geopolitical states. The international community is unlikely to support dissolution of Iraq's current international borders to accommodate the creation of three separate states. As seen from the impacts of the Arab Spring, drastic change has not brought stability to the Middle East. Dissolution of Iraq's borders could create a geopolitical disaster impacting not only the Middle East but also the world economy. For option two to be successful, I argue that Iraq must maintain its current international borders, thereby maintaining geopolitical stability within the region.

Second, Iraq must develop a model of federalism that is symbolic of its diverse population's ethnic, cultural, religious, and political outlooks. While most Middle East inhabitants distrust anything of Western origin, the Swiss federal model, with certain cultural adjustments, could provide a framework that would stabilize the internal political environment of Iraq. Before any model can be implemented, it is necessary for all or a vast majority of the ethno-linguistic-religious groups to agree to participate in the development of the new federal model. In cases where groups choose not to participate,

every effort needs to be taken to ensure those groups' individual rights are protected within the federal model. As seen throughout the literature, federal models are either symmetrical or asymmetrical. According to Weller and Nobbs (2010, 6), "asymmetrical federal designs are sometimes adopted as a way of terminating secessionist disputes." Asymmetrical autonomous arrangements may need to be a component of the Iraq federal model in order to ensure that secession by different ethno-linguistic-religious groups is prevented from destabilizing the country and the region.

Finally, as the Islamic religion plays a defining role in the Middle East, incorporation of Islamic principles, while also incorporating religious freedom through autonomous arrangements within the Iraq federal model, is necessary to gain the acceptance of the majority of Iraq's population. This action would create a template for a federal state based on Middle East culture and religious beliefs, while also incorporating the Western ideology of federalism. Where early attempts by the British, French and, later, the United States and the U.S.S.R. failed to effect positive change in the Middle East, an Iraq federal model designed and implemented by Iraqis and rooted in Islam could serve as a future template for other Middle East countries to develop their own federal systems. The challenge that exists in an Islamic-based federal model is how to contain Islamic extremism effectively and to prevent its adherents from destroying positive improvements in Iraq's political system. The methodology used in this research aims to identify, at the very least, the positive and negative value of each model of government proposed as a solution to Iraq's geopolitical problems. The results should provide a framework for future scholars to build upon when developing solutions for the future stability of the state of Iraq.

Analysis

Understanding the Human Components of Iraq

Iraq is a country consisting of multiple ethno-linguistic-religious groups residing within borders artificially created by Western powers at the conclusion of WWI. By combining the Ottoman provinces of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul (Figure 6), the Western Powers created a state that would encapsulate one of the most diverse populations in the Middle East. The human component of Iraq is challenging to understand, due to the diversity of the population. A significant portion of the population is ethnically homogeneous, primarily Arab or Kurd, but is heterogeneous based along religious and linguistic lines (e.g., Sunni vs. Shia, Arabic vs. Kurdish) (see Figure 1). According to the CIA (2014):

1. Arabs make up 75-80 percent of the population, Kurds 15-20 percent, with a few minority groups, including Turkomen and Assyrians, who make up less than 5 percent of the population;
2. Arabic and Kurdish are the two official languages spoken in Iraq, but other dialects exist in limited areas;
3. Over 99 percent of the population is Muslim. Of these, 60-65 percent adheres to the Shi'a faith of Islam, while 32-37 percent adheres to the Sunni faith.
The remaining one percent of the population is made up of Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, and other religions.

The diverse population in Iraq has served as a constant destabilizing force for the state, leading to multiple ethnic and sectarian conflicts from its inception to the present day. To better understand the difficulties and centrifugal forces experienced by the

current state, an examination of the three primary ethno-linguistic-religious groups' interactions and their current political situations is necessary.



Figure 6: Modern Border of Iraq Imposed on a Map of the Ottoman Empire in 1914
Source: Created by the author using base data from the UKNA (2014).

Sunni Arab Domination of Iraqi Politics

The Sunni Arab population comprises approximately 20 percent of the total population in Iraq. As shown in Figure 1 earlier, the Sunni Arabs inhabit the western and central portions of the state and intermix with the Kurds to the north and the Shia to the east. Intermarriage was common between the Sunni and the Shi'a for a number of years, effectively establishing transitional zones between the dominant Sunni and Shi'a areas. Sunni Muslims differ from Shi'a Muslims due to an ideological split in Islam around 632 C.E., when the death of the Prophet Mohammed prompted a divergence in the religion due to a disagreement regarding the rightful successor to Mohammed. This split led to

numerous conflicts between the two Muslim sects, creating a rift that exists to the present day. According to Merritt (2007, 41):

The long-standing hatred and distrust of Shi'a is a component in the very identity of the Sunni Arab. The continual conflict since the original split of Islam in 632 CE likely plays an important role in understanding the situation in Iraq.

This section discusses the historical significance of the Sunni-led governments in Iraq that repressed the multiple ethno-linguistic-religious groups of the state. It also identifies the problems that resulted from the de-Ba'thification of Iraqi society, which embroiled the country in sectarian conflict that is still occurring today.

From the creation of the mandate in the 1920s until the fall of the Saddam Husayn regime in 2003, the Sunni Arabs dominated Iraqi politics and controlled the state. The Sunni Arabs led more secular-oriented governments as opposed to a government rooted in Islam. To maintain control of the multiple ethno-linguistic-religious groups, the monarchy, and later the Sunni Arab military officers and politicians, utilized force to keep tribal and sectarian opposition from destabilizing the state. During the period of Sunni Arab dominance, both the Kurds and the Shi'a Arabs were marginalized both politically and culturally. The Sunni Arabs attempted to unite the state under the banner of Arab Nationalism, but this further increased the divide between the Kurds, whose ultimate goal was autonomy and statehood, and the Shi'a, who preferred a less secular state devoid of foreign involvement (Marr 2012).

The coup of July 17, 1968, brought the Ba'th Party to full power in Iraq. The Ba'ath party "was dedicated to the ideal of establishing an Iraqi nation" (Merritt 2007, 42; Bengio and Ben-Dor 1999). According to Baram (1997, 1):

As soon as it came to power in Iraq in July 1968, the Ba'th Party announced in its Communique No. 1 its rejection of "tribalism" in no uncertain terms. "We are against religious sectarianism (al-t'd'ifiyya), racism, and tribalism (al-qabaliyya)," it declared, defining all these ills as "the remnants of colonialism."

Despite this hard-lined rhetoric, as Saddam Husayn's influence and power increased in the Ba'th party during the 1970s, he utilized tribal lineages and symbolism to enhance the power of certain Sunni Arab clans, which further minimized the Shi'a and Kurdish populations' influence (Merritt 2007). The Ba'th party invested in a security apparatus that prevented internal divisions in the party, and the party leadership began its process of Ba'thization. The Ba'thization program banned non-Ba'thists from civil service, high-level education positions, and military leadership, and instituted a school curriculum indoctrinating Iraqis with the party ideals (Abdullah 2011). According to Abdullah (2011, 132):

These policies had a profound social impact. In place of tribe, or religious community, and with independent civil institutions not allowed to emerge, the individual came to be linked directly to an all-controlling state.

These actions further cemented Sunni Arab control over the state, creating a lopsided governmental power structure.

The central government, now under the control of the Ba'th Party, had to deal with multiple uprisings during the 1970s from both the Kurds and the Shi'a Arabs. The Shi'a revolts were dealt with through judicial trials and, in some cases, military action that killed and wounded a large number of Shi'a civilians. The Kurds went to full war with the regime with military support from Iran. After reaching an agreement with Iran to remove support for the Kurdish fighters, the Iraqi government was able to defeat the Kurdish resistance. An autonomy agreement was reached with the Kurdistan region but,

to ensure that future Kurdish rebellions would not occur, the Iraqi state encouraged Arab settlement of Kurdish cities and supported forced removal of Kurds from these areas as well as rural areas bordering Turkey and Iran (Abdullah 2011; Marr 2012).

When Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr resigned as President in 1979, he appointed Saddam Husayn in his place. Saddam immediately “conducted an extensive purge of the government and party” (Abdullah 2011, 136). Saddam Husayn created the façade of a democratically elected government by holding elections for the National Assembly. In reality, “the National Assembly was a powerless body [that] basically rubber-stamped all the president’s decisions” (Abdullah 2011, 136). Additionally, the only citizens authorized to run for political office had to be approved by an election commission, which ensured that only Ba’th party loyalists could run (Marr 2012). Over the course of the next 24 years, Saddam Husayn used “his prejudice against Shi’a and Kurds to widen the already enormous rift between the ethnic groups” (Merritt 2007, 44). He crushed Kurdish and Shi’a opposition movements with overwhelming military force and chemical weapons. It would not be until the 2003 invasion of Iraq that the Ba’th and Sunni Arabs would be removed from control over the country.

The de-Ba’thification of Iraq proved to be one of the most costly mistakes made by the United States immediately following its military invasion. The first Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) order “disestablished the Ba’th Party and aimed to eliminate the party structures to ‘ensure that representative government in Iraq is not threatened by Ba’thist elements returning to power’” (Marr 2012, 267). While de-Ba’thification was popular with the Kurds and the Shi’a, the act of de-Ba’thification, followed by dissolution of the Iraqi Army, created a drastic instability in the occupied state due to the

destruction of Iraq's institutional structure. The Sunni Arab population of the country was soon embroiled in an insurgency fueled by numerous grievances. According to Marr (2012, 274-275):

One was obvious, shock and rejection of foreign occupation and rule, accompanied by outrage at de-Ba'athification and the displacement of Sunni Arab leaders by exiles and opposition elements. Sunnis were also dismayed at the increasing ethnic and sectarian basis of rule, which seemed to be undermining state unity... A second source of the insurgency drew on a more locally rooted nationalism, often intermixed with tribally based codes of honor... A third source of opposition came from foreign elements, most notably those loosely associated with al-Qa'ida.

Over the course of the insurgency, Sunni Arabs were discouraged from participating in the development of a new Iraqi government by religious clerics, which opened the door for Kurdish and Shi'a politicians to shape the 2005 Constitution in a way that benefited their ethno-linguistic-religious groups while marginalizing the Sunnis. This would lead to an horrific period of sectarian conflict pitting Sunni against Shi'a and Arab against Kurd.

Sectarian conflict and the Sunni insurgency began to diminish in 2007. This was due in large part to the Sunni Arabs turning against al-Qa'ida and the insurgency. "While many Sunni leaders have abandoned the resistance and turned against the more extremist groups (like al-Qa'ida), they still complain of being excluded from important state institutions" (Abdullah 2011, 174). Furthermore, oppression of the Sunni population is still ongoing by the Shi'a-led government in Baghdad. Van Buren (2014, 1) stated:

The Iraqi army, along with paramilitary police from the Interior Ministry, had engaged in a multi-year campaign of beating, imprisoning, and arresting Sunnis, to the point where many felt that Baghdad was occupying, not governing.

It can be argued that the rapid ISIS advance through western Iraq through primarily Sunni areas was a result of the maltreatment of the Sunni population. Many journalists are

currently positing that the Sunni Arabs in Iraq may be waiting to see if their situation improves before picking sides. It is important to note that not all Sunnis share this view. With recent news reports focused on the atrocities carried out by ISIS, it will be interesting to see how the Sunni population eventually reacts to ISIS occupation.

Shi'a Arabs

The Shi'a population comprises approximately 60-65 percent of the total population in Iraq and inhabits the southeastern half of the state. Despite being from the same sect of Islam as the Persian population of Iran to the east, ethnically the Shi'a population of Iraq is predominantly Arab. The Sunni-Shi'a divide within the sect of Islam was discussed earlier, and the fact that Shi'a Arabs were marginalized politically during Sunni Arab control of Iraq has been noted. This section briefly touches on historical events related to the Shi'a marginalization in Iraqi government and politics under the Sunni-led governments. It highlights the events that led to the rise of Shi'a dominance within the Iraqi government post-2003 invasion and the issues their role reversal with the Sunni Arabs created.

Early in the creation of the Iraq mandate there was a shared vision among the Sunni and the Shi'a based on opposition to foreign control; however, the Sunnis also "feared that Shi'i leadership of government [in Iraq] would open the door to sectarianism and even to theocratic rule" (Marr 2012, 31). Initially, conflict between the Sunni and Shi'a Arabs in Iraq grew out of tribal conflict. This conflict originated mostly in Shi'a areas in response to the increased power and influence of the central government during the transition from a tribal society to a more developed state. "A striking manifestation of this transition was the erosion of the power and authority of the shaikh within the tribe as

the new state extended its reach into the countryside” (Marr 2012, 41). As tribal rebellions increased, the amount of force used to defeat the uprisings increased and the rebellions were dealt with ruthlessly. The excessive use of force by the Sunni-led government established a tentative “peace” in the southern tribal region.

During the 1950s and 1960s, multiple Shi’a revivals took place. “The intense secularism of the [Iraq] regime and its support for the leftist policies soon provoked a reaction from conservative Shi’a elements and a religious revival among the Shi’a youth” (Marr 2012, 103). An important Shi’a Islamic group, the Da’wa, emerged under the leadership of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr. “The Da’wa was interested in reshaping Islam and its teachings to meet the needs of the modern world and in organizing to protect and spread these ideas” (Marr 2012, 103). The Da’wa would later become a political party “aimed at the eventual establishment of an Islamic state,” and as both Sunni domination and Shi’a discrimination increased, so did the development of a stronger Shi’a identity. (Marr 2012, 103-104).

Under Saddam Husayn, discrimination against and distrust of the Shi’a continued to increase, as did the rift between the Sunni and the Shi’a Arabs. Interestingly, the fear of the Sunni elite during the mandate period would come to fruition after the US-led invasion and overthrow of the Saddam regime in 2003. The continuous mistreatment of Shi’a Arabs by the Sunni Arabs throughout the 20th century would lead to a bloody sectarian conflict as the religiously oriented Shi’a parties became the dominant force in post-invasion Iraqi politics.

Once the 2003 invasion of Iraq was complete, the United States regarded the fall of Saddam Husayn as an opportunity to build a stable democracy in Iraq, which might

facilitate democratic movements in the rest of the Middle East region (Merritt 2007; Nasr 2006). This, however, was not a shared view of the Iraqis. As Nasr (2006, 58) stated:

Rather than viewing the fall of Saddam as an occasion to create a liberal democracy, therefore, many Iraqis viewed it as an opportunity to redress injustices in the distribution of power among the country's major communities. By liberating and empowering Iraq's Shiite majority, the Bush administration helped launch a broad Shiite revival that [would] upset the sectarian balance in Iraq and the Middle East for years to come.

The Sunni Arabs were unwilling to cooperate with the creation of a new Iraqi government as long as the state was occupied by foreign forces and the campaign of de-Ba'thification was aimed at all Sunni Arab leaders. This allowed the exiled Shi'a opposition leaders to enhance their position in the interim Iraqi government by placing Shi'a Arabs in key positions. De-Ba'thification and the overthrow of Saddam Husayn essentially shifted power from the Sunni to the Shi'a rather than promote "liberation of the Iraqi people as a nation" (Merritt 2007, 50). As sectarian violence and insurgency from the Sunni Arabs increased in response to US occupation and de-Ba'thification, the Shi'a also faced insurgency from their own population. The Sadrists, led by Muqtada al-Sadr, became a divisive force among the Shi'a Islamist movement, as well as within the coalition and the IGC. According to Marr (2012, 277):

They [the Sadrists] were adamantly opposed to US occupation. They were insiders who had endured Iraq under Saddam and who resented the 'exile' opposition. And they had not been included in the emerging government structure... The Sadrists also had a very different constituency – the young and the poor in Sadr City and other towns of the south.

Sadr created the Mahdi Army, which engaged U.S. forces, rival Shi'a groups, and took control of various locations in multiple cities. This led to dissent for Sadr in both the Shi'a community and from Shi'a Islamist parties. Eventually, Sadr would be forced to stand down and negotiate a cease fire, but his insurgency coupled with the Sunni

insurgency and terrorist attacks from al-Qa'ida greatly affected the establishment of the new Iraqi government.

In 2005, the Shi'a swept a large portion of the seats in the first parliamentary election. The results of the election were clear, and they indicated that fragmentation existed along ethnic and sectarian lines. The Shi'a parties took over 51 percent of the seats during the election, followed by the Kurds who took 27 percent. The remaining seats were taken by non-sectarian parties, the Sunni, and minority interest groups.

According to Marr (2012, 289):

The biggest losers [in the 2005 elections] were the Sunni Arabs. Sunni groups won only six parliamentary seats (2 percent) although a few Arabs Sunnis ran on other party labels. This left Sunnis with little voice in the constitutional process.

Despite efforts by the U.S. to relax the de-Ba'thification process and include the Sunnis in the constitutional process, both Shi'a and Kurds were able to shape the Constitution in their favor, minimizing the strength of the Sunni Arabs. The Shi'a, still fearful of Ba'thism, ensured that de-Ba'thification would continue, further alienating the Sunni Arabs. Fearful of further exclusion from the political process, the Sunnis began to align themselves along sectarian lines. This prompted the Shi'a, who feared Sunni extremist violence, to do the same. Sectarian violence erupted in Baghdad from 2006-2007, and Sunni and Shi'a militias conducted numerous killings and assassinations against each other. As sectarian violence decreased in 2007, the Shi'a Arabs essentially cemented their control over the Iraqi government. This resulted in further discrimination against the Sunni Arab population, which continues to this day.

Despite U.S. attempts at creating a democratic state inclusive of all ethno-linguistic-religious groups, the current state of Iraq is best characterized as a fragile state

with increasing sectarian rifts. As the U.S. has become more critical of Iraq's government, Iraq has looked to Iran for support. "Since 2003, Sunni leaders in Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia have repeatedly blamed Iran for the chaos in Iraq and warned that Iran would wield considerable influence in the region if Iraqi Shiites came to hold the reins of power in Baghdad" (Nasr 2006, 60). Since coming to power, the Shi'a-led government in Iraq has developed positive diplomatic relations with the Iranian government. This is likely a result of many of the exiled Shi'a politicians living in Iran prior to returning to Iraq after the fall of Saddam Husayn.

During the development of the new Iraqi government, Iran has been linked to various Shi'a political movements as well as to support for various Shi'a-based militias during the insurgency. Iran has a strategic interest in a Shi'a-dominated government in Iraq. For a number of years, Iran has been surrounded by hostile Sunni Arab-dominated states. A Shi'a-dominated government in Iraq creates a buffer between these hostile regimes, and increases Iran's regional influence as well as access to Iraq's oil reserves. Iran's impact on Iraqi politics continues today, and this was validated by Iran's immediate response to Iraq's plea for assistance in dealing with the ISIS advance. Continuing Iran-Iraq relations pose a difficult conundrum for the U.S. With Iran advancing its influence over Iraq, the possibility of an increased sectarian rift becomes more likely.

The Kurds

According to O'Leary (2002, 17), "The Kurds, an Iranian ethno-linguistic group, inhabit the mostly mountainous area [in the Middle East] where the borders of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria converge." After WWI, the Kurds were promised their own nation-

state created by the Treaty of Sevres, but the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne withdrew the pledge, making the Kurds “the largest ethnic group in the world without a state” (Jimenez and Kabachnik 2012; O’Leary 2002, 17). The Iraqi Kurds inhabit the northern region of Iraq and extend south along the eastern border of Iraq and Iran (Figure 7). They make up approximately 15-20 percent of the population and are predominately Sunni in religious faith. Some Kurds are Shi’a, Christian, or Yezidi.

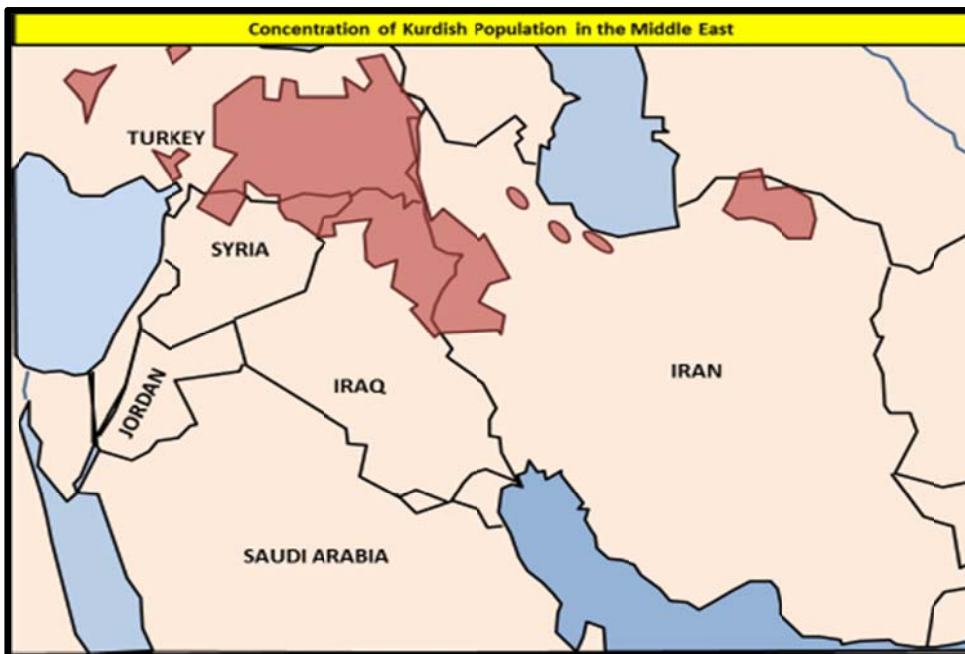


Figure 7: Concentration of the Kurdish Population in the Middle East
Source: Created by the author from CIA (1986) base data.

The Kurds have been fighting for autonomy and to maintain their national identity for centuries. The Kurds assert that their population is distinctly different from the states their nation inhabits, and they have consistently executed rebellious activities in multiple countries in an effort to increase their autonomy and create their own Kurdish state. In Iraq, the Kurds have been fighting for autonomy but truly desire their own independent

state. This section outlines the historic plight of the Kurds in Iraq and discusses their role in the creation of the current Iraqi government.

Kurdish history in Iraq has been framed by the Kurds' numerous attempts to attain autonomy from the Iraqi government through peaceful negotiations and all-out war.

Romano (2010, 1345) stated:

As leaders in Baghdad (whether under the monarchy before 1958 or the republican regimes that followed) sought to legitimize their rule, forge a new state, and unite Shi'is and Sunnis via a discourse of Arab nationalism, the Kurds' place in Iraq remained ever uncertain.

Numerous Kurdish uprisings against the Iraqi government occurred from the 1920s through the 1990s and led to heavy oppression by the different Iraqi regimes. "Mustafa Barzani established the KDP [Kurdish Democratic Party] to include its militia, the peshmerga, and conducted an unsuccessful revolt that lasted for decades against the Iraqi government (Merritt 2007, 57). The goal of the Kurds during these uprisings was to establish a Kurdish Autonomous Region. Multiple agreements were developed over the years to pacify the Kurds but, on multiple occasions, the Iraqi government voided these agreements for its own benefit. One such peace agreement was established on 11 March, 1970, according to Marr (2012, 152), and:

It provided for Kurdish autonomy (the first official use of the word), and it guaranteed proportional representation of Kurds within a future legislative body, the appointment of a Kurdish vice president at the national level, the expenditure of an equitable amount of oil revenue in the autonomous regions, and the recognition of both Kurdish and Arabic as official languages in Kurdish territory.

The agreement failed to endure due to transgressions by both the Iraqi government and the Kurds. Specifically, the Iraqi government began to displace numerous Kurds in the cities of Kirkuk and Mosul and replace them with Arabs. The Kurds, in turn, chose not to

close their borders with Iran and sought aid from the U.S. The breakdown of the agreement led to war between the Kurds and the Iraqi government resuming in 1974. The war was eventually won by the Iraqi government, when a successful negotiation with Iran to remove its military assistance to the Kurds gave the Iraqi government the momentum to defeat the Kurdish rebellion.

After the Kurdish defeat in 1975, a new problem emerged within the Kurdish population. “In 1975, a split occurred in the KDP when Jalal Talabani founded the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)” (Merritt 2007, 58). This split was a result of rifts that developed within the KDP over a number of years. The creation of the PUK led eventually to an ongoing conflict between the PUK and the KDP that sidelined advances in Kurdish autonomy due to Kurdish infighting.

The next major obstacle faced by the Kurds was partly the result of their involvement in the Iran-Iraq War and also partly due to an ethnic-cleansing campaign established by Saddam Husayn (O’Leary 2002). During the Iran-Iraq War, the Kurds provided military assistance to Iran, and at the conclusion of the war Saddam Husayn turned his attention to the Kurds in an attempt to eliminate any resistance to his government amongst the Kurdish community. According to O’Leary (2002, 18):

Its [the campaign’s] specific aim was to cleanse the region of saboteurs’—who included all males between the ages of 15 and 70. Mass executions were carried out in the targeted villages and surrounding areas.

In addition to mass executions, Saddam Husayn established economic blockades in the Kurdish region and resorted to chemical weapon attacks to destroy the Kurdish communities. One of the largest cleansings occurred when Saddam Husayn launched “campaigns against the Iraqi Kurds in 1988, killing an estimated 50,000 to 200,000”

(Logan 2009: 166). The campaign effectively decimated the Kurdish community by destroying over 1,200 Kurdish villages.

In 1991, the Kurds initiated an uprising against Saddam Husayn after U.S. broadcasts encouraged the Iraqi Shi'a and Kurdish populations to rise up and overthrow the Saddam Husayn regime following the invasion of Kuwait. U.S. support did not materialize for the rebellions and the Iraqi Republican Guard quickly crushed the uprising. With a large refugee crisis looming, a no-fly zone and safe haven were created under U.N. Security Council Resolution 688 in northern Iraq. Under the protection of a no-fly zone, the Kurdish population of Iraq began operating under an autonomous regional government. The Kurdish government established in 1992 had left the region unstable and underdeveloped due to the civil conflict between competing Kurdish political parties. "This situation changed dramatically after the US-led invasion of 2003, which forced the KDP and PUK, with its Peshmerga fighters, to work together (van Wilgenburg 2012: 49).

Just like the Shi'a, the Kurds benefited from the Sunni boycott of the 2005 elections and the lack of Sunni representation on the constitutional committee. Marr (2012, 293) noted:

They [the Kurds] insisted on a distribution of power between the central government and regions, which gave the latter priority. The Kurds worked to weaken the authority of the central government on issues such as taxation, health, and education. In essence, the Kurds wanted a virtually independent state in the north in a voluntary union with Iraq – a confederation – with a right to secede. Even though they did not get this, they did manage to get a weak central government and a highly decentralized polity.

The Kurds also utilized their peshmerga forces to stabilize their region. While the Sunni and the Shi'a Arabs were engaged in sectarian civil war, the Kurds sealed their borders

and were able to establish peace in their sphere of influence. This allowed for a significant level of development within the Kurdish economy as well as in their political, social, and cultural institutions (Marr 2012).

Since 2007, the KRG, “once an unrecognized local body, has become an internationally legitimized entity in a quasi-state” (Natali 2007, 1111). As the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq began to take shape in 2010-2011, the prosperity of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq was evident. “Given the KRG region’s progressive investment law, free market practices and excellent security situation relative to the rest of Iraq, foreign direct investment in the region exploded” (Gunter 2011, 104). With the KRG gaining more power and stability “the deteriorating relationship between the semiautonomous Kurdish minority in the north and the central government in Baghdad is perhaps [one of] the most incendiary of Iraq’s potential crisis” (van Wilgenburg 2012, 47).

Iraq’s Economic Development

Sectarian conflict took a toll on Iraq’s economic development between 2005 and 2007. The lack of security during this time resulted in very little foreign direct investment in the state’s economy. As violence began to subside, economic repair materialized, especially in the oil industry. With oil remaining Iraq’s main resource and export, rebuilding and development of Iraq’s oil industry became a priority. It took time but, by the end of 2010, foreign oil companies had signed contracts and had begun working to rebuild Iraq’s oil infrastructure in order to boost production (Marr 2012). Currently, Iraq’s oil industry “provides more than 90% of government revenue and 80% of foreign exchange earnings” (CIA 2014, 1). Iraq benefited from the rise in global oil prices, but

transferring those benefits to raising the standard of living for the local populace has eluded the Iraqi government. Additionally, the dispute between the central government and the KRG regarding oil contracts initiated by the KRG needs to be resolved. Many of these contracts involve boundaries in disputed administrative territories, specifically Kirkuk (Marr 2012; CIA 2014). This dispute is a constitutional issue that needs to be addressed to ensure future benefit from the oil contracts. Finally, extensive repair to the oil and export infrastructure still needs to be completed in order for Iraq to benefit fully from its vast oil reserves. Once this work is completed, the state could maximize production and increase revenues. A caveat to this process, however, is the impact a dramatic decline in oil prices might have on the future of the Iraq economy.

The Iraqi government also has taken steps to further the state's participation in the global economy. With the help of the United Nations, programs were created to assist in economic reform and investment in energy and agriculture. Tourism improved due to an increase in security in many parts of the country, and foreign direct investment by Iraq's neighbors increased as well. Turkey became a major investor in the Kurdish region, and reached an agreement with the Iraqi government to expand the Ceyhan oil pipeline (Marr 2012). In 2009, Iran became Iraq's primary trading partner; however, "the Iranian government subsidized its exports and levied import taxes on inbound goods, making it difficult for Iraqis to compete" (Marr 2012, 362). Vast amounts of subsidized agriculture products have been shipped into Iraq from Iran, flooding the local Iraqi markets. This has made it more economical for the Iraqis to purchase imported agriculture products rather than growing their own. For example, "in 2008, Iraq imported 74 percent of its wheat from abroad" (Marr 2012, 365). For Iraq to benefit from foreign trading, significant

investment into the industry and agricultural sectors is necessary to deliver goods at a more competitive price for Iraqi citizens. This could be difficult because it is currently cheaper to use oil revenues to import goods and services as opposed to investing in the rebuilding of the agricultural and industrial sectors.

As Marr (2012, 363) noted, “The greatest need in Iraq’s economy was for development of the country’s human resources.” Iraq is attempting to rebuild its labor force through better educational programs for its population and investment in social overhead capital; however, this takes significant time and does not help immediately the increasing unemployed population. Further affecting this problem was the “brain drain” that occurred from 2003 to 2007, which was a result of “the huge outpouring of doctors, professors, lawyers, engineers, scientists, writers, artists, and bureaucrats” (Marr 2012, 370). Iraq is trying to right this deficiency through scholarship programs, but it needs to develop incentives and opportunities for its educated population to contribute to the Iraqi state as opposed to seeking employment elsewhere.

There have been notable improvements to the Iraqi economy, since the security situation has improved in the state; however, that progress remains uncertain due to the current conflict with ISIS. If the ISIS conflict can be contained and stability returned to Iraq, an economic development strategy needs to be created to ensure future improvements continue. “Rampant corruption, outdated infrastructure, insufficient essential services, skilled labor shortages, and antiquated commercial laws stifle investment and continue to constrain growth of private, nonoil sectors” (CIA 2014, 1). As oil continues to be the primary source of income for the Iraqi economy, a strategy that funnels that capital into the development of other areas of the economy is crucial. This is a budgetary

action that needs to be implemented by the central and provincial governments. As Al-Ali (2012, 182) stated:

One way to achieve this is by employing the government budget as a medium to spread the development, which has taken place in the oil sector across other sectors of the economy. As such, the government budget is seen to play a dual role: firstly, as a means by which development in the oil sector are directed to induce and facilitate the development of other sectors in the economy, and secondly, as an instrument for economic stabilization and development policies.

Pumping oil revenues into different economic sectors and into social overhead capital could decrease the state's reliance on the volatile oil sector. This strategy provides an opportunity for future stability within the Iraqi state and its economy, and invests in human capital, thus strengthening other areas of the state.

Centripetal vs. Centrifugal Forces

The analysis of the ethno-linguistic-religious groups and the Iraqi economy highlights a number of centrifugal forces that are barriers to progress within the state of Iraq. This section offers additional analysis on these centrifugal forces and identifies centripetal forces that exist that could counteract the divisive forces. While the significance of centripetal forces may seem trivial in comparison to the centrifugal forces in the state, the magnitude of problems that could occur due to state dissolution as a result of centrifugal forces warrants an examination of the positive aspects of the state. By developing and nurturing Iraq's centripetal forces, it may be possible to avoid state dissolution.

Sunni-Shi'a Divide

The multiple ethno-linguistic-religious groups that exist in Iraq are not just a centrifugal force. As seen in India and Switzerland, with the proper establishment of a

federal system of government, multi-ethnic populations can exist within a stable state. The centrifugal force associated with Iraq's ethno-linguistic-religious groups is the history of marginalization and suppression of the Shi'a and Kurds under the Sunni-dominated regimes, followed by suppression of the Sunni by the current Iraqi state. The Sunni-Shi'a split that occurred in 632 C.E. may be the starting point for sectarian differences between the two religious groups, but the Sunni-Shi'a divide that has occurred in Iraq is a result of the governmental policies that occurred under the Sunni-dominated governments. This divide has created a deep-rooted hatred between the two religious groups and has been exploited by both as well.

Under Sunni controlled governments, the Shi'a have suffered years of marginalization in Iraqi society and have been the target of numerous security and military actions to keep the Sunni Arabs in control of the state. This role was reversed after de-Ba'athification removed almost all Sunni Arabs during the establishment of the new Iraqi government. Instead of fostering a path to reconciliation, the Shi'a politicians, fearful of a return of Sunni-Arab dominance, sought to right the injustices that marginalized their population for so many years. This led to one of the worst sectarian conflicts the country and region had ever endured. Now, with ISIS advancing from the Sunni-populated areas of western Iraq, the Shi'a Arab politicians might be rethinking their policies of retribution and discrimination against the Sunni Arab population. The Shi'a Arabs need the participation of Sunni Arabs to expel ISIS effectively from the western portion of the state. The ISIS conflict could serve as a unifying force if the Sunni are approached properly by the Shi'a-dominated government; conversely, this conflict could be the divisive force that tears the state apart. Regardless of what happens, the

Sunni-Shia divide is one of the most contentious centrifugal forces that exist in the state. For Iraq to maintain its current geopolitical borders, this Sunni-Shi'a divide must be addressed.

The best way to address this divide is by drawing on past feelings of Iraqi nationalism as a centripetal force. While most scholars agree that, in recent years, Iraqi nationalism has been replaced with sectarian loyalties, it has been noted that “nearly 70 percent of those polled still prefer to identify themselves as Iraqi citizens rather than through ethnic, religious, or regional affiliations” (Abdullah 2011, 173). As Al-Hashimi (2014, 1) noted in his *USA Today* column, “an Iraqi consciousness, an Iraqi identity, has become weaker and weaker... [and] if Iraq can be saved, it will only be if they [sic] fight to save Iraq’s national identity.” Fostering this feeling of national identity is important in dealing with the ISIS threat and the future direction of the state. This requires a significant level of reconciliation between the Sunni and the Shi’a Arabs and possibly a nationalism campaign. The ISIS threat provides a great opportunity for the Iraqi government to strengthen a national identity, especially with the atrocities that are being executed by ISIS against all ethno-linguistic-religious groups, including the Sunni Arabs.

Kurdish Independence

The Kurdish desire for an independent nation-state still threatens to divide Iraq. “Today, if they felt that geopolitical conditions would allow it, most Iraqi Kurds would opt for complete independence” (Romano 2010, 1347). When the Kurds were promised their own nation-state, a promise withdrawn at the end of WWI, this set in motion the constant political and military struggles of the Kurdish people in Iraq and across the Middle East. The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, coupled with the current instability as a

result of the ISIS advance, only compounded the desire of the Kurds to secede from the current Iraqi state. The viability of a Kurdish state is analyzed later in this thesis but, of the three ethno-linguistic-religious groups, the Kurds are the most likely to be successful in establishing a stable independent state. If the Kurds were to break from Iraq, the ramifications would be considerable for the remainder of the state. The territorial disputes over Kurdish-populated cities such as Kirkuk and the vast oil reserves that exist in the Arab-Kurd transition zones likely could develop into a military dispute between the new Kurdistan and the remaining Arab-Iraq state. This could compound instability in the region and could result in the involvement of both Turkey and Iran, who vehemently object to the creation of a Kurdish state.

Desire for Kurdish independence could be countered by past political relations between the Kurds and the Shi'a. The reconstitution of the coalition between the Shi'a and Kurds that existed during the initial establishment of the new Iraqi government may serve as a unifying centripetal force to keep the Kurdish population from seeking secession from Iraq. Both the Kurds and the Shi'a were consistently marginalized under the Sunni-dominated governments, from the mandate period to the fall of the Saddam Husayn regime. In addition, the Kurds and the Shi'a were targets of Husayn's brutal attacks and ethnic-cleansing campaigns. Upon the fall of the Husayn regime, the Kurds and the Shi'a worked together to establish the current Iraqi government using this common history as a basis for their political agendas. Their coalition was instrumental in creating the Constitution and a federal state. More importantly, the autonomy arrangement developed for the Kurds was instrumental in keeping them from seeking full secession from Iraq. Even though each group had its own political agendas, the

partnership between the two groups effectively promoted significant strides in the democratic evolution of the Iraqi state.

By drawing on these past events and common geopolitical plights, the current central government could resolve the Kurdish disputes over Kirkuk and oil development rights to decrease Kurdish grievances with the state. This requires a significant amount of political maneuvering, amendments to the current Constitution, and possibly a new federal structure for the state. But Iraq would be a more secure and stable state with the Kurdish region remaining a part of the country.

Oil as a Centripetal and Centrifugal Force

Iraq's oil reserves have the ability to be both a centripetal and centrifugal force for the state. Iraq's oil industry "provides more than 90% of government revenue and 80% of foreign exchange earnings" (CIA 2014, 1). The Iraqi government's inability to translate its oil wealth into significant benefits for the entire population remains one of the greatest issues for the state. Typically, oil wealth remains in the hands of the political elite in many oil-rich countries, and Iraq is no exception. Barnett et al. (2003, 26) noted:

There is little social or economic development beyond the elite. Thus, oil and other resource-dependent economies are more prone to violent internal conflict than are diversified economies.

Furthermore, Henry (2003, 61) has identified that "oil wealth ironically becomes a barrier to good governance and development even as it provides the material wealth capable of funding development projects." A perfect example of a post-colonial country that has failed to utilize successfully its oil wealth is Nigeria, which is Africa's primary oil producer. Nigeria's oil revenue has led to social polarization and lack of diversification of the country's economy. Additionally, oil has fueled inter-regional conflict and

complicated the country's federal development. It would be in the best interests of the Iraqi government to be mindful of its own recent failures as well as the failures of other countries to utilize oil wealth as an economic diversifier.

Iraq, under the current federal structure, has the opportunity to break the mold of Middle Eastern regimes and utilize its oil revenues as a centripetal force to invest in social overhead capital as well as development projects that could diversify the economy. It is also important that oil revenues benefit the entire state and not be strictly invested in the oil-rich regions. Failure to do so could result in regional conflicts between the Kurds, Sunni, and Shi'a. Finally, even though Iraq has significant oil reserves, oil is a finite resource and cannot sustain the country over the long-term. Investment of oil revenue to stimulate economic diversification is crucial to the future of Iraq's stability.

Islamic Fundamentalism

A growing concern for the future stability of Iraq is the advance of ISIS. An Islamic fundamentalist group, ISIS has been seizing and occupying territory in the state of Iraq since June, 2014, and is trying to establish an Islamic caliphate across Iraq and Syria. ISIS poses a significant risk to the stability of Iraq, and the lack of resistance from the Sunni Arab population should be a deep cause for concern for the Iraqi government. Islamic fundamentalism is not new to Iraq or the Middle East. Contemporary Islamic fundamentalism, also known as Islamism, began in the late 1960s-early 1970s when "the Islamic states of the Middle East- and beyond- experienced an outgrowth of popular demands to restore Islam to a central role in political and social life" (Cleveland 2000, 426). More recently, Islamic fundamentalist groups have used the instability created by the Arab Spring to infiltrate transitional governments in the Middle East and North

Africa. This resulted from a lack of experience by the political youth “in managing the post-Arab Spring political situation, and as such they were supplanted quickly by the regimented and religiously-motivated Islamist groups” (Chtatou 2014, 1).

The danger of fundamentalist movements lies in their recruitment strategy and agenda. They recruit from the oppressed populations of the Middle East, and they blame secular governments and Western infringement on regional politics as the reason for hardship and poverty in the region (Munson 2003). Islamic Fundamentalists argue that a return to fundamentalist Islam will solve all the problems of their followers. As Munson (2003: 43) explained:

For Islamists like Khomeini, the idea of a “return to Islam” is linked to the goal of overcoming foreign domination. The underlying logic of the Islamist argument is familiar: The believers are suffering because they have deviated from the laws of God. To end their suffering, they have to conform to God’s laws. God has allowed the infidels to dominate the believers because they have deviated from His laws. Once they conform, He will grant them victory. Such reasoning is often meshed with more subtle themes, notably that of cultural authenticity. The return to Islam becomes a means of regaining one’s true cultural identity – as opposed to mimicry of the dominant West.

The danger that Islamic fundamentalism and ISIS pose to Iraq is significant. ISIS has already forced multiple ethno-linguistic-religious groups to convert to its branch of Islam. Those who do not convert are killed through mass executions. Women are being forced to marry ISIS militants, and children are being forced to take lessons in radical Islamic theology. The anti-Western sentiment is likely appealing to some of Iraq’s Sunni Arab population; however, “many of the Sunni groups, especially those led by former Baathists, are largely secular in nature, seeing their Sunni ties as broadly cultural rather than strictly religious (Van Buren 2014, 1).

If ISIS' extreme tactics are not condoned by all Sunni Arabs, then Iraq's best solution to resolve this incursion is to promote a united national front to combat the fundamentalist organization. This can only be accomplished through cooperation from all ethno-linguistic-religious groups and an end to sectarian conflict within the state. Without the support of the Sunni Arab population, Iraq could lose most of the western half of the country. This could open the door for more Islamic fundamentalist organizations to infiltrate Shi'a and Kurdish areas, further destabilizing the state to the point of complete fracture.

Territorial Stability and the Limitations of the Three-State Solution

There has been significant debate regarding the current geopolitical structure of Iraq since the U.S. invasion in 2003. As Iraq appeared to be destined for state failure from 2005-2006, a three-state partition solution dominated world news as the best approach to accommodate the multiple ethno-linguistic-religious groups that exist in the state. Solutions varied from a weak federal model with three ethnic provinces, a confederation of provinces based along ethnic lines, and the creation of three new micro-states. With the advancement of ISIS over the past year, there has been increased interest in establishing a three-state solution for the people of Iraq. This is easier said than done, as partition of the country into three states has implications that could be the impetus for further destabilization of the region.

If the world has learned anything from the Arab Spring, drastic change to the geopolitical structure of Middle East and North African states has created significant turmoil for those territories. Syria found itself in a civil war as well as occupation by the terrorist group ISIS, Egypt has imprisoned its democratically elected president and is currently governed under military rule, and Libya is quickly approaching state failure.

Thus, partitioning Iraq into three micro-states based along ethno-linguistic-religious lines appears to be a promising solution to the country's sectarian issues; however, the second and third order effects of this partition could surely bring further instability to the Middle East.

When analyzing the partition of Iraq into three micro-states, multiple factors must be taken into consideration:

1. Do internal territorial disputes exist that could complicate the independence process?
2. Do the territories of the suggested three-state model have viability as independent states?
3. Would international or cross-border issues result from a three-state model?

Internal territorial disputes do exist in Iraq and would surely complicate the partition of the country into three micro-states. Looking back at Figure 1, it is clear that partitioning the state along ethnic lines would be difficult, especially in the regions with inter-mixed populations. Whether rational thought utilizing history and ethnic population distribution is used or arbitrary lines are placed on the map, it is likely that wherever the line is drawn, forced and voluntary migrations of people are highly likely and borders would be disputed. Furthermore, economic concerns related to border creation could likely be a source of conflict as well, considering the oil fields in Iraq are concentrated in the north and east of the country. The question then becomes: where do the borders get drawn?

Looking first to the north of the country, the Kurdish-populated areas extend south along the border of Iran and Syria. Kirkuk and Mosul are highly populated by both Sunni Arabs and Kurds. Separating these areas from either ethnic group could cause significant problems due to the risk of splitting ethnic populations and the loss of economic benefits provided by the oil industry.

Of the two cities, the main territorial dispute would likely be over Kirkuk, historically a Kurdish city with a mixed population that includes Turkomans and Arabs. Under Saddam Husayn, the process of Arabization displaced Kurdish inhabitants and encouraged the migration of Arab citizens to the city in an attempt to control local politics (Marr 2012). Since the fall of the Husayn government, the Kurds have been lobbying for control over Kirkuk based along ethnic and historical lines; however, a referendum and census to decide the affiliation of the province have been repeatedly delayed. At the heart of the dispute are the oil fields near Kirkuk that provide a significant source of revenue for the state of Iraq. An independent Kurdistan would need the oil fields to provide economic stability for the state. In addition, giving a new Kurdish state control over Kirkuk could possibly create a forced migration of Arabs from the region and take a significant resource away from the Sunni population.

Looking further south, there is a large transitional zone between Sunni and Shi'a populations. Over the years Sunni and Shi'a tribes co-populated areas and, in some cases, intermarried. This raises the question again of where do the lines get drawn? Does it make sense to give the Sunni or the Shi'a the intermixed population areas, or should an attempt be made to separate the area along tribal lines? This action could create enclaves or pockets of each group within the other's territory, and either solution poses risk to both groups. Baghdad would most likely be the greatest point of contention between the Sunni and the Shi'a population for historical, political, and economic reasons. Baghdad has served as capital of the region as far back as the 8th century under the Abbasid Caliphate and has significant historical value to both the Sunni and the Shi'a. Baghdad has large

elements of both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims, but the Sunnis dominated the capital politically from the mandate period to the fall of Saddam Husayn in 2003.

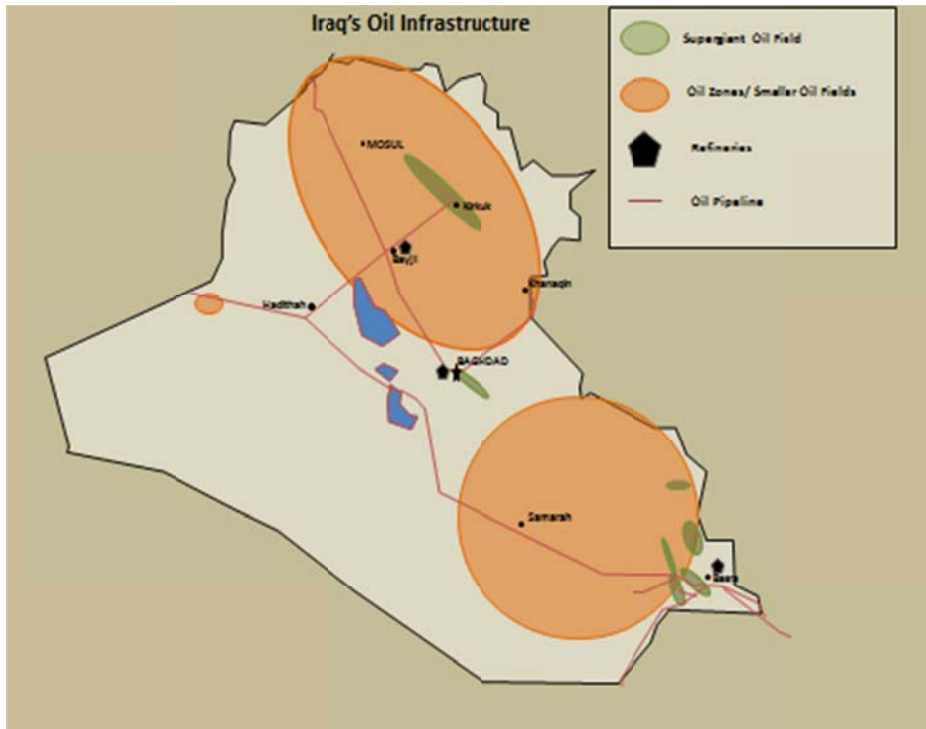


Figure 8: Map of Iraq's Oil Infrastructure
Source: Created by the author using CIA (2003) base data.

Under the new government, Shi'a Muslims now play a major role in the city and are the majority population. Despite the political and historical significance of the city, it also has economic importance. Figure 8 shows both a supergiant oil field as well as smaller oil fields in the area. If Sunnis are cut off from the oil fields to the north, it is highly likely they would not quickly release their claim to Baghdad. More importantly, with Sunnis having a long history of control of the city and the Shi'a only having recent control, it is likely that the city would be a point of major friction between the Sunni and Shi'a populations.

State Viability

The internal territorial disputes highlight economic dependence upon oil as a major factor in the creation of three micro-states. If a state does not possess a strong economic foundation, then its ability to survive independently becomes a serious challenge. Iraq's oil resources provide over 90% of government revenues. If any of the three proposed micro-states are cut off from the oil industry, their ability to remain a viable state diminishes significantly. In addition to economic factors, an examination of political and security factors is also warranted to determine state viability.

Kurdistan

Of the three major ethno-linguistic-religious groups, the Kurds have the greatest chance of success for establishing a functioning state. The Kurds had autonomous arrangements in Iraq well before the U.S. invasion in 2003. Following the Gulf War, the Kurdish region of Iraq was protected under a no-fly zone preventing the Husayn regime from conducting attacks in the area. This allowed the Kurdish people to establish a regional government with their own elected bodies and security forces. Under the 2005 Iraqi Constitution, the Kurds were able to maintain a significant degree of autonomy; however, disputed territory and ownership of natural resources in the region remained an unresolved issue. Despite these issues, the two dominant political parties in the Kurdish region, the KDP and the PUK, were able to reach a unification agreement that allowed the Kurdish government to focus on economic development as well as on building political, social, cultural institutions (Marr 2012).

The Kurdish Regional Government's (KRG) success in developing its security forces, political institutions, and economic resources correlates to the high level of

stability and security achieved by the Kurds. This security has attracted foreign direct investment, which has further enhanced the region's economic stability. The increased stability, security, and the positive relations with the international community increase the likelihood that the Kurds would be able to operate independently of the state of Iraq. Three major concerns arise with the creation of a Kurdish state. First, the region would be landlocked, forcing an independent Kurdish state to be dependent on its international neighbors for product export. With relationships already shaky with Turkey and Iran, this could pose a potential problem for an independent Kurdish state. Second, the Kurdish state would be at great risk without the oil reserves in Kirkuk. Despite the objections of the Iraqi government, the Kurds have been developing the oil fields in the region and seeking foreign direct investment. Without the oil fields as a source of income, an independent Kurdish state would have to develop a new source of revenue quickly to maintain its viability as a functioning state. Third, the KRG's international neighbors, specifically Turkey and Iran, do not support an independent Kurdish state. This is discussed in detail later in the analysis.

Sunni Iraq

Creation of a Sunni Iraq state would be the most difficult micro-state to establish. The Sunni and the Shi'a Arabs share a great deal of territory, political history, and resentment of each other. The development of the Sunni micro-state would depend greatly on the ability of the Sunni and Shi'a to set aside sectarian tensions effectively, demarcate borders, and reach agreements on resource allocation and distribution of security forces. Failure to complete any one of these actions could lead to a civil war

between the two groups, possibly leading to intervention from Iran on the side of the Shi'a and Saudi Arabia on the side of the Sunni.

The de-Ba'thification of Iraq that took place under the CPA significantly damaged the power of the Sunni Arabs. While a significant amount of military and political experience exists within the Sunni Arab population, establishing a separate Sunni government would be no easy task. If Bosnia is used as a metric, the international community faces a significant amount of time and money to invest in the creation of an independent Sunni state. From 1993 to 2010, the United States alone provided over \$2 billion in aid to Bosnia, while the stabilization effort by the international community overall has lasted over 17 years (Woehrel 2013). The time and money required to create a Sunni state could easily match or exceed that of the Bosnia effort, especially with the resources that would be needed to counter the ISIS threat.

The issue of economic stability for a Sunni state also needs to be addressed. Most three-state models have the Sunni state occupying the far western portion of the current state, with no water port or oil fields to operate. If the Kurds get the oil fields to the north and the Shi'a Arabs get the Baghdad oil fields as well as the Basra oil fields, the likelihood of a Sunni state flourishing is miniscule. A good portion of the land west of Baghdad, not including the immediate area around the Euphrates River, is sparsely populated desert. There is minimal land usable for agriculture and a significant amount of money would need to be invested to develop an industrial complex in the Sunni state. In addition, with no active port from which to export or import goods, the Sunni state would be at the mercy of its neighbors to provide an import/export solution.

The final issue is how to create a security force for the Sunni state. Will the Sunni soldiers leave the Iraqi Army and form their own army? Will the Shi'a government give the Sunni military equipment to strengthen the Sunni army? It is highly unlikely, due to the Sunni-Shi'a sectarian divide, that the Shi'a would voluntarily provide the Sunni Arabs any type of military capability, especially as the Sunni persecuted the Shi'a under Saddam Husayn and also killed hundreds of people during the sectarian violence under U.S. occupation. It is likely that a new military system, as well as equipment, would need to be procured to establish the military and security complex needed to protect the Sunni state. Again, this would require significant investment of time and money by the international community. Finally, without an effective Sunni security force, the separation of the Sunni Arab population from the rest of Iraq could allow ISIS to maintain a strategic foothold in the proposed territory and establish its caliphate. This would further destabilize the region as ISIS tries to extend its influence throughout the Middle East.

Shiastan

The creation of a Shi'a micro-state would not pose the same challenges as the creation of a Sunni state. During numerous meetings with Iraqi officials in 2011, it was not uncommon to hear the argument that "Basra can survive without the rest of Iraq, but Iraq cannot survive without Basra" (Poznack 2011, 1). While this sounds like a very bold statement, there is truth to the adage. With the majority of the Shi'a population located in southeast Iraq up to Baghdad, creation of a Shi'a state inclusive of the political system in Baghdad would likely be an easy transition. The current Iraqi government is already Shi'a dominated, and military and security control already rests in the hands of the Shi'a.

Baghdad and Basra both have supergiant oil fields, and Basra has a port on the Persian Gulf that would facilitate trade. In addition to the oil industry, Basra is also one of the more fertile regions for agricultural development. Many of the economic or security issues faced by the Kurds and the Sunni would be minimal in a Shi'a state; however, this does not mean that a Shi'a state would be without problems.

The biggest hurdle facing a Shi's state would likely be political inexperience. The Shi'a have not been in control of the country as long as the Sunnis had been under the mandate and subsequent regimes. Even the Kurds have maintained an independent form of regional government since the end of the Gulf War, much longer than their Shi'a counterparts. This lack of political expertise could lead to instability and corruption within the political system and lack of support from the constituency. As seen from the Arab Spring, if the proposed Shi'a state could not deliver the support that the population expects, collapse of the central political system and creation of tribal territories would not be out of the question.

A Shi'a state most likely would have the support of its neighbor, Iran. This relationship would play an important role in regional politics. While ethnically diverse, the two countries do share a common religious background. The current Iraqi government has maintained positive relations with its neighbor that likely would continue with the formation of a separate Shi'a state. Any threat perceived by Sunni sectarian violence against the Shi'a in Iraq would most likely garner the support of Iran. This has been especially evident in the recent ISIS conflict, as Iran has offered military support to Iraq to counter the ISIS advance. This relationship does have the ability to create friction within the Middle East should a sectarian conflict occur between Sunni and Shi'a groups.

A minor sectarian conflict has the ability to spiral into a regional conflict should Iran and Saudi Arabia choose to get involved.

Cross-Border Territorial Issues

The creation of three micro-states would create cross-border tensions within the Middle East. The most probable conflict would be among the Kurds and Iraq's neighboring countries in the north. "The Kurdish-inhabited areas cover the vast swathes of the Middle East from southeastern Turkey and northeastern Syria through the entire north of Iraq, to northwestern Iran and deep into the Iranian hinterland" (Bernstam 2011, 13). An independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq could endanger the territorial integrity of these three countries by instilling hope of a united Kurdistan state for all Kurds. History has shown that the prospect of losing territory to the Kurds is not acceptable to any of these countries. The KRG has had to play a balancing act with both Turkey and Iran, since the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) and PJAK (Free Life of Kurdistan) rebels in the northeastern mountain region of Iraqi Kurdistan have been conducting attacks into Turkey and Iran, respectively. "The KRG has refused Turkish and Iranian demands that they take military action against the PKK and PJAK, and as a result, regular Turkish and Iranian Air strikes and artillery bombardments periodically hit the rugged mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan where the rebels are based" (Romano 2010, 1359). As recently as 2008, Turkey authorized cross-border attacks into Iraq to target the PKK in retaliation for the killing of 15 Turkish soldiers (Marr 2012). Iran conducted similar cross-border attacks as recently as 2011 against the PJAK in an attempt to end a conflict that has been ongoing since 2004. The resolve of these countries to maintain order and territorial integrity is why they would oppose an independent Kurdish state. Their fears are warranted given

the history of Kurdish guerilla groups retreating to northern Iraq after initiating conflict in neighboring states.

Another territorial dispute that has occurred in recent months is the advancement of ISIS into western Iraq. If Syria were not currently in a state of turmoil with its current civil war and conflict with ISIS, the development of an independent Sunni state would likely have been an easy target to annex by Syria's President al-Assad. This is highly unlikely at this time, since the insurgent group ISIS has already taken advantage of both countries' instability and has annexed territory in both states. This event just highlights how easy annexation of territory can happen in the absence of a strong security force, which would be needed if an independent Sunni state were to be created.

It is clear that the creation of three independent micro-states as a solution to Iraq's sectarian problems is not without its own shortcomings. A significant amount of capital and time would need to be invested to ensure the viability and protection of each state from both internal as well as external forces. This next section examines the concept of *Uti Possidetis Juris* and why maintaining the current boundaries in Iraq is preferable to dissolving the country.

Uti Possidetis Juris

The principle of *Uti Possidetis Juris* is based on the Roman legal principle of *Uti Possidetis, ita possideatis* or "As you possess, you shall possess" (Vahlas 2013, 133). The original application was used to settle personal property disputes in ancient Rome but, in modern times, it has become the "repartition rule for organizing the division of territories between modern States" (Vahlas 2013, 133-134). When Latin American and African nations underwent decolonization in the 19th and 20th centuries, they utilized the

principle of *Uti Possidetis Juris* and accepted their colonial territorial structures. To oppose the application of this principle in the decolonizing regions would have had profoundly negative effects. According to Fromkin (2009, 571-572):

If the native peoples had taken up arms in an attempt to achieve states and boundaries corresponding to their political realities and their nationalist dreams – as the nations of Europe had done, beginning with the French Revolution of 1789 – bloodbaths would have been perpetual.

While the implementation of *Uti Possidetis Juris* in the process of decolonization has led to internal territorial disputes and ethnic tensions, especially in the case of Africa, opposing the colonial borders during the decolonization process could have very well delayed the independence of nations in both regions as well as contribute to disastrous conflicts.

In the late 20th century, the *Uti Possidetis Juris* principle was implemented to address new borders for the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia. During these arbitrations, internal administrative boundaries were used as a territorial template to address statehood claims. It must be noted that, in some cases, the implementation of the *Uti Possidetis Juris* principle, where states were created using existing internal administrative boundaries, has led to internal conflicts as well as sectarian violence. As Vahlas (2013, 139) stated:

Serbs in Bosnia-and-Herzegovina and in Croatia, then in Kosovo, but also Abkhazs, Adjars and Ossetians in Georgia, Armenians in Azerbaijan, Chechens in Russia, Gagaouzes and Russians from Transnistria in Moldova, all decided to fight rather than accept to be “locked in” former administrative lines promoted international borders. Some of those armed conflicts had a peaceful settlement but others are still without mutually agreed solution and the *uti possidetis* principle is still ruled out by some parties.

Looking at the application of *Uti Possidetis Juris* over the last 200 years, accepting the principle as implemented in the decolonization process is the best solution for Iraq. Trying to build upon or improve the current political model within Iraq's current borders would be much more efficient and likely to have a longer lasting effect than dissolution of the state. First, the current government, while not actively abiding by the Constitution or federal principles, is based on a federal model that recognizes the need for autonomy and incorporation of all ethno-linguistic-religious groups. While this model is not perfect, it provides a framework for resolving the current sectarian conflict, whereas dissolution of the state potentially could create more conflict. The best approach would be to implement an improved federal model for Iraq based on the Swiss federal system. Second, despite having multiple ethno-linguistic-religious groups, many citizens have developed a sense of identity as Iraqis as well as Shi'a, Sunni, and Kurd. As faith in the central government has decreased so has the Iraqi sense of identity. Developing the Iraqi identity would further strengthen the current government, but the political leaders in the country must set aside their sectarian differences for this to be successful. Finally, the dissolution of Iraq would further destabilize the Middle East region as a whole. Islamic fundamentalists could use the disorganization and chaos that would result in state dissolution to push their radical agenda further throughout the region, which they have already done in many states that were involved in the Arab Spring. Additionally, the creation of three micro-states could create cross-border conflicts that would destabilize the new states as well as their international neighbors.

If the principle of *Uti Possidetis Juris* were to be applied in creating a three-state model for Iraq, it is highly likely, based on the experiences in Eastern Europe, that

sectarian conflict would erupt between and within the three micro-states. There is no way to separate successfully all of the ethno-linguistic-religious groups in Iraq, whereby each group has its own territory. Furthermore, separation based upon internal administrative divisions in Iraq would create enclaves of different sectarian groups within the three micro states, creating the possibility of increased sectarian conflict. To counteract the possibility of sectarian violence, redrawing borders based upon ethno-linguistic-religious lines would be the best solution; however, this is not how the principle of *Uti Possidetis Juris* has been applied by the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

The benefit of promoting a federal model of government in Iraq within its current borders significantly outweighs the risk of creating three micro-states. The next section analyzes three possible outcomes for Iraq's political model with the intent of identifying the best solution for future governance and regional stability.

Developing a Stable Political Structure for Iraq

The analysis in the previous sections demonstrates that Iraq has faced significant political, cultural, and economic challenges throughout its history that have affected the successful implementation of its current system of federal government. This has led to increased interest in implementing a three-state solution for Iraq. The disadvantages and challenges discussed in creating a three-state solution argue that complete dissolution of Iraq into three micro states would create more chaos in the region and require a significant investment of time and capital by the international community. This section's goal is to analyze the implementation of three different models of government and identify the best solution to stabilize Iraq utilizing the current geopolitical borders. The three models to be analyzed are as follows:

1. Iraq governed by a strong central government;
2. Development of a federal model with three key regions defined along ethno-linguistic-religious lines;
3. Iraq decentralized into multiple regional governments (more than three).

The advantages and disadvantages of each model are analyzed with the intent of identifying the best model for peace and stability within Iraq.

Model 1 – A Strong Central Government

The creation of a strong central government for the state of Iraq is a dangerous proposal. Since the creation of the state after WWI, Iraqi governments have been highly centralized. Consisting of monarchies, military-sponsored regimes, and authoritarian rulers, strong central governments in Iraq were extremely suppressive of the multi-ethnic populations. Iraq's history as an authoritarian state could make it more susceptible to returning to that style of government should power be consolidated in the center.

Strong central governments are not uncommon in the Middle East region, and Table 3 highlights the governmental structures of these states. Six of the fourteen countries are monarchies, and six governments claim to be republics or federations. However, "close scrutiny reveals that in most cases their claims to democratic credentials have been purely rhetorical and void of substance in meeting even minimal criteria of democratic credibility" (Saikal 2003, 113-114). The continued existence of authoritarian, dictatorial, and totalitarian regimes in the Middle East can be attributed to the regimes' oil-based economies. Over the past half century, one of the United States' foreign policy initiatives has been to protect the oil flowing from the Middle East. The US and Western dependence on oil has led to the support of numerous authoritarian regimes within the

Table 3: Middle East Governments

| Country | Government |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Bahrain | Monarchy |
| Egypt | Republic |
| Iran | Theocratic Republic |
| Iraq | Parliamentary Democracy |
| Israel | Parliamentary Democracy |
| Jordan | Monarchy |
| Kuwait | Monarchy |
| Lebanon | Republic |
| Oman | Monarchy |
| Qatar | Monarchy |
| Saudi Arabia | Monarchy |
| Syria | Republic under Authoritarian Regime |
| United Arab Emirates | Federation |
| Yemen | Republic |

Source: Created by the author from CIA (2014) data.

Middle East. Monshipouri (2002, 72) argued that “the Western world has gained more access to the region’s oil resources by working with dictators rather than democratic regimes accountable to their people.” The Western dependence on oil has helped facilitate a democratic deficit within the Middle East region and has greatly impacted the quality of life for a vast majority of the population. Oil wealth, typically, remains in the hands of the elite and, to sustain authoritarian regimes, revenue from oil rents is utilized to build “military-industrial enclaves” that allow governments to suppress their challengers economically and forcefully (Henry 2003, 61; Barnett et al. 2003). As Iraq’s economy is oil-centric, the development of a strong central government becomes a dangerous scenario for the state’s population. By consolidating power in the center, the Iraqi government could utilize its oil revenues to fund a security apparatus to suppress the population, much like the Saddam Husayn regime.

Recent events in Iraq have highlighted the centralization of power by the Shi'a-dominated government under the leadership of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. This consolidation of power has taken on authoritarian characteristics and led to further destabilization and increased sectarian violence. According to Fitzsimmons (2008, 8), "historical experience with centralized power in democratizing multi-ethnic states is not encouraging." For example, Sudan experienced decades of civil war when the Arab Muslims attempted to centralize power over the Christian and animist populations (Fitzsimmons 2008). O'Leary (2010) argued that recentralization of power to an Arab-dominated central government could result in a war with the Kurds and sectarian conflict between the Sunni and the Shi'a. The advance of ISIS appears to be the precursor to these predictions.

According to Sullivan (2013, 6), "Maliki began his security consolidation not long after taking office in mid-2006." Under this consolidation of power, Maliki has been instituting measures that allow him to bypass constitutional checks and balances, as well as marginalize his political competition. Sullivan (2013, 7) further stated that:

Maliki uses his control over the security and civil institutions mentioned above in various ways to advance his interests. One objective is to dismantle Iraqiyya's senior leadership, while another is to expand his control over Iraq's financial institutions. Maliki has also used his control over the security forces and judiciary to defuse a federalism challenge from several Iraqi provinces. De-Ba'athification, along with accusations of terrorism and corruption, have become convenient political tools to discredit and even remove opponents. Maliki is not the only politician in Iraq to use these tools, but he has the most latitude in doing so on account of his growing executive authority.

Maliki's centralization of power and oppressive political tactics support Sullivan's (2013) characterization of Maliki's government as authoritarian. The Prime Minister's policies are clearly in violation of the Iraqi Constitution, and they reinforce the argument that the

Shi'a have just replaced the Sunni Arabs in government and have not embraced liberal democracy. Sullivan (2013) further argues that Maliki's opposition to federalist movements by different provinces is directly related to his desire to maintain control over Iraq's oil revenues, which is characteristic of authoritarian regimes in the Middle East.

Maliki's policies and use of political power to discredit and remove his Sunni Arab opponents has resulted in an increased Sunni-Shi'a divide. As discussed earlier, ISIS received little opposition from the Sunni Arab provinces in western Iraq, which should be a signal to the Shi'a Arab government that the Sunni Arabs desire a change in governance. Additionally, Maliki's policies to prevent the KRG development of the Kurdish region's oil resources, and repeated delay of the census and vote to settle the Kirkuk dispute, have further pushed the Kurds to seek their own independent state. The increased fragmentation, due to Maliki's transgressions, has not been ignored. In August, 2014, Nouri al-Maliki was asked to resign as Prime Minister after significant pressure from the Iranian government. According to Hashem (2014, 1), the Iranian government supported a candidate that "wouldn't intimidate the Sunnis and the Kurds" and could "open closed channels with other parties." The further development of an authoritarian central government under Maliki was likely to fragment Iraq to the point of state failure, and Iran's involvement in his removal could have been prompted by Iranian fears of the ISIS advance, which is quickly nearing its borders. Haider al-Abadi was selected to be the new Prime Minister of Iraq and, if unification of the state is one of his goals, it is clear that he has a difficult road ahead. If al-Abadi chooses to continue the practices of Nouri al-Maliki, then Sunni and Kurdish support is not likely to materialize; however, the appointment of al-Abadi is an opportunity for the Shi'a-dominated government to redress

the injustices created by the Maliki government over the last seven years and implement the federal principles that have been ignored in the Constitution. Maliki's policies demonstrated that Iraq, despite its federal constitution, was headed towards an authoritarian model of government. It is too early to tell if the al-Abadi government might reverse Maliki's policies and create a more unified Iraqi state, but it is evident that reform is necessary for Iraq to remain a stable political state.

In contrast to an authoritarian state, the creation of a strong central government under a federal model may be a viable solution for Iraq. The development of strong central governments within federal models is not inherently hazardous. According to Smith (2005, 131):

The history of federalism warns that federal structures, in order to work, must be both a product of conscious efforts – rather than de facto creations – and built on the foundation of a strong central state.

The development of a federal model with a strong central government enables the government potentially to prevent state fracture from secessionist and autonomy movements in ethnically diverse countries. It also provides a degree of control to better facilitate disputes within the state.

The U.S. serves as a good example when analyzing federal systems with strong central governments. Much like Iraq, the U.S. colonialists feared the creation of a strong central government after being under the rule of the British Monarchy; however, after the Articles of Confederation proved to be an ineffective constitution, it was replaced with the U.S. Constitution that provided for a strong central government that has endured for over 200 years. The problem that exists in creating a strong central government for Iraq lies in the failure of the Iraqi Constitution to allow for its creation. When developing the

Constitution, the Kurds lobbied to create a weak central government with powers devolved to the regions and governorates. They were successful in this endeavor and, upon ratification of the 2005 Constitution, the government of Iraq was established under a weak federal model. While decentralization of power to the regions and governorates was an expected attempt to satisfy the multiple ethno-linguistic-religious groups, its rapid implementation only led to increased sectarian conflict and disputes between the regions and the central government. This was partly a result of the Iraqi Constitution lacking clarity, possessing contradictory language, and failing to define effectively the power-sharing arrangements between the central government and the regions and governorates. To develop a strong central government under the Iraqi federal system, the Constitution will need to be amended to address these shortcomings.

The advantage of developing a strong central government is that it could allow for a smoother transition or devolution of power to the regions or governorates over time. Since the creation of Iraq following WWI, the population had been accustomed to strong central governments and authoritarian rule. Much like Nigeria, regional and ethnic rivalries were immediately destabilizing for Iraq upon transition to a federal model with a weak central government. A strong central government could have exerted influence to control these rivalries, while fostering national unity under a federal system. Additionally, a strong central government could have utilized its judiciary to resolve the issues of natural resource control and ensure equitable distribution of those resources throughout the state. Despite these advantages, the distrust between the Sunni and Shi'a, as well as the Arabs and Kurds, runs deep. The likelihood of creating a strong central government under the current provincial system in Iraq is miniscule, due to the lack of

support that it would receive from the ethno-linguistic-religious groups. The following section provides analysis on how to address these concerns through the implementation of a new federal model, which could strengthen the central government but also achieve the demands of the ethno-linguistic-religious groups.

Model 2 - The Three Region Federal Solution

The development of a three-region federal model defined along ethno-linguistic-religious lines is proposed as the best solution for the continued existence of the state of Iraq. To achieve the stability needed to establish a working federal government, implementation of a Swiss-type federal model could provide Iraq with a framework to build its multi-ethnic federation. This next phase of the analysis identifies the factors necessary to implement the Swiss model, examines the current Iraqi Constitution to identify the critical problems between the central government and the regions, and addresses the challenges inherent in the creation of a three-region solution.

Laying the Groundwork for the Swiss Federal Model

The implementation of the Swiss model initially is contingent upon three factors. First, all of the ethno-linguistic-religious groups need to be willing to participate in the development of the new government as well as amending the current Constitution. This would require the support and participation of the Kurds, Sunni, and Shi'a politicians as well as the different minority ethnic populations of the state (e.g., Turkomen and Yezidis). One solution to facilitate maximum cooperation would be to establish an international conference, much like the Dayton Accords (Merritt 2007). According to Al-Rahim (2007, 1):

A Dayton-like process for Iraq would be a multi-tiered international engagement. At its heart would be an Iraqi national compact forged by Iraqis with international and regional endorsement.

“The process would require attendance by Turkey, Syria, Iran, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia to address all three ethnic outside influences and key leaders from all Iraqi political parties” (Merritt 2007, 70-71). Bringing together Iraq’s international neighbors makes these states accountable for a successful solution to Iraq’s internal conflict. The international community, specifically Iraq’s geopolitical neighbors, has a vested interest in maintaining the current borders of Iraq. Having these states participate in the process allows them to take ownership of the regional problem and help to develop a viable solution.

The second hurdle that would need to be crossed prior to the implementation of the Swiss model is the reestablishment of Iraq’s international borders. ISIS has successfully seized territory from western Iraq to within 25 miles of the Iranian border. A critical component of establishing a unified state is having a stable internal security apparatus in place to secure the borders of the state. This does not mean that the ISIS threat would have to be eliminated completely prior to implementation of the Swiss model, but Iraqi territory must be regained and the ISIS threat reduced to an insurgency, not an occupation. The accomplishment of this task would need a concerted effort by all ethno-linguistic-religious groups in the state and the international community. Expelling the ISIS threat from Iraq could act as the unifying force needed to bring the ethno-linguistic-religious groups in Iraq, as well as Iraq’s regional neighbors, to the negotiating table to establish a more stable state.

The third challenge that needs to be met is the refinement and amendment of the Iraqi Constitution. This process needs to occur concurrently with the transition to a Swiss-based federal model to ensure deficiencies in the Iraqi Constitution are corrected and aspects of the Swiss Constitution can be implemented. Every effort needs to be made not to make the same mistakes made by the CPA and opposition leaders after the fall of the Saddam Husayn regime. Specifically, there is no reason to dissolve the current government or security forces in the state. This would only create chaos and further destabilize the region. More importantly, there is no need to dissolve the current Iraqi Constitution, but rather it needs amending to resolve the lack of clarity, to clarify the contradictory language, and to define clearly the power-sharing arrangements between the central government and the regions and governorates that need to occur. A brief review of how the current Iraqi Constitution was developed provides an understanding of the contentious issues that have plagued the state.

The Iraqi Constitution was drafted in less than four months and presented to the population for referendum in October, 2005. Its development took place rapidly, which resulted in a document that highlighted the sectarian divide and created a number of issues that have hindered the stability of the state. “There was no discussion of the provisions that would later become highly contentious, such as the broad federal system, the exploitation of oil and gas, and the weakness of the centre of the country in dealing with the regions” (Jawad 2013, 11). While the issues that plague the effectiveness of the Constitution are numerous, the critical issue that must be addressed is the relationship between the central government and the regions

The powers of the federal government are recognized in section four of the Constitution and include “formulating foreign policy and national security policy, exercising control over Iraq’s armed forces, securing the country’s borders, defending Iraq, formulating fiscal policy, drawing up a national budget, and planning policies on water sources external to Iraq (Marr 2012, 295). The defined powers are typical for a central government to execute, but the contradictory language identified in Article 115 and Article 121 of the Constitution gives regional governments the power to supersede these responsibilities. Article 115 (UNHCR 2005) established the power-sharing relationship between the federal government and the regions/governorates thus:

All powers not stipulated in the exclusive powers of the federal government belong to the authorities of the regions and governorates that are not organized in a region. With regard to other powers shared between the federal government and the regional government, priority shall be given to the law of the regions and governorates not organized in a region in case of dispute.

Moreover, Article 121 (UNHCR 2005) stated that:

In case of a contradiction between regional and national legislation in respect to a matter outside the exclusive powers of the federal government, the regional authority shall have the right to amend the application of the national legislation within that region.

As the Constitution is currently written, the regions and governorates have significant power when dealing with matters not clearly defined within as powers of the central government; furthermore, the Constitution allows for regional governments to establish laws that directly contradict the central government’s powers.

It is evident that the Constitution needs to be reformed in order to address the issues created by its drafters. Many of the problems that exist within Iraq result from the KRG’s and governorates’ powers defined or not defined by the Iraqi Constitution. The

KRG continues to exploit the Constitution's weaknesses in matters of foreign affairs, the armed forces, and resource exploitation. There have been numerous demands to amend the Constitution, but Article 126 prevents amendment on the most controversial matters (UNHCR 2005):

Articles of the Constitution may not be amended if such amendment takes away from the powers of the regions that are not within the exclusive powers of the federal authorities, except by the approval of the legislative authority of the concerned region and the approval of the majority of its citizens in a general referendum.

This essentially provides the KRG with veto power over proposed amendments, as Jawad (2013, 23) stated:

To correct all these mistakes and solve the existing problems, a consensus should be reached by the different blocs that dominate the Parliament. Even the Kurdish Regional Government's refusal to consider amendments and the accompanying threat of secession should be mitigated, especially following the US administration's clear indication that a Kurdish independent state in Iraq is out of the question.

Amending the Constitution to facilitate the creation of a more clearly defined central government would be necessary to implement a three-region federal model. In addition, the contradictory language needs to be addressed by both the amendment process and the judiciary to define clearly the role of the central government and the power-sharing agreements between the central government and the regions. The one benefit of the current Constitution is that it provides a basic framework to establish federal regions.

Developing the Three Region Solution under the Swiss Federal Model

Establishing three federal regions in Iraq has been discussed as an option to Iraq's political crisis ever since the 2003 invasion of Iraq. U.S. Vice-President Joseph Biden (at the time Senator Biden) and Leslie Gelb developed a plan to partition Iraq into three semi-independent regions based upon ethno-linguistic-religious groups (Cohen 2007;

Lederman 2014). The plan, based upon the Dayton Accords, called for the creation of three distinct regions consisting of Sunni Arabs, Shi'a Arabs, and Kurds. The plan further stipulated that "the central government in Baghdad would handle security and foreign affairs plus distribute the nation's vast oil revenues among the groups – the glue that would hold the three regions together" (Lederman 2014, 1). The Bush Administration chose not to accept the suggested political model presented by Biden and Congress and so, eleven years after the 2003 invasion, numerous sectarian conflicts have divided Iraq along sectarian lines. This has resulted in political leaders from the international community trying to re-evaluate the implementation of a three-region solution.

The three-region model is not a perfect solution. If Iraq were to be partitioned into three federal regions, the drawing of the internal borders creates an issue of intermixed populations such as Arab-Kurd and Sunni-Shi'a communities. It is important to note that the sectarian violence occurring in Iraq after the U.S. invasion led to the migration of ethno-linguistic-religious groups to areas that were more culturally homogeneous, similar to what happened in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s. Despite the migrations, intermixed communities still exist, and there is no way to divide Iraq into three ethnically pure regions. Implementation of a Swiss-type federal model could provide the solution needed to address successfully the ethno-linguistic-religious problems created by dividing Iraq into three federal regions, as well as solve some of Iraq's more pressing territorial and constitutional disputes.

Figure 9 provides a three-region partition model for Iraq, which was first proposed by Merritt (2007). The model establishes three federal regions similar to the Biden model and also creates a city-state centered on Baghdad. The benefit of this

partition model is that it concedes disputed territorial areas to the different ethno-linguistic-religious groups and addresses economic and historical challenges that exist under the current governmental structure. Examination of the model from north to south to highlight the benefits of its implementation may prove useful.

Figure 10 shows a comparison of Iraq's oil reserves with the three-region partition model of Iraq. The first benefit of the model addresses the Sunni Arab concerns of an oil resource deficiency in a Sunni-established federal region. One of the greatest fears of the Sunni population is the lack of natural resources in their region. By establishing the Sunni region's border north of Mosul, the Sunni Arabs would have access to some of Iraq's northern oil fields, thereby addressing the Sunni Arab concern over access to the country's oil industry. Second, the model concedes Kirkuk to the Kurdish federal region in the north. This would put to rest a territorial dispute that has been present in Iraq since the inception of the state. Since the city is believed to be predominantly Kurdish, the act of including Kirkuk in the Kurdish federal region could serve as an olive branch to encourage the Kurds to be more open to the implementation of the three-region federal model. Finally, Baghdad could be established as a city-state (similar to Washington D.C.), and not part of an ethnic federal region. This counterbalances both the Sunni and Shi'a Arab's historical and territorial claims over the city and allows the capital of Iraq to remain a neutral area focused on the governance of the federal state (Merritt 2007).

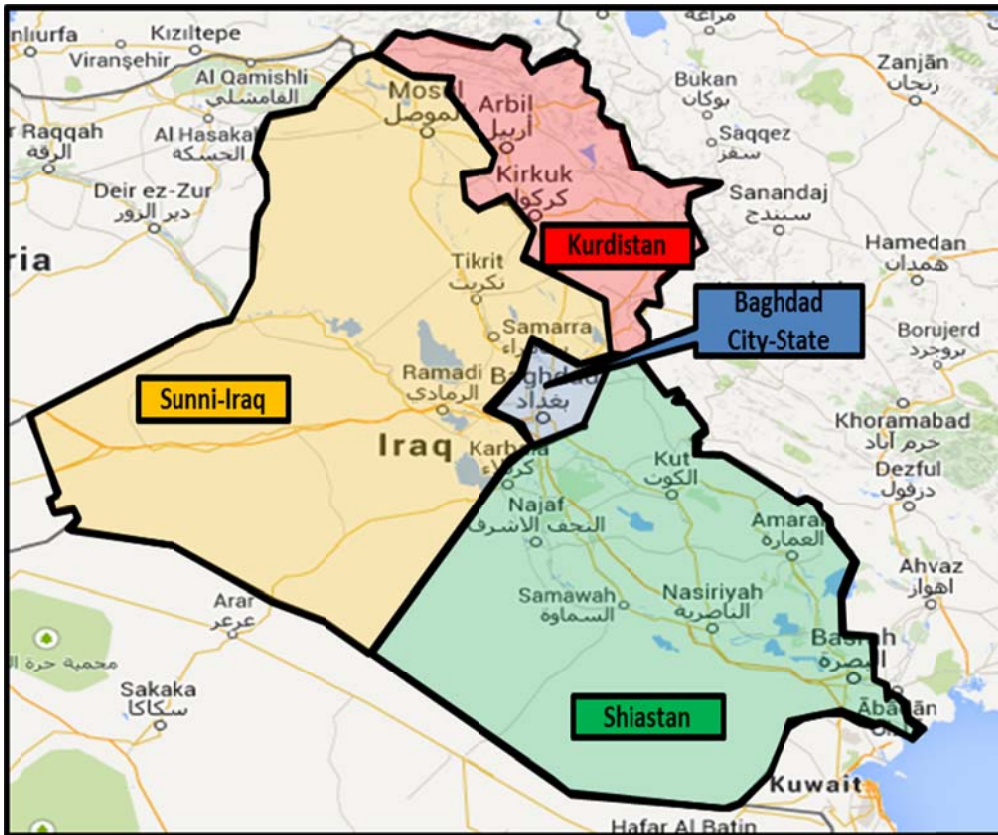


Figure 9: Map Illustrating a Three-Region Federal Partition
 Source: Created by the author using Merritt's (2007) base data.

The disadvantage of the model is that all three regions are not ethnically homogeneous. This is where the implementation of the principles found in the Swiss federal model becomes crucial. To address this issue in Switzerland, the Swiss Constitution (Articles 69, 70, 72) devolved powers over cultural, religious, and linguistic matters to the cantons, which have further devolved power to the municipalities. This devolution of power to the regions and further down to the provincial and tribal levels could be a viable solution for Iraq.

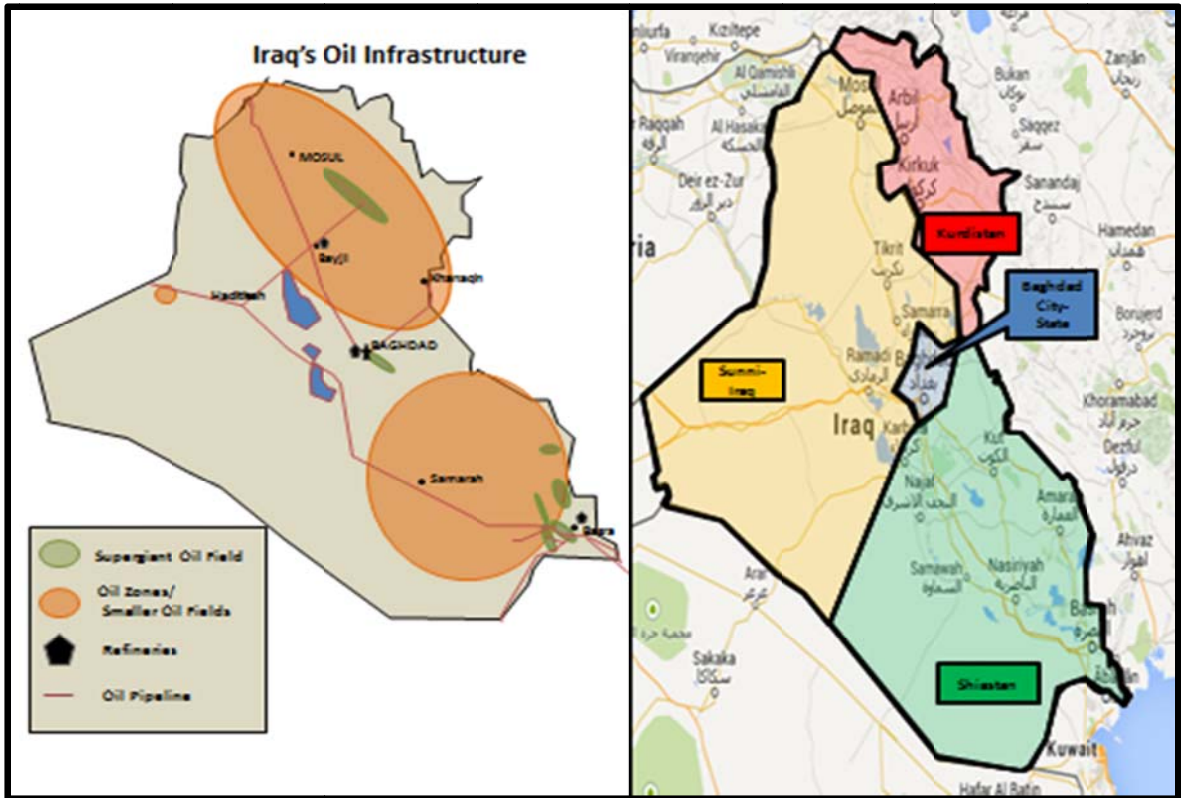


Figure 10: Comparison of Iraq's Oil Fields with the Three-Region Federal Partition
 Source: Created by the author from CIA (2003) and Merritt's (2007) base data.

Devolution of power is not a new concept to the Middle East region or Iraq. For example, the Ottomans utilized the Millet System (Smith 2005, 140):

[which] allowed identified ethnic and religious groups recognized legal control over matters related to personal status—marriage, divorce, inheritance, birth, death and education. Religious leaders were accountable both to their constituents and the central state, and Constantinople remained the overarching power and final arbiter of disputes.

This method, which was formerly implemented in Iraq, allowed the Ottoman Empire to remain the central authority, while allowing for cultural matters to be managed by the different ethno-linguistic-religious populations. The Swiss system of devolving power to the regions and municipalities would be similar to the establishment of a modern millet system and could provide the basis for fair treatment of all ethnic groups regardless of the

region in which they are located. For devolution to work in Iraq, it would be absolutely necessary for the devolved powers to be written into the Iraqi Constitution as well as the regional constitutions. Clearly defining the devolved powers within the state and regional constitutions would alleviate conflicts between the multiple ethno-linguistic-religious groups in the regions, as well as decrease conflict between the regions and the central government. This could allow the central government to focus on more important issues such as state security, foreign policy, and economic development.

Another important aspect of the Swiss federal model, which could alleviate the fears of minority populations in the proposed Iraq federal regions, is the concept of tri-level citizenship. According to Article 37 of the Swiss Constitution, “a Swiss citizen is [a person], who has the citizenship of a Municipality and the citizenship of the Canton” (ICL 2000). This tri-level citizenship allows the Swiss population to retain their cultural identity, while also fostering a sense of Swiss nationalism. In Iraq, where sectarian violence has almost destroyed Iraqi nationalism, a multi-level citizenship could become a unifying force in the state by allowing Iraqis to maintain their cultural identity. Article 3 of the Iraqi Constitution (UNHCR 2005) states:

Iraq is a country of multiple nationalities, religions, and sects. It is a founding and active member in the Arab League and is committed to its charter, and it is part of the Islamic world.

Moreover, Article 18, paragraph 1, of the Iraqi Constitution states that “Iraqi citizenship is a right for every Iraqi and is the basis of his nationality” (UNHCR 2005). Both Article 3 and Article 18 support the notion of an ethnic identity and a state national identity. This dual identity was marginalized by the sectarian violence that has ravaged the state since the U.S. invasion in 2003. Amending the Constitution to recognize multiple ethno-

linguistic-religious identities could provide a framework to rebuild Iraq's national identity by distinguishing the importance of the cultural heritage of the population as a component of Iraq's national identity.

Defining the powers of Iraq's central and regional governments is another imperative and fundamental issue that must be resolved. The current Iraqi Constitution has given the regions and governorates significant power when dealing with matters not clearly defined in the Constitution as powers of the central government; furthermore, the Constitution allows for regional governments to establish laws that directly contradict the central government's powers. The Swiss have addressed the federal-cantonal legal issues in their constitution under Article 49 (ICL 2000), which states:

1. Federal law takes precedence over contrary cantonal law;
2. The Federation ensures the adherence to the Federal law by the cantons.

Iraq needs to amend its Constitution to reflect the Swiss Constitution and to ensure that regional governments' constitutions cannot contradict national law. This does not necessarily create a strong central government, but it does allow the central government to perform its assigned responsibilities without having to mediate with the regions on contradictory legal language.

The devolution of power to the three regions also needs to be addressed. As stated in Article 42, 43 and 43a of the Swiss Constitution (ICL 2000):

Article 42. Tasks of the Federation,

1. The Federation accomplishes tasks allocated to it by the Constitution;

Article 43. Tasks of the Cantons,

1. The Cantons define the tasks to be accomplished within the framework of their competencies;

Art. 43a. Principles for the Allocation and Fulfilment of State Functions;

1. The Federation only undertakes tasks that the Cantons are unable to perform or which require uniform regulation by the Federation.

The regional governments of the proposed three-region model need to be able to fulfill their obligations to their populations. In areas where the regions cannot competently accomplish tasks, the central government needs to undertake those tasks. This is clearly defined in Article 43 of the Swiss Constitution and Article 123 of the Iraqi Constitution, but the execution of this power delegation has not occurred down to the regional government or up to the federal government in Iraq. The developers of the Iraqi Constitution were so concerned with minimizing the power of the central government that they maximized their power with no way to execute some of their responsibilities. This needs to be addressed to better facilitate services to the Iraqi population. The benefit of defining regional and federal powers in this way would allow the Iraqi regions to increase their ownership and responsibility as their infrastructure develops. While the central government may initially retain the power, it can be devolved at a later date to the regions as they become more self-sufficient.

In the economic arena, the Swiss Constitution provides guidelines for fiscal equality among the cantons, which, in turn, the cantons do for the municipalities. In the case of Iraq, the oil reserves have the greatest potential to create social and wealth polarization in the state. Within the current Iraqi Constitution, there is contradictory language on who has the authority to develop oil resources. It is imperative that this language be adjusted, giving the central government control over natural resource development. The central government of Iraq should be responsible for ensuring that polarization due to the presence of oil reserves does not affect its regions. In the case of Nigeria, mismanagement of the country's oil resources resulted in political corruption

and conflict between Nigeria's regions; furthermore, it has directly contributed to the lack of broad-based economic diversification in Nigeria (Suberu 2010). To prevent this from occurring in Iraq, the management of the oil industry needs to remain with the central government to ensure equitable distribution of oil profits to the regions and into areas of economic diversification for the state. As stated in Article 111 of the Iraqi Constitution, "Oil and gas are owned by all the people of Iraq in all the regions and governorates" (UNHCR 2005). This Article needs to be enforced and utilized to build the infrastructure of the state and the regions.

The Islamic religion plays a defining role in the Middle East and Iraq. When drafting the Constitution, the Sunni and the Kurdish members of the committee lobbied for a more secular document, while many of the Shi'a politicians from religious-based political parties insisted upon the mention of Islam in the Iraqi Constitution. Thus, Article 2 of the Iraqi Constitution (UNHCR 2005) states the following:

First: Islam is the official religion of the State and is a foundation source of legislation:

- A. No law may be enacted that contradicts the established provisions of Islam
- B. No law may be enacted that contradicts the principles of democracy.
- C. No law may be enacted that contradicts the rights and basic freedoms stipulated in this Constitution.

Second: This Constitution guarantees the Islamic identity of the majority of the Iraqi people and guarantees the full religious rights to freedom of religious belief and practice of all individuals such as Christians, Yazidis, and Mandaean Sabians.

As a consequence, Jawad (2013, 15) believes that:

While there may be no harm in stating Islam is the official religion of the state as the overwhelming majority of the population is Muslim, Point A rendered meaningless all the positive aspects that were mentioned in Chapter Two (The Liberties), Articles 14 – 46. In reality, practice, and

with the domination of the religious parties, institutions and personalities, any liberty could be cancelled if a religious institution claimed that it contradicts Islamic beliefs, as we have seen in many Middle Eastern states.

Jawad (2013) makes a strong argument. While the incorporation of Islamic principles should not be a necessary component of the Constitution or the Iraqi government, the power the religious leaders have over their communities directly impacted the government's ability not to incorporate Islam as part of the government. This is where diversion from the Swiss federal model occurs. The Swiss Constitution accounts for the religious freedom of its population, as does the Iraqi Constitution; however, the Iraqi Constitution incorporates Islamic principles into its execution of government, where the Swiss Constitution does not. There is no easy answer to resolve this possible conflict, but the best course of action for the Iraqi government would be to devolve religious powers to the regions, and further devolve them to the provinces and tribes. Keeping religious activity at the local level and allowing each region to determine how to apply the tenets of Islam could cushion the central state from potential conflict.

Maintaining positive relations with religious leaders is also paramount. As the current Iraqi government has failed to provide basic needs and services for its population, the religious leaders of the country have tried to fill that void. Regional and local politicians should work with religious leaders to improve the quality of life for their populations. This could create credibility for the federal regions with their internal populations. More importantly, it keeps the central government out of religious affairs and focused on running the state. Finally, maintaining a positive relationship with religious leaders could prevent conflict with Islamic Fundamentalists, who have created significant problems for the Iraqi government in the past. If the regions have positive

relations with religious leaders and the community, then Islamic Fundamentalists will have less influence on the population.

Establishing a three-region federal model in Iraq could have profound positive impacts when paired with principles found in the Swiss federal model. While the model is not perfect, it does provide solutions to improve the current structure of Iraq's government. It must be noted that there are critics of the three-region federal model. Fitzsimmons (2008) believes that devolution of Iraq into ethno-sectarian communities (e.g., the three-region model) would fail, like the post-colonial Nigerian government in the 1960s. Fitzsimmons (2008, 6) argued that:

strongly aligning Iraq's political institutions with its ethno-sectarian identities is likely to entrench the efficacies of those identities in Iraqi politics and lock in the zero-sum nature of competition that has generated so much instability.

Fitzsimmons' (2008) argument is based on the current Iraqi Constitution and a set of variables that has since changed over the past six years. Specifically, the Iraqi population has already fallen prey to sectarian divide without a three-region model. It is highly unlikely that this will change under the current government structure. Implementation of the Swiss federal model in a three-region Iraq provides a framework for the regions to operate harmoniously, regardless of ethnic makeup, and to mediate inter-regional disputes when they arise.

Model 3 - The Multiple Regional Government Solution

The decentralization of Iraq into multiple regional governments is an option that has been argued by opponents to the three-region model, but the exact structure is something that has not been agreed upon. According to Fitzsimmons (2008, 6), "the form of decentralization most feared by Iraqi nationalists is the one predicated on creation of

new regional governments,” and he believes that devolving powers to the provincial level may be a solution to developing Iraq’s federal system because the provincial political structure already exists and would not require development of new regions. This model creates two problems. First, the 18-province model fails to accommodate an autonomous Kurdish region, which creates a significant problem of implementation considering that the Kurds would not easily give up their regional status. Second, the 18-province model also assumes that “the provincial governments will be able to effectively shoulder greater responsibilities for basic governance” (Fitzsimmons 2008, 7). This would require a significant improvement in provincial infrastructure and political institutions in order to be a feasible option. Advocates of a regional federal model like Al-Rubaie (2008), Anderson and Stansfield (2005), and O’Leary (2010) foresee the development of a five-region model as a more viable solution than a provincial model. Al-Rubaie (2008, 1) stated:

Iraq's political geography suggests five likely federal units: A "Kurdistan province," including the current Kurdistan and surrounding areas; a "Western province," including Mosul and the upper Tigris and Euphrates valleys; a "Kufa province," built around the Middle Euphrates governorates; a "Basra province," including the lower Tigris and Euphrates valleys; and a "Baghdad province," built around Greater Baghdad, which may include parts of Diyala and Salah ad Din Governorates.

The likelihood of Iraq devolving powers directly to all 18 governorates is unlikely, but Al-Rubaie’s (2008) five-region model under a federal system does provide a viable solution.

The most significant difference between the three-region model and the five-region model is the separation of the Shi’a communities into three distinct regions: Baghdad, Basra, and Kufa. The location of regional borders for a Sunni Arab and a

Kurdish region also differ slightly, which does limit the oil reserves available to the Sunni Arabs. The benefit of the five-region model is that it creates regions with balanced population distributions and creates five strong regional governments with power devolved from the central government in Baghdad (Anderson and Stansfield 2005). The Swiss federal model could be applied to the five-region model, much like the three-region solution; however, the potential of secessionist movements could possibly be greater in a five-region model as opposed to the three-region model, complicating the implementation of the Swiss federal model.

Figure 11 recreates Al-Rubaie's (2008) five-region model and provides insight into why this model could be more prone to fragmentation and secession movements than the three-region model. As the map illustrates, the Basra, Baghdad, and Kurdish regions contain the majority of Iraq's oil reserves, leaving the Kufa and Western (Sunni) regions with almost no significant oil fields. This could create economic disparity for both the Western and Kufa regions, much like Nigeria, possibly sparking inter-regional conflict and secessionist movements over increased wealth polarization due to lack of economic opportunities created by the oil industry. In addition, the Kufa region incorporates the two holy cities of Karbala and Najaf. Anderson and Stansfield (2005, 379) described the proposed Kufa region as a Holy Region, which could be governed according to the tenets of Islam, relieving the federal government from having to address Islam as "either 'a' or 'the' source of law."

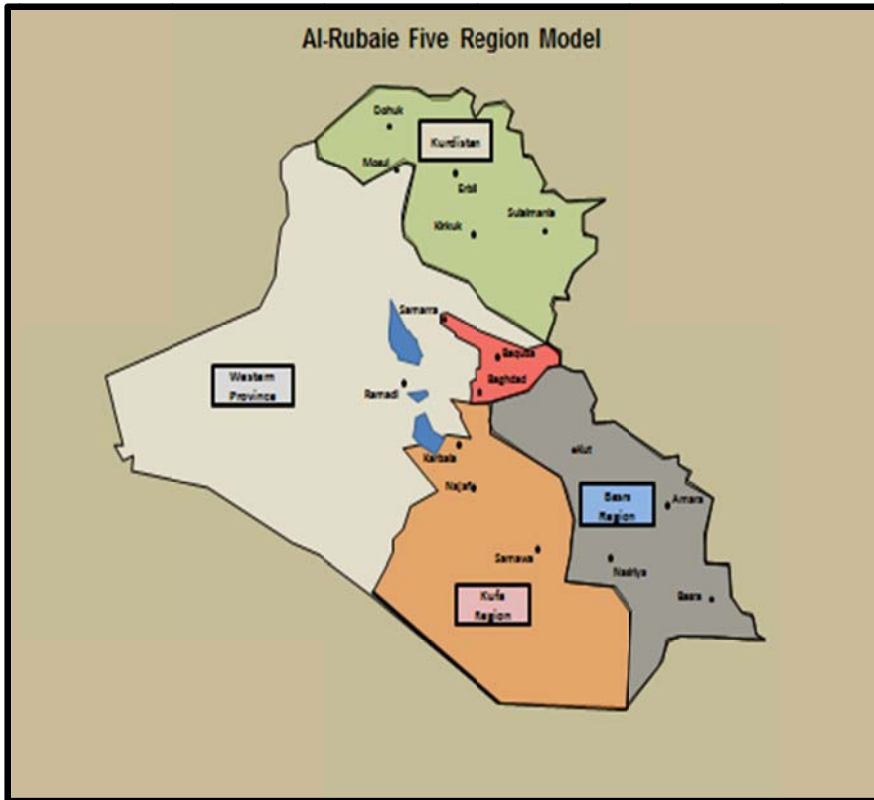


Figure 11: Al-Rubaie (2008) Five-Region Model
 Source: Created by the author from O’Leary’s (2010) base data.

Development of a Holy Region based on the tenets of Islam could create friction between the regional and federal government, especially in the realm of the judiciary and civil liberties of the Iraqi population. This friction could lead the Kufa region, with the support of Shi’a religious leaders, to support a secessionist movement based on religious contradictions with the Iraqi central government. The five-region model, in essence, separates the secular Shi’a from the more radical religious Shi’a political groups, making secessionist movements more likely. Under the three-region model, these groups would be incorporated into the same region, thereby creating a community that would share economically in the oil wealth and be force to cooperate politically. More importantly, by incorporating the Shia’ religious groups with the secular Shi’a, this could foster an

environment of internal regional cooperation, which is supported by the Swiss federal model. The five-region solution does not require cooperation between the two groups, therefore creating an element of instability.

If the five-region model failed to maintain the stability of southern Iraq, the consequences could be catastrophic for the state. If a secessionist movement started in the south, the Kurds would most likely follow with their own secessionist movement in the north. This could lead to sectarian and tribal conflict across the country that would essentially rip the state apart. Western Iraq would become an easy target for Islamic groups such as ISIS, allowing Islamic Fundamentalist groups to overwhelm the more secular Sunni elements in the west. The Shi'a areas of southern Iraq would likely engage in a tribal war, resulting in the creation of multiple Shi'a micro-states. The Kurds could experience their own internal struggles between the PUK and the KDP, which might lead to the disintegration of the Kurdish region into as many as three separate micro-states to include Dihok, Erbil, and Sulaimani. The effects of Iraq's disintegration would be felt throughout the Middle East region. Large numbers of refugees would be created, regional conflict would increase between Middle East states and Kurdish communities in Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and Iran, and the establishment of an Islamic State Caliphate would become more likely. Ultimately, the implementation of a model with five or more regions, while plausible, is more likely to lead to the fragmentation and disintegration of the state of Iraq than the development of a strong central government based on a three-region model following the Swiss federalism ideal.

Conclusion

Three models were proposed and analyzed in this thesis to determine their ability to stabilize successfully the state of Iraq within its current geopolitical borders:

1. Iraq governed by a strong central government;
2. Development of a federal model with three key regions defined along ethno-linguistic-religious lines;
3. Iraq decentralized into multiple regional governments (more than three).

This thesis' working argument was that the most likely route to achieving long-term political stability within Iraq is implementation of a three-region federal model that incorporates elements of the Swiss federal model into Iraq's government. Based on the analysis, it is clear that all three geopolitical models offer positive and negative characteristics if implemented.

The first model, development of a strong central government, is a dangerous proposition. Iraq's history of authoritarian regimes makes it more susceptible to reestablishing this past system of government if power is consolidated in the center. This is demonstrated by Nouri al-Maliki centralizing power despite the current Constitution's establishment of a weak federal government. Al-Maliki's government has been characterized as authoritarian and is being touted as a critical cause of sectarian violence in the state. To prevent the establishment of an authoritarian central government, Iraqi politicians would need to work diligently to ensure the checks and balances in the Constitution are upheld. Furthermore, correcting problems in the Constitution that allowed al-Maliki to bypass the checks and balance system in the first place needs to occur.

The benefits of a strong central government in Iraq designed along the Swiss federal model does allow for a gradual devolution of power as the regions become more self-sufficient. A strong central government would also be able to address internal security threats, regional conflicts, and secessionist movements more effectively. In addition, a strong central government is needed to manage Iraq's natural resources to ensure equitable distribution of oil wealth and infrastructural improvements throughout the state. Incorporating elements of the strong central government model into the three-region model may be the best solution for a Federated Iraq.

The three-region model, based on Swiss federalism, could settle successfully many of the internal political and territorial disputes that have created fragmentation within the state. The model addresses Sunni Arab concerns over access to the state's oil industry, the dispute over Kirkuk's territorial status could be resolved, and the new role of Baghdad as a multi-ethnic city-state focused on national politics could resolve the Sunni-Shi'a historical claims over control of the city. The Swiss federal model provides a framework to support ethnic tolerance through specific power devolution, internal cooperation, and conflict resolution between the different tribal and ethnic groups within each region, and external cooperation and adjudication of issues between the regions and the central government. The model also would allow for the devolution of religious matters to the local level, creating a beneficial separation between religion and the central government. Finally, the development of an Iraqi national identity, by acknowledging the multi-ethnic makeup of the state, could be enhanced through the implementation of a multi-level citizenship. An Iraqi national identity would be a critical element of state stability. While the three-region model provides a number of solutions, all of these

benefits would be contingent upon the state's ability to rectify the shortcomings found in the Iraqi Constitution.

Implementation of a multi-regional model poses its own benefits and challenges. Separating Iraq into multiple regions of equal size and population distribution is a feasible model, if structured like the three-region model to include characteristics of the Swiss federal model. What could be problematic is the increased likelihood of regions seeking to secede from the central state because they have no internally binding characteristics with the central government. Cooperation is not a necessary component between secular and religious political groups under this model. If a Holy Region were to be created, religious leaders could incite a secessionist movement. Much like the domino effect, if one region seceded, it could open the doors for others to do the same, creating instability that could lead to state fracture. In addition, this model would be ideal for Islamic Fundamentalists to operate within. Holy regions could provide a safe haven for fundamentalist groups, which would not only destabilize the state, but could destabilize the region. For the multi-regional model to be successful, a strong central government would be a necessary component to ensure secessionist forces did not destabilize the state; however, if not kept in check, a strong central government could develop into an authoritarian state as increased control over security forces would be needed to deal with internal instability.

Finally, it is clear that more analysis is needed to determine the best course of action to establish a more stable Iraq. To prevent the same mistakes of the CPA after the fall of Saddam Husayn, a necessary component of the analysis must include subject-matter experts on the dynamics of Iraq's multiple ethno-linguistic-religious groups. An

international conference, much like the Dayton Accords, would be extremely beneficial to resolving the Iraq question, and it would provide regional states as well as the international community a forum to address the problems that currently plague Iraq. But before this can occur, the ISIS threat needs to be contained. While it is unlikely that ISIS would be able to establish a caliphate, if the fundamentalist group is not dealt with quickly, its actions could destabilize Iraq to the point of fracture, creating multiple independent micro-states. This outcome could further destabilize the Middle East and create significant problems for the international community.

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