IRAQ BETWEEN OCCUPATIONS

Perspectives from 1920 to the Present

Edited by Amatzia Baram, Achim Rohde, and Ronen Zeidel

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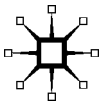

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Amatzia Baram, Achim Rohde, Ronen Zeidel
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INTRODUCTION

Iraq: History Reconsidered, Present Reassessed

Amatzia Baram, Achim Rohde, and Ronen Zeidel

When the statues of Saddam Husayn came tumbling down in April 2003, the symbolic gesture was to mark the beginning of a new phase in Iraqi history. But the traumatic events in the immediate aftermath of the invasion, the ensuing occupation of the country by U.S.-led coalition forces, the rise of communalism, and the country's barely arrested slide into civil war belied the optimistic forecasts of a country that would rise like a phoenix out of the ashes of dictatorship, and develop into a showcase Arab democracy at peace with itself and its neighbors. Whether this was indeed a genuinely held belief among proponents of the invasion or simple propaganda aimed at selling the war to reluctant international audiences cannot be determined at this point. However, it soon became obvious that the rebuilding of Iraq under U.S. tutelage would prove far more difficult than previously thought—and its success remains uncertain.

To further complicate things, there is no consensus as to what exactly would constitute a "successful" rebuilding of Iraq. Once the Pandora's box that was Saddam's Iraq had been opened, the centralized state all but collapsed, and a plethora of competing agendas regarding the country's future started to evolve from within Iraqi society. These agendas were often influenced in one way or another by neighboring countries, first and foremost Iran and Turkey, who follow their own agenda of securing political leverage in the evolving Iraqi polity. The United States, for its part, made some fatefully flawed policy choices in the early phase of the occupation, which

negatively impacted the country's chances for a quick recovery. By 2010 the United States still seems to lack a sustainable strategy to pacify and stabilize Iraq and assist its development.

The ongoing search for solutions and new horizons on the political level is visible in the field of academic literature published on Iraq in recent years. The country has long been a difficult area of scholarly interest, due to the restrictions placed on field research inside the country under the Ba'th regime, the lack of access to relevant sources, and the general opaqueness of domestic politics and decision-making processes. This state of affairs was inversely mirrored in much of the Western scholarship on Iraq, with its focus on the regime's inner circle and Saddam Husayn himself. Since the removal of the dictator, scholars who are aware of the rising communal tensions in Iraq have started to shift their focus to the perceived structural deficiencies that impeded the evolution of a viable and stable Iraqi nation since the founding of the modern Iraqi state by the British in 1920, and the Hashimite monarchy a year later. These research foci reflect the competing rationales of "structure" vs. "agency" for explaining the function of political systems. The visible shift of emphasis in the scholarship on Iraq since 2003 may also reflect the fact that students of Iraqi history and politics often tend to focus on the issues that dominate the political agenda at each given time.

From among the more serious works that were published on Iraq following the U.S.-led invasion of 2003, many were written by people who witnessed the aftermath of the invasion firsthand, as part of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) or as journalists (Diamond 2005, Phillips 2005, Etherington 2005, Shadid 2005, Packer 2005). Their works focus mainly on U.S. and international policy over Iraq, at the expense of penetrating observations of the domestic Iraqi scene and its historical background. The lack of historical depth in some recent scholarship on Iraq is contrasted by historiographic works that address the situation in post-Saddam Iraq by comparing it to the British experience in Iraq in the first half of the twentieth century. Some researchers point to similarities in these two cases. Toby Dodge, for example, concentrates on the often futile attempts of the Western occupiers to understand new and unfamiliar realities.

In Dodge's opinion, this difficulty accounts for similar errors that were committed by the United Kingdom and the United States, provoking rather similar reactions from the Iraqi population (Dodge 2003). In the revised, new edition of his study on the British Mandate in Iraq, Peter Sluglett also points to the similarities between the two experiences (Sluglett 2007). As historical studies, both books are valuable contributions, but the comparisons between the British and U.S. occupations result in a rather ambiguous

discourse. On the one hand, such comparisons seem to imply that every foreign intervention or occupation in Iraq is doomed to failure. On the other hand, they revolve around the question "what went wrong?" with U.S. and British policies, while downplaying the agency of the Iraqi side.

A second main area of research in post-Saddam Iraqi Studies is the rise of communalism and intercommunal strife, which is presented as the main structural factor that determined the torturous path of Iraqi history all through the twentieth century. Such works reverberate against the background of political debates regarding the rebuilding of Iraq as a loose federal state. Reidar Visser's book on the history of southern Iraqi separatism, starting with an episode from Basra's history in the early 1920s and ending with contemporary calls for federalism emanating from Basra, is a good example (Visser 2005). This theme is further elaborated in a volume that Visser coedited with Gareth Stansfield (Stansfield and Visser 2007), which deals with historical notions of regionalism in Iraq. In a notable departure from the conventional wisdom that highlights *religious* fault lines between Sunnis and Shi'is, these works recount the story of *regional* identities as a driving force for separatism or federalism in Iraq. All in all, studies with a "structuralist" focus often imply that by establishing modern Iraq, the British authorities artificially united disparate regions inhabited by diverse religious, ethnic, and tribal groups under the roof of a nation-state that never developed into a genuine nation (Lukitz 1995, Dodge 2003, Catherwood 2004, Sluglett 2007).

In response, other, mainly Iraqi, scholars rediscover Iraq's Ottoman and Mamluk past, and find there the seeds for the subsequent emergence of Iraq as a state and a national community, based on an analysis of the economic and social history of the region (Abdullah 2003, Fattah 1997 & 2003, Haj 1997). Such debates regarding the historical authenticity of nations, and the projections of modern nationalism onto earlier historical periods, are common concerning any nation in the world, but they seem to be particularly salient in the Iraqi case, reflecting the instability of the current situation and the competing political agendas that are being pursued. A notable volume in this context that contains original research was edited by Shams Inati; its contributors cover a wide variety of subjects from Iraq's ancient to modern history (Inati 2003). Although of high quality, the overall composition of the volume seems aimed at fostering Iraqi national pride, while ignoring the crimes of the Ba'th regime. Muhsin al-Musawi published a remarkable work on Iraqi cultural history that tracks the evolution of a national consciousness in modern Iraq, which he distinguishes from its instrumentalization at the hands of various rulers (al-Musawi 2006). Eric Davis has published a similar work focusing on the field of historiography (Davis 2005). Before al-Musawi

and Davis, Amatzia Baram studied the place of ancient Mesopotamia in modern Iraqi politics, historiography and art (Baram 1991). A concise history of Iraq, focusing mainly on the period from the 1980s to the early twenty-first century was written by Thabit Abdullah (Abdullah 2006). Other valuable recent works focus on a specific institution or aspect of Iraqi history throughout the twentieth century, like the armed forces (al-Marashi and Salama 2008), the Communist Party (Ismael 2008), and women (al-Ali 2007).

This book endeavors to explore a middle ground between these two trends. It juxtaposes external and internal factors during the processes of nation building and state formation in Iraq in the twentieth century. In this way, it examines continuity and change behind the major events in the history of Iraq, and places those events in a wider context. Whereas some articles discover the continuity that links major events to previous periods, others highlight the aspect of a break with the past, especially during the Ba'th period. Sensitive and highly controversial subjects for some Iraqis will not be ignored in this volume, which includes articles on sectarian and ethnosectarian relations, the contribution of the British and U.S. occupations to state formation and re-formation, as well as internal dynamics within the various communities before and after April 2003. Acknowledging the existence of strong subdivisions in Iraq does not imply the negation of Iraqi national identity. On the contrary; it enriches Iraqi identity and makes it more accommodating, as acknowledging the existing differences opens the way for resolving outstanding tensions.

Downplaying the "structuralist" arguments that point to factors that impede national integration (as some Iraqi historians who are keen on stressing the authenticity of Iraqi national identity do), sometimes comes at the price of ignoring crucial developments. Thabit Abdullah, for example, never mentions the massive conversion to Shi'ism that took place in Iraq over the second half of the nineteenth century, leading to the current Shi'i majority (Abdullah 2003). Structural differences preceded the establishment of the Iraqi state, and the country's history seems to be marked by a dynamic interplay among the state, the economy, and societal structures such as sect, ethnic group, and tribe. Adeed Dawisha argues that when the state was strong, the government centralized and national identity prospered, while communal fault lines became less discernible (Dawisha 2009). Yet one must differentiate between a strong state, as Iraq was during the last decade under the monarchy, and a fierce state, as it was during most of the Ba'th era (Ayubi 1995). Communal identities and other structural factors should not be ignored, yet they should not be considered unchanging, as they are constantly reconstructed and adjusted to fit changing circumstances.

Very few books offer comprehensive overviews of modern Iraqi history from the late Ottoman period until today. For this, we still have to rely on the new editions of Phebe Marr's and Charles Tripp's excellent textbooks (Marr 2006, Tripp 2007), which, however, cannot possibly cover all aspects of this broad topic, as many significant features remain unknown due to the restricted access to relevant sources and archival materials. This is particularly true regarding the Ba'thist era, but also concerns earlier periods. As textbooks, their accounts are rather normative in style, and they do not allow for a discussion of the various schools of thought and interpretative paradigms regarding Iraqi history and present-day developments.

This book seeks to add a number of hitherto underresearched aspects to the existing body of scholarship on Iraq, covering the whole period from 1920 to post-2003. The volume is based on an international conference held at the University of Haifa in March 2007. It focuses on several crucial issues such as the rise of communalism and the development of other components of identity, including internal contradictions within each sectarian and ethnic community, the attitudes toward foreign presence, and the implications of those developments for the future of the country. This includes a comparative discussion of the British and U.S. occupations without, however, limiting our inquiry to the question "what went wrong?" or predetermining that all had to go wrong. The book also discusses often marginalized issues pertaining to the rise and demise of Iraqi civil society by offering studies that shed light on Iraqi women, liberal intellectuals, and democratic ideas during the monarchy. The volume thereby reexamines Iraq from the foundation of the nation-state to the present, and thus conceptualizes Iraq's present in a broader historical context.

While it does not solve the conceptual and interpretive divides that are visible in scholarship on Iraq, this book contributes to a more integrated and multidimensional understanding of the forces underlying Iraqi history by including different views on various aspects, which are presented by Iraqi Kurdish, Israeli, American, and European scholars. The studies assembled in this volume deliberately stress the agency of Iraqis, and most discuss Iraqi domestic affairs.

Probably the most decisive factor that stands in the way of a more integrated vision of Iraqi history is the Ba'thist period and, in particular, the rule of Saddam Husayn, which resonates in implicit and explicit ways in most of the studies assembled in this volume. How could this resourceful country descend into such a terrible abyss? How could Saddam's dictatorship have lasted so long? Is it therefore possible to speak of an Iraqi exceptionalism among the countries in the region? How much are the developments in Iraq since 2003 rooted in the period of Saddam's rule? To what degree are

communal strife and authoritarian rule the results of structural patterns that determined Iraqi history throughout the twentieth century? Unfortunately, compared to the growing interest in present-day Iraq and in the Mandate period, far less research has been conducted on the Ba'th period (1968–2003) in recent years. While the editors of this volume do not wish to downplay the difficulties involved in gaining access to relevant sources concerning the history of Ba'thist Iraq, we are convinced that gaining a deeper understanding of this particular period, many aspects of which remain unknown, is crucial for being able to grasp the present situation. Several chapters deal with related questions concerning the Ba'thist period. For Iraqis themselves, coming to terms with this particularly tormenting era is a necessary step on the way to a future national reconciliation that might transcend the present communalist revival. Understandably, this process will take time and hard work, and cannot be imposed from outside (though it can be encouraged). As researchers, we can merely unearth and critically investigate the historical evidence, thus preparing the ground for an informed discussion of the issues at hand.

The British and U.S. occupations constituted ruptures that gave rise to the notion of new beginnings, a process which, in both cases, entailed a denial of whatever preceded it. If, in the 1920s, this meant strongly denouncing the Ottoman legacy and playing down the country's history under Ottoman rule, after 2003 the same applied to the Ba'thist period. However, we assert that neither the British nor the U.S. occupations were totally new beginnings. Iraqi history in the twentieth century revolves around two major crossroads: 1920 and 1958. Though they constitute major breaks with the past, both contain some elements of continuity. The first date brought about the British Mandate and with it the creation of the state, the definition of borders, the establishment of a monarchy, and state institutions that perpetuated the Sunni dominance inherited from the Ottoman era. The second period was a time of decisive political and social change in Iraqi society. It led to the fall of the monarchy, the proclamation of a republic, the empowerment of lower classes in society, and the rule of the officer corps of the armed forces. As a consequence, ties to the former British colonial power were severed, and between 1958 and 1968, while the state undertook great efforts to improve the lot of the lower classes, it also became more repressive. The latter process reached its apogee during Saddam Husayn's presidency (1979–2003). Under his rule, another process that had begun in 1970 reached its peak: military officers were pushed out of political power back into their professional domain, and their place was taken by civilian party operatives (Baram 1989). This process, among other factors, might have contributed to the fact that after the fall of the Ba'th regime, a democratically elected

government easily managed to keep the professional military officers away from politics. April 2003 represents the third momentous watershed in the history of Iraq. It meant the end of Sunni dominance, and also the decentralization and consequent further weakening of the central state. These developments represent a major break with Iraq's past, but, at the same time, it should not be ignored that elements of this agenda, like civilian rule, a democratic trend, and opposition to a centralist state, had existed in Iraq right from the beginning.

The overarching consensus among all the contributors to this volume is that Iraq's history and its present are interconnected and shaped by a number of factors, some enforced from the outside and some grown out of particular and historically changing configurations within Iraqi society. The interaction of these various factors and their effects can be understood only by carefully looking at the *longue durée* of modern Iraqi history, by recognizing the ruptures while not ignoring continuities.

Part I of this volume dwells on the question of Iraqi nationalism in relation to competing political currents, first and foremost Kurdish nationalism. In a comprehensive discussion that opens the volume and takes up many of the issues discussed further on, Phebe Marr captures the oscillations and metamorphoses through which the political identity of the Iraqi people has gone between the late Ottoman era and today. The article includes an investigation of the effects that 35 years of Ba'thist and dictatorial rule had on the sense of "Iraqiness," and an outlook on post-Saddam developments. Marr argues that even in the unstable environment of present-day Iraq, where intercommunal hostilities are still paramount and conflicting interests are poisoning the political atmosphere, there are forces working toward the recreation of a sense of all-Iraqi nationalism.

While Marr analyzes the gradual crystallization, however fragile, of Iraqiness, Shirko Kirmanj conceptualizes Iraqi history since the establishment of the state, mainly as a clash among three competing nationalisms: pan-Arab, Iraqi, and Kurdish. He contends that Kurdish nationalists all through those years maintained a dialogue with propagators of the other currents. Kirmanj marks the first Ba'thist interregnum of 1963 as the turning point in the process of constructing Iraqi identity, leading directly to the violent repression of the Kurds (and the Shi'a) under the Ba'th. He makes first use of recently published sources in Kurdish. In sum, the article portrays the interaction between Kurdish and Arab nationalists in Iraq from a Kurdish perspective. Further elaborating on Kurdish-Arab relations in Iraq, Ofra Bengio offers an in-depth portrayal of the state and the nation-building efforts that are underway in the Kurdish region of Iraq. Unlike Kirmanj, Bengio stresses the significance of the last phase of Ba'th rule in Iraq,

particularly the years since the creation of a "safe haven" in northern Iraq by coalition forces in 1991. Bengio argues that a distinct national polity with political institutions and vibrant civil society structures is emerging in the Kurdish north of Iraq, and she discusses future options to further enhance Kurdish autonomy in Iraq. In his investigation of Iraqi Kurdish separatism, Michael Eppel focuses on the challenges that the ruling political elite in the Iraqi Kurdish region faces in convincing their public that seceding from Iraq is not a viable option. Eppel shows how the historic leadership is being challenged by a new generation of budding politicians who are criticizing the Kurdish government for incompetence, corruption, and nepotism, and are demanding more democracy and transparency in the administration of the Kurdish region. The chapter focuses on contemporary Kurdish politics, highlighting a new generation of Kurdish leaders, and emphasizes the differences between the latter and the old guard.

Moving on to Part II, which discusses aspects of Iraqi history under the monarchy, Orit Bashkin highlights some of the forgotten traditions of democratic thought and politics in Iraq, focusing mainly on the 1920s and 1930s. Specifically, she portrays and evaluates the writings of the social democratic theorist 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim, whose contributions to the vivid public debates of this period have until now received little scholarly attention, both within Iraq and in Western academia. Bashkin argues that current attempts at rebuilding Iraq as a democratic country need to be aware of and revive such traditions, lest they fall into the trap of reconstructing Iraq as the very authoritarian system that the invading forces set out to remove in 2003.

Remarkably, scholars revisiting the period of the British-backed monarchy (1921–1958), against the background of current U.S. efforts at rebuilding Iraq, have almost entirely ignored gender issues. By reading the current political struggle over Iraq's Personal Status Law against the historical backdrop of similar debates during the monarchy period, Noga Efrati sheds first light on the historical context of the present struggle. She deepens our understanding of the positions held by the three main actors involved in today's debates regarding gender equality in Iraq: women activists, Shi'i clerics, and U.S. officials. Efrati argues that current U.S. policies in this context are eerily reminiscent of British tactics during the monarchical era: they betray most of the values that the United States officially set out to defend by invading the country.

Part III focuses on the Ba'thist era and its impact on current developments. In its opening chapter, Achim Rohde engages in a discussion of interpretive paradigms regarding the Ba'thist era, and their significance in understanding current developments. Rohde criticizes the monolithic image projected by Kanan Makiya in his seminal study *Republic of Fear*. His chapter

questions the usefulness of the totalitarianism paradigm for understanding the history of Ba'thist Iraq, based on a comparative reading of methods and questions guiding the historiography of other regimes commonly perceived as totalitarian dictatorships, particularly Nazi Germany. He argues that neither "structuralist" nor "intentionalist" views offer a sufficiently complex analysis of the kind of polities under scrutiny here. Researchers of Iraq should be aware of the potential and the limitations of various conceptual paradigms, and use them accordingly.

Addressing the rise of communalism in Iraqi politics, Amatzia Baram's chapter discusses the psychological, social, and historical sources of the main power struggle within the Shi'i community of clerics in Iraq, beginning in the early 1990s and continuing well into the post-Ba'th era. This has been the struggle between the Sadrist Movement on the one hand, and Grand Ayat Allah Sistani and his supporters on the other. The article analyzes the political goals, arguments, and style of Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr and his son Muqtada. While shrouded in some mystery, the rivalry between Muqtada's father and the leading *mujtahid*s of Najaf, as well as Muqtada al-Sadr's ongoing struggle with the children of the late *marja' taqlid* Muhsin al-Hakim, has its roots in Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr's inconsistent political conduct and the successful divide and rule policies of the Ba'th regime in the 1990s. Baram's conclusion is that, like father like son, the Sadrs have been striving—so far unsuccessfully—to lock away the grand ayatollahs into the fenced corral of the *Hawzah,* the religious University of Najaf. The goal has been to limit the senior ayatollahs to a professorial capacity, while leadership of the community would revert to the Sadrs.

Further elaborating on the rise of communalism in Iraq, Ronen Zeidel's chapter examines the emergence of a new, consciously and overtly sectarian-Sunni parliament-based leadership in post-2003 Iraq from a wider historical perspective. Zeidel focuses on the 1990s as the formative period for various trends of Sunni politics in Iraq after 2003. Yet, he stresses that only after the U.S.-led invasion did Sunni politics become colored with an explicit, bold sectarian dye. Zeidel traces the origins of the most senior figures among the present Sunni leadership, and their activities in previous decades. He concludes that the invasion of 2003 was the instigator of a process of constructing a Sunni sectarian identity, based on a common cause and a feeling of victimization.

Turning to military history, Pesah Malovany's study adds a great deal to our understanding of the performance of the Iraqi military in the U.S.-Iraq confrontations. Malovany is basing his analysis almost exclusively on Iraqi sources. His main focus is on the Iraqi response to the U.S. strategy, and its effectiveness. Surprisingly, except those passages that eulogize the role of

Saddam Husayn, the Iraqi sources proved to be reasonably accurate; they realistically describe setbacks as well as successes. Malovany is emphasizing the fact that, their inferiority and defeat in the overall war of 1991 notwithstanding, the Iraqi armed forces showed professionalism and courage in a number of important battles. However, his conclusion is that an open and honest discussion of the conduct of the Gulf War, and the suppression of the Shi'i Intifada that followed, was impossible in Saddam's Iraq. As a result, the Iraqi armed forces were condemned to repeat the strategic mistakes of 1991 in 2003, with devastating consequences.

In his study, Joseph Sassoon addresses one of the crucial aspects that will determine whether the rebuilding of Iraq under U.S. tutelage will eventually stand a chance of succeeding at all, by providing a broad picture of all the major sectors of the Iraqi economy over the decades of Ba'thist rule and exploring options for its future development. He offers a skeptical outlook on the chances for an economic recovery of Iraq, pointing to the dramatic brain drain and the erosion of the middle class, endemic corruption on all levels of governance as well as to the country's looming fragmentation as the most decisive factors in this context.

Part IV of this volume adresses the developments in Iraq since 2003, particularly focusing on the role of the United States. Michael Eisenstadt offers an account of recent developments in the Anbar, Salah al-Din, Diyala, and Ta'mim provinces. His article offers a fresh look at the military challenges and dilemmas faced by the United States in Iraq between 2003 and 2007. His analysis dwells on the different approaches to counterinsurgency in the U.S. military, the reasons behind them, and how the chosen course led from near-failure to qualified success.

In a notable departure from common approaches that analyze the U.S. failure in Iraq by focusing on strategic decisions like the appointment of a provisional government, the dissolution of the armed forces, and the sweeping de-Ba'thification, Heather Coyne provides a "worm's-eye view" of events, based on her service as a civil officer of the U.S. Army, and later as a field worker for the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) in Baghdad. She argues that a catastrophic lack of capacity on the ground was the decisive factor that caused the situation to deteriorate so dramatically, even more so than miscalculations on the strategic level.

Finally, Judith Yaphe provides a comprehensive assessment of U.S. policies in Iraq since 2003, based on a comparison with the British experience in the early twentieth century. Focusing on the revolt of 1920 and the anti-U.S. insurgency in post-Saddam Iraq, she compares both revolts and occupations and draws a number of conclusions regarding the likely future of Iraq. Yaphe examines British and U.S. exit strategies, the factors that shape them, and

the possible outcomes for Iraq and the United States in case Washington repeats the British model.

In sum, the volume assembles a broad range of meticulously researched case studies. We hope it will enable scholars, students, and an interested general public to reappraise and develop a more thorough understanding of the forces that shaped the history of modern Iraq and its present. Envisioning Iraq's future, these forces, as well as their interplay, should be taken into consideration.

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PART I

Iraq between a Nation-state and Ethnosectarian Divides: A Reappraisal

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CHAPTER 1

One Iraq or Many: What Has Happened to Iraqi Identity?

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Since 2003, Iraq has undergone a series of upheavals, including occupation, insurgency, terrorism, and some of the worst sectarian strife in its history. Ethnic tensions between Kurds and Arabs may also be stretched to a point of no return, leaving the Iraqi state and any sense of Iraqi identity, which must undergird it, severely weakened. While it is too early to tell which way Iraqi identity is going, it is time to reexamine the past. How did Iraq get to this point? Has the sense of Iraqi identity been a myth all along, as some claim? Are ethnic, tribal, and sectarian differences "primordial," papered over and disguised by the British creation of a state from three Ottoman provinces in 1920? How much of the current identity crisis is a result of more recent circumstances, including Saddam Husayn's repressive regime and the disruptive U.S. occupation? If these identities are not primordial, have they been better managed in the past, and if so, how? Most important for the future, are the Iraqi state and Iraqi identity gone?

While there are no clear answers to these questions yet, they need to be asked and examined. How we deal with Iraq in the future should be governed by a better understanding of the past. This chapter is an attempt not to give answers, but to provide a framework and some guidelines for a discussion on what we might learn from Iraq's history about the multiple sources of Iraqi identity, and the forces that have shaped them over time.

The end of the Ottoman Empire is a good starting point to examine the major components of identity in traditional Iraqi society. Three components of identity stand out as most important.

Tribe and Kin

First came ties of kinship—those of tribe, clan, and extended family—that varied in strength and significance between rural and urban areas. Numerous descriptions and analyses bear this out.[1] Marriages were frequently arranged between extended families, with preference given to a girl's first cousin. Land ownership was kept in family hands, and urban businesses were usually family owned and organized. Extended families provided the main social service network, offering care and needed assistance from birth to old age. In rural areas, governance was largely in the hands of tribal leaders; in urban areas, in those of local notables—mainly families of some wealth and religious distinction.[2] Reliance on kinship structures and the personal bonds of trust that they engendered gave rise to a dominant political culture that may be characterized as "patrimonial," that is, the organization of power and social relations was based on "networks of patrons and clients," especially those of kinship.[3]

Tribes and the reliance on bonds of kinship that they emphasize also generated a "code of honor" with some strongly held social values and ideas: on the role and status of women; on notions of justice and retaliation; and on methods of conflict resolution and mediation, which also came to permeate the social and political culture.[4] These values and the practices associated with them have waxed and waned over time, depending on the strength of central government institutions, but they continue to exist today, especially in the countryside. An excellent study by Amatzia Baram has shown how tribal institutions and values were used and strengthened by Saddam Husayn.[5] Kinship remains the fundamental basis of identity for most Iraqis today, cutting across other forms of identity. While there have been many political consequences of this, one is worth noting here. Strong kinship bonds, rather than an emphasis on individualism (as in the West), make it more difficult for Iraqis to bond on the basis of common interests and to readily shift identities to another group. Political parties, civic societies, and organizations (labor unions, professional associations, interest groups), which operate on the basis of common interests, have come into being but have been hard to root.

Religious Communities

Second in terms of identity came ties to a religious community. The identification of almost all Iraqis—some 95 percent—as Muslims is clear,

and the Ottoman government was, itself, based on this principle. Hence, the well-recognized "millet" system in which non-Muslim communities, essentially Christians and Jews, were given control of their own religious observances, education, and Personal Status Law.[6] Most Christian and Jewish communities were well integrated in Ottoman society in what is today Iraq.

Among the Muslim majority population, however, the relevant question is how strong were the differences of identity between Sunnis and Shi'a? Although contemporary evidence is scarce, most later historians think they were considerable.[7] Differences between the two sects—more political than theological—had been reinforced by some three centuries of intermittent warfare (roughly from 1514 to 1823), between the Sunni Ottoman Empire and several Shi'a Persian empires, over boundaries and control of population and territory.[8] In time, the seeds of mutual distrust were sown, with Ottomans fearful that the Shi'a population might turn into a "fifth column" and change allegiance, while Shi'a often repudiated the legitimacy of the Sunni Ottoman government, attempting to avoid military and government service and preferring their own religious leadership. Differences were also sharpened by the rise of Sunni "Wahhabism" and Wahhabi attacks on Iraqi territory and tribes, especially the sack of Karbala in 1802, and later the attack on Najaf.[9] These attacks, the tribal instability that accompanied them, and the intrusion of new and radical Sunni ideas into the region reinforced, rather than mitigated, sectarianism.[10]

In the Iraqi provinces, Sunnis dominated the administration, the military, and the patronage system, although their control was often haphazard and weak in many areas.[11] Sunni *waqfs* (religious endowments) were part of the established political order and were regulated and supported by the state. Local notables in most regions, especially the larger cities, including Baghdad, Mosul, Basra, and Kirkuk, were Sunni. But Shi'a also had strong institutions and a counteridentity. Nakash, a leading historian of the Iraq Shi'a in this period, describes a degree of Shi'a independence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, under their own religious leadership, that could almost be defined as a nascent state.[12] Under a religious system that obliges the Shi'a to follow a recognized clerical authority (*marja'*) in religious practice, the Shi'a generally had much stronger religio-political leadership (the *marja'iyya*) than did the Sunnis.[13] The Shi'a, under the *Hawza* (religious seminaries), had a well-articulated education system capable of producing religious leaders. The *khums* (a "fifth" of net income), given as a charitable donation to religious leaders and dispensed through powerful, informal foundations, provided a voluntary financial underpinning for the Shi'a establishment that was independent of the state.[14] The shrine cities of

Najaf and Karbala, located on Iraqi soil, provided a focal point for pilgrims and a symbol of Shi'a identity. While these attitudes weakened in Baghdad, where there was more intermixture between the sects, they were strong in the rural areas, where Shi'a festivals and ceremonies reinforced them.[15]

As the Sunni establishment under the Ottomans began to modernize in the nineteenth century, to introduce more secular institutions—especially schools and courts—and to appoint men with a more modern education to positions in the military and the bureaucracy, the absence of Shi'a among them, both by Ottoman design and by Shi'a choice, added another layer to the sense of difference and sowed feelings of discrimination among the Shi'a.

Linguistic Communities

A third source of identity—language and the cultural ethnicity usually associated with it—only began to be thought of as a source of "national identity" among some Kurdish and Arab intellectuals late in the nineteenth century, as Western ideas of nationalism began to penetrate the young, urban educated groups who had come in contact with modern, Western ideas.[16]

A sense of Arab identity inspired a group of Arab—mainly Iraqi—officers in the Ottoman army to spearhead a clandestine movement against the Young Turks (*al-'Ahd*), calling for the use of the Arab language in government in the Arab areas, the appointment of Arabs to high posts, and greater autonomy for Arab provinces. Likewise, Kurdish identity, though weak, was surfacing. Kurdish principalities had emerged in earlier periods, but these were not based on Kurdish nationalism so much as more traditional sources of authority (religious, tribal, and territorial),[17] but some of these dynastic families awakened Kurdish identity. Like their Arab counterparts, young, educated Kurds joined shadowy societies, such as *Hiva-ya Kurd* (Kurdish Hope), just before World War I.[18]

Regional and State-Centered Identities

But these were not the only political identities available to Iraqis. What of other identities—those tied to locality, territory, or the state? A far more elusive identity, but still one that was often demonstrated, was regional.[19] Thus, Basra had already developed a local identity by the time British troops conquered the south in 1914–1915. The city and its close hinterland faced the Gulf and had multiple trading networks with the Arabian gulf ports, India, and Iran. This mix of cultural and economic influences, together with the existence of local leadership, may explain the emergence in the 1920s of a

movement that called for a southern autonomy.[20] Baghdad, too, had some local attributes: culturally and economically it was equally influenced by its proximity to the Persian border and its imperial ties to Istanbul. Mosul and its hinterland (*al-jazira),* on the other hand, was intimately connected with what is today northeastern Syria through trade relations and tribal affinities, and it was more closely attached to Aleppo and Istanbul than Baghdad.[21] Nevertheless, these local identities, based on geography and natural terrain, were far more nebulous and less politically effective than tribal and, to a lesser extent, sectarian ones.

Even more elusive is whether there was a sense of Iraqi identity based on territory, despite the fact that the geographical term "Iraq" existed since the early medieval era and was increasingly used by travelers and administrators in the nineteenth century. Since 2003, there has been some controversy among scholars and analysts over this issue.[22] Ali al-Wardi, Iraq's leading sociologist, makes the point that the history of the plain of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, at least since the Mongol conquest in the thirteenth century, had been one of invasion, disruption, and discontinuity—an environment in which a cohesive identity, especially one based on territory, did not easily strike root. Ottoman rule provided a modicum of stability but was too weak to affect much more than elements of urban areas. With discontinuity of leadership and incursion of tribal groups right up to the twentieth century, Iraq's population has been more influenced by tribalism than by roots in the soil.[23] Others claim that Ottoman administration in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially under the Mamluks (1747–1831) and late nineteenth century reformers, provided some organizational cohesion to territories between the Tigris and Euphrates, centered on Baghdad, and this may have imparted a sense of Iraqi territoriality to some living within this (mainly Arab) area.[24]

It is difficult to substantiate this, but what can be said is that identification with—or loyalty to—the state existed but was limited. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the state was the Ottoman Empire and its three provinces in Iraq. Despite Islamic theory to the contrary, there had long been some separation of religious and state institutions under the Ottomans. The latter consisted mainly of the bureaucracy, the military, and some of the court system. These institutions, though thinly staffed, provided services—albeit poorly—in the form of security, infrastructure (roads, telegraph, some irrigation), a legal system, and some employment. The Ottomans relied on religion (Sunni Islam) to provide an aura of legitimacy. But it is also clear that these state institutions did not penetrate very far into Iraqi territory or society. At the end of the Ottoman era, loyalty to and identification with the state existed among some of the urban, educated classes (those trained for

the bureaucracy, the military, and the legal establishment) and local notables (possessors of land and wealth who depended on the state for security and patronage). For the most part, this was a small, thin, mainly Sunni strata, and identification with the state was based more on patronage than positive fealty.

What of the Arab Shi'a who lived in the center and the south and who were not part of this patronage system, but had their own? Evidence suggests that, while they may not have felt positive loyalty to the Ottoman state, they largely accepted it, although some indeterminate number listed themselves as Persian to avoid conscription, which was introduced in 1858. However, as Nakash has show, Shi'i identity was strongly mixed with—and challenged by—tribal ties, and these were strongly Arab. Nonetheless, despite these subidentities, the Ottoman state, after almost four centuries of rule, had provided some sense of focus and identity for elites, which would become incorporated into the newly emerging Iraqi state under the British. Indeed, identification with the state and its institutions would be the common thread on which the British would build the new state.

The Mandate and Iraqi Identity

The Mandate period and its immediate aftermath was a formative period in shaping an Iraqi identity and the political direction of the new state. It may also have been a missed opportunity to create a new identity grounded on a multiethnic, multisectarian basis. The tensions and the different forces involved in shaping this identity were evident from the beginning. Both the British and the Iraqi leaders who emerged in this period undertook several critical steps in this process. First, the new leaders, Iraqi and British, largely Arabized the state, shifting the language of state and education from Turkish to Arabic. While this made sense, since some 80 percent of Iraqis were Arab speakers, it tended to open the door to a broader Arab identity, rather than one focused simply on the new state. Indeed, many of Iraq's leaders, mainly Sunni Arabs, were not yet ready to accept to reality of an Iraqi state and yearned to be part of a larger Arab polity. They accused those who focused on Iraq and its plural identity of *shu'ubiyya* (anti-Arab particularism), and, in the case of the Shi'a, of leaning toward Persia—both echoes of medieval controversies.[25] Hence, the tension between creating a more self-contained Iraqi state and making Iraq an integral part of a larger Arab world was born with the state itself and the imposition of a non-Iraqi but Arab king. This was particularly problematic for the non-Arab Kurds, who could have better accommodated to a more limited Iraqi identity. The role of Sati al-Husri—Iraq's chief educator between 1921 and 1927—in shaping this identity, and

the controversy surrounding him, is indicative both of the effort and the sensitivity of the issue.[26]

Nonetheless, the new Iraqi state gradually took shape with its capital in Baghdad, a center of new authority and power, weak and fully dependent on the British military at first, but gradually extending its rule throughout regions and provinces and over fractious local groups with subnational and often competing visions of identity. The new Iraqi army concentrated on becoming a focus of national loyalty. As several authors have shown, these "facts on the ground" inevitably created some momentum toward acceptance of, and identification with, an Iraqi state and its role as a dispenser of patronage and services, a role that had traditionally helped shape loyalty and legitimacy under the Ottomans, though the new state's legitimacy was constantly challenged.[27]

Second, the British introduced a new political paradigm for governance—a Western-style parliamentary system with a monarchy (modeled on themselves), the concept of elections (indirect at first), the formation of political parties, and a variety of liberal concepts such as the rule of law, freedom of religion and expression, and protection of minorities. That these systems functioned poorly and only partially is clear. Strong British influence behind the scenes—often exercised through the monarch and leading politicians—prevented real freedom of action by Iraqis, as did government attempts to repress extremist views and actions. Nonetheless, the system did bring Iraq's various social and religious groups into the new system and gave them the beginnings of a stake in society. Despite their flaws, over the next 38 years of British rule and influence, these institutions came to function better and were generally superior to those which have followed. Iraq's political class could have put more focus, over time, on these new institutions to embed them in the public consciousness and make them part of Iraq's new identity. This, however, was not done—at least not adequately. As a result, the institutions and the liberal ideals underlying them did not put down deep roots and could not take precedence over the previous, longer-standing identities.[28]

Third, the new rulers built up the previous institutions of state—the military and the bureaucracy, although they reshaped them.[29] It was through this process that many of the Sunni elites, previously trained by the Ottomans, entrenched themselves in the state system, especially the army, from which they were not entirely dislodged until 2003. However, the military, while dominated by these Arab Sunnis, was never exclusively Sunni and gradually brought in a number of Kurdish and Shi'a officers—though they remained a small minority under the monarchy.[30]

Fourth, the new state was built on a high degree of separation between religion and politics, encouraging a relatively strong tradition of secularism

that outlasted the monarchy. The removal of the Shi'a religious leaders in the 1920s curbed Shi'a activism and encouraged the quietist Shi'a tradition in Najaf. Among urban elites, especially in the military and the intelligentsia, considerable secularism did take root. Fifth, the government was, of necessity, pro-Western in its foreign policy, and tied in numerous ways to the British, a situation that created continuous opposition to the colonial tie from elements of the population who favored complete independence. Even after Iraq's admission to the League of Nations in 1932, British advisers remained in major Iraqi ministries, and the British ambassador took precedence over other ambassadors

Lastly, economics also played a role in state formation and identity. There was little economic development in Iraq until quite late—the 1950s, when oil production began to provide some significant income to the economy. But maldistribution of its benefits began to be a divisive issue. Distribution of landholdings to the shaykhly class and the growth of urban incomes, especially during the Second World War, created economic and social inequality, which grew with oil wealth. As Batatu and others have shown, a landholding class and a small urban elite, which controlled both wealth and power, left the bulk of the population without the "stake in society" that supports identification with the state and its government.[31]

In sum, what can be said about the identity issue as a result of this early British state-building effort and the elite they empowered? A new, functioning, modern state came into being, although some of its institutions, such as the military, the bureaucracy, and the law courts, had strong continuity with the Ottoman period, especially through the elites who ran them. Gradually, an attachment, not so much to "Iraq" as to the new state apparatus, grew, especially on the part of those who had a stake in it and benefited from their services. These included: secular Arab Sunnis, who manned some key institutions, and, gradually, Kurds and Arab Shi'a, educated under the British, who were integrated; tribal leaders, especially in the Shi'a south, who became landowners and on whom the regime relied for support in parliament; a new merchant class—both Shi'a and Sunni—who benefited from stability and the expanding global economy; and the small but growing educated middle class—even when it was in opposition to the British and its policies—who hoped and expected to benefit by control of the state in the future. These groups looked to the state for jobs, positions, and patronage, and came to accept its existence even without a specific ideology to support it. This loyalty to the new state came to be synonymous with "Iraqi" identity.

But many in the new elite did not focus entirely on Iraq; rather they put their emphasis on an Arab identity and aimed to integrate Iraq in the broader Arab world. The Arab secular nationalist vision created problems

in two areas. The first was among Kurds, who could not identify as Arabs. Secondly, it created an allergic reaction among religiously oriented Shi'a. They disliked its secularism, and feared that in a huge amalgamated Arab state, their community would become numerically insignificant and thus loose all chances of reaching equality, let alone supremacy. But both of these counterforces remained weak and unorganized compared with the growing strength of the state and identification with it—until 1958.

The Last Decade of the Monarchy

The last period of the monarchy (1946–1958) represents the apogee of the state created by the British. Despite its faults, it was one of the best periods in Iraqi history, with respect to representation of ethnic and sectarian groups in government. While the imbalance was still present, the situation was gradually improving. Shi'a were still underrepresented but were moving up in numbers, and Kurds were fairly well integrated.[32] The Kurds fielded at least one Prime Minister (Ahmad Mukhtar Baban [1958]) and a very influential Minister of Interior (Sa'id Qazzaz [1953–1957]), while several prime ministers were Shi'a.[33] The Kurds were quiescent in part because of better integration into the political process, but also because their nationalist leader, Mustapha Barzani, was living in exile in the USSR. There were riots and disturbances in the 1950s, but they were stirred mainly by ideological and socioeconomic causes. The lower middle class and workers, particularly those in the port city of Basra and working for the oil company in Kirkuk, were organized and influenced by the ideas of the left (including a clandestine Communist Party). Their discontent stemmed mainly from socioeconomic reasons, as did those of the peasantry. The new, educated middle class was developing its own sense of identity, but was politically weak and divided ideologically. Nationalists rioted against the Anglo-Iraq Treaty, and leftists and reformers were anxious to change social and economic conditions. Ethnic and sectarian identities have rarely played less of a role. Although the Crown Prince, Abd al-Ilah, tried to institute some pan-Arab schemes, by the mid-1950s, Nuri al-Sa'id turned away from Arab politics and, in practice, followed an Iraqi First policy, orienting Iraq toward the West and the non-Arab world. The Baghdad Pact was, in one sense, an affirmation of that policy. This may have been a high point of "Iraqi identity," although it was not made explicit as such.

Nonetheless, the attempt failed. In 1958, the monarchy was overthrown in a bloody coup. In retrospect, there may be some lessons on identity for the present here, and it behooves us to ask why. Ethnic and sectarian differences appear to have played little role. Opposition to the regime was spearheaded

by the new, mainly secular, educated middle class, primarily on ideological grounds. The main strand of opposition was based on nationalism and an anti-Western, anti-imperialist ideology opposed to foreign rule. In the Arab world, this movement was led by Nasser. Nasserism simply overwhelmed the pro-Western, Iraqi-oriented stand of Nuri and his cohorts in Iraq. Another strand was grounded on socioeconomic discontent, based on maldistribution of wealth and privilege and too little emphasis on economic development. This strand was led by the clandestine Communist Party and the liberal-left National Democratic Party. More emphasis on better distribution of resources and greater political empowerment of the middle class might have helped mitigate this opposition. But the regime, buttressed by tribal landowners and the urban wealthy, had little time or inclination to undertake this kind of transformation. Meanwhile, opposition grievances were increasingly expressed in anti-Western, even anti-Israeli, terms, rather than in socioeconomic protest. The earlier defeat of the Arab armies at the hands of the fledgling Jewish state in 1949, and then the formation of the Baghdad Pact of 1955, reinforced this anticolonialist thinking in Iraqi public opinion. The rise of Nasserism as a pan-Arab, anticolonialist movement, with strong elements of social reform, pulled both strands of the opposition together, galvanized hostility to the monarchy, and dealt a death blow to the regime. But the Arab nationalist strand in Nasserism reinforced an Arab, rather than a more limited Iraqi, identity. These contradictions carried over into the new regime.

The Era of Military Rule: 1958–1968

The Qasim revolt of 1958 replaced the leadership of the "old regime" entirely and in a violent manner.[34] It also resulted in the destruction of some civilian institutions, beginning with the monarchy and parliament, and gradually extending to political parties and elections. Top levels of the army and the bureaucracy were replaced, but the institutions themselves were left intact. In a significant step toward modernization and national unity, the new regime eliminated the tribal disputes code and began a major land reform, which weakened tribal leaders and tribalism as a whole. An effort was made to redistribute wealth and privilege, with measures such as rent control and a legal code that gave more rights to women. There was also some attempt to restore political parties and elections, but the Mosul rebellion of 1959 degenerated into a violent conflict between Kurds and their Arab tribal neighbors and between classes as well, and revealed what could occur in the aftermath of a radical replacement of a regime and its leadership. The rebellion was quickly put down by the army. From then on, the military governed

in Baghdad, essentially through the bureaucracy, gradually stifling the press and political parties and corrupting the court system.

The overthrow of the old regime opened an era of intense struggle over identity within the ruling group, which resulted in continual instability – four regime changes within a decade.[35] In the first weeks after the overthrow of the monarchy, there was a sharp conflict between Qasim and Abd al-Salam Arif, the two leaders of the successful revolt, over the political orientation of the state. Arif favored a close union with Nasser's Egypt; Qasim a policy of Iraq First. Arif and the pan-Arabists lost—temporarily. Qasim also allowed the return of Mustapha Barzani, and recognized Kurdish rights and Kurdish nationality for the first time. But Qasim also focused on keeping Iraq's unity, which led to a struggle for power with Barzani, who demanded more autonomy than Qasim was willing to concede. This gradually morphed into a Kurdish struggle against the central government. The Kurdish struggle received the most attention in this period, but the left-leaning orientation of the regime gave rise to another challenge—an Islamic political movement among the Shi'a, the Islamic Da'wa. Although shadowy and underground in this early period, the Da'wa Party represented the beginnings of yet another front in the struggle for identity. Following their mentor, a young Shi'i cleric, Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, they embarked on a revitalized Islamist ideology that, in time, developed a sharp Shi'i cutting edge. But this antisecular struggle would erupt in full force only under the Ba'th regime.

The dominant struggle under Qasim was between Arab nationalists and the leftists; the latter wanted to concentrate on Iraq and its social reform. The leftists lost. In February 1963, they were overthrown by the Ba'thists, and then, in a "palace coup" in November, by Arif, who brought Arab nationalists back for the rest of the decade and beyond.

Between 1963 and 1967, the Iraqi government was deeply involved in Arab politics, much of which involved political identity: the nature of the Iraqi state, its role in the region, and even its continued existence. As Iraq was increasingly drawn into Arab affairs, Kurdish nationalism grew, as did the Kurdish war with the central government, which weakened the state, exhausted its resources, and set back the search for a more embracing Iraqi identity.[36]

In April 1963, the Ba'th regime signed a tripartite unification agreement with Ba'thist Syria and Nasser's Egypt, but instead of unification, the two Ba'th regimes on the one hand, and Egypt on the other, descended into a vicious political struggle. After he rid himself of his Ba'th partners, Arif, too, pulled back from "unity" with the Arab world, thus by implication reinforcing the independence of the Iraqi state and an Iraqi identity. But it may have been

too late. A decade of instability and multiple regime changes had been critical in sharpening identity struggles between Kurds and Arabs, Arab nationalists and Iraqi-ists, and even between Sunnis and Shi'a. The continued domination of the military, led by Sunnis—and, in particular, by the staunchly Sunni Arif brothers from Dulaym—resulted in renewed Shi'i resentment over discrimination and accusations of *shu'ubiyya* (particularism).[37] In retrospect, the decade of instability (1958–1968) may have undone much of the consensus on Iraqi identity that had begun to take shape in the last years of the monarchy and the first years of the Qasim regime.

The Ba'th: 1968–2003

The long Ba'th period of 35 years, almost equal to that of the British, was decisive in creating the environment in which the current identity crisis has evolved, and in which the post-2003 Iraqi leaders have been bred. Although elements of the current identity struggle predate the Ba'th, the Ba'th era, particularly in its later period, greatly exacerbated them. The Ba'th period falls into at least two distinct periods; it is the latter period, after 1979, in which the current deep fissures in identity clearly emerge.

The first period of Ba'th rule, essentially from 1968 until 1979, was one in which the Ba'th Party established a one-party state in Iraq, modeled to a large extent on the totalitarian system in the Soviet Union and the Eastern European "popular democracies." It took the Ba'th a decade to stabilize power, but in the process, the party, now under the leadership of Saddam Husayn and Ahmed Hasan al-Bakr, "Ba'thized" the bureaucracy, installed a police state, and, in a remarkably short time, removed the military from control over the levers of power and politics in general.[38]

The Ba'th Party also used the economy to good advantage to facilitate this process. The nationalization of the oil industry in 1972 and the subsequent rise in oil pries in 1973, and again in 1979, produced a flood of wealth for Iraq. While the regime used some of it to strengthen its security apparatus, leaders also focused on modernizing the infrastructure and the economy in general, on spreading health and education, and on rapid upward social mobility for the middle class.[39] This trend, especially the growth of a professional middle class, facilitated the erosion of ethnic, sectarian, and tribal identities. In this early Ba'th period, the role of religion in the state continued to be limited.

Ba'th Ideology

The Ba'th also attempted to deal with the ideological issue. In this early Ba'th period, Saddam fashioned an ideology designed to reconcile the old

conflicts between Iraqi and Arab identities. He understood that keeping the Iraqi state intact and distancing it, at least for a while, from the futile Arab struggles of the 1960s, was fundamental to the Ba'th undertaking in Iraq. Hence, as Amatzia Baram has shown in his seminal work on identity under the Ba'th,[40] Saddam introduced three interrelated concepts. In the first place, he made Iraq, rather than the Arab world, the central focus of identity. Secondly, he stressed future Iraqi leadership of the Arab world. Third, he focused on Iraq's illustrious history, ancient and modern. He thus assured Iraqis—Sunnis, Shi'a, and Kurds—that Iraq, as an entity, within its present borders, would not disappear in any pan-Arab sea. But Saddam recognized that his formula also needed a unifying Iraqi myth. This Saddam supplied through a Mesopotamian national myth, designed to convince all Iraqis—Sunnis, Shi'a, Kurds, and Arabs—that they were all the genetic as well as cultural heirs of ancient Mesopotamia and its glories. For the pan-Arabs, ancient Mesopotamians were depicted as Arabs who could boast an illustrious history, surpassing even those of the Egyptians. For the religious Shi'a, Saddam incorporated their two main historical heroes—Imam Ali and Imam al-Husayn—in the Iraqi national pantheon.[41] Saddam also incorporated Salah al-Din, a Kurd and a hero of Arab civilization, to appeal to the Kurds.

In hindsight, it is clear, however, that the regime's attempts to win Shi'i and Kurdish hearts and minds were only partially successful. The Ba'th had to deal in this period with the development of the two rival identities (Kurdish and Shi'a) inherited from the previous period, and now developed and sharpened by Kurdish national and Shi'i religious leaders.

The Kurdish problem was the most difficult. The struggle with the Kurdish movement went through several stages in this period, including military clashes with the central government in 1969 and 1970, and a full scale war in 1974–1975, supported militarily by Iran, which sharpened Kurdish identity. This stage came to an abrupt end in 1975 with the defeat of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the removal of their forces from Iraq, although Iraq had to make concessions to Iran on the Shatt al-Arab waterway to achieve this goal. In 1974, the Iraqi government recognized an autonomous Kurdish zone in three provinces in the north, legitimating Kurdish identity for the first time, but limiting Kurdish rule on the ground.[42] Baghdad poured considerable economic resources into the region in an effort to damp down the influence of the Kurdish nationalist movement, relying on Kurdish tribal leaders to support the central government, which they did. But the Kurdish national movement continued outside of Iraq under the leadership of the KDP and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), formed in 1975.

In the south, the regime faced a rising crescendo of Shi'a feeling, spurred by the Da'wa movement, in opposition to the regime's control over education and its Ba'thization of state and society. Under the leadership of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, the Da'wa began to challenge the regime in demonstrations in 1974 and 1977. These reached a crescendo in 1979, as the Islamic Revolution in Iran gathered strength. Most of the Da'wa supporters were by then arrested, killed, or had fled, and in April 1980, Saddam made the fateful decision to execute Sadr. This decapitated the emerging Shi'a movement in Iraq and pushed many of its adherents into Iran and other Middle Eastern countries.[43] As Iran's messianic revolution began to spill across its borders, Saddam took a second fateful decision. In September 1980, he started a war with the new Islamic Republic of Iran that was to last eight years, with serious consequences for the Iraqi state and its emerging identity.

The Second Ba'th Period: 1979–2003

The Iranian Revolution ushered in the second Ba'th period (1979–2003). In 1979, Saddam removed Ahmed Hasan al-Bakr and made himself president. Although Iraq went through a number of clearly defined episodes in this second period—a long, eight-year war with Iran (1980–1988), the occupation of Kuwait, and then war with an international coalition (1990–1991), and a long period of decline under sanctions (1991–2003)—Saddam's assumption of power in 1979 started Iraq on a long, downward trend from which it would not recover. These events are too well known to need repeating, but their outcome on the Iraqi state and the issue of identity needs further probing. They solidified the emerging subnational identities, and decisively shaped the exiles who returned in 2003 to govern Iraq.

In fact, the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s appeared to have been a high point of Iraqi identity.[44] The bulk of the Shi'a fought on the Iraqi side; so, too, did large numbers of Kurdish tribal contingents in the north. The war of "David" (Iraq) against "Goliath" (Iran) seemed to spur a genuine Iraqi patriotism, along with enormous sacrifices. At its end, the survival of the state intact (despite no other real gains) was seen as a victory for Iraqi identity, but the victory was to prove hollow. The war began Iraq's decline in all areas—economic, political, and social. Perhaps Iraq could have been rescued in its aftermath under different leadership, but the overwhelming concentration of power in Saddam's hands precluded this outcome. Inept decisions resulted in the invasion of Kuwait, a new war with the international community, and, in 1991, a rebellion against his rule throughout most of the country. That rebellion was a turning point in Iraqi identity, revealing sharp

ethnic and sectarian fissures that had been growing in the previous period; the Kurdish and Shi'i areas largely rebelled, while the central (mainly Sunni dominated) areas did not.[45] How can one explain this reversal of apparent Iraqi cohesion during the Iran-Iraq War? In the Shi'i case, it appears, in retrospect, that their loyalty to a national cause was not as firm as it had seemed. As Arabs, the Shi'a of Iraq were fearful of an Iranian occupation, but they also had to deal with fear of harsh punishments for shirking recruitment and desertion. Moreover, the war itself was not widely considered justified, and its results were particularly devastating in the south, where most of the fighting took place. In Kurdistan, especially along the borders with Iran, the war had been disruptive. Villages along the border with Iran had been razed and Kurds forcibly moved to policed settlements on the plains. However, a turning point seems to have been reached with the Anfal campaign, which not only leveled hundreds (some say thousands) of villages, but included poison gas attacks on civilian populations.[46]

A decade of sanctions followed the war. The 1990s—the era of sanctions—saw the hollowing out of the institutions and the services of the state that had sustained Ba'th rule, as well as the collapse of its ideology.[47] Saddam's reliance on his family and clan, the Albu Nasir, was now ingrained and clear for all to see.[48] Meanwhile, the depletion of party ranks during the Iran-Iraq War, and even more during the Intifada of 1991, meant that Saddam came to rely ever more heavily on tribal contingents to keep security in the provinces.[49] Tribal mores and codes of honor were once again elevated in public consciousness and integrated into the newly emerging Iraqi identity. So, too, was religion. Under the exigencies of continual war, as well as a need to counter the revolutionary Shi'i ideology that flowed from Iran, Saddam opened the door to religiosity, mainly of the Sunni variety. A "Faith Campaign," launched in 1993, was devoted to building mosques and spreading religion, so long as it adhered to government limitations. Sufism, in particular, was cultivated under Izzat al-Duri. Under sanctions, the progressive impoverishment of Iraq, the decline in production, jobs, oil revenue, and income, and above all the shrinkage in education at all levels led to a huge exodus of Iraq's middle class. It was this class, particularly concentrated in Baghdad and Iraq's larger cities during the 1950s–1970s, which had been the mainstay of a secular Iraqi identity. Its more liberal elements, always fragile, had by now been crushed or were living abroad in the West. Meanwhile, two new developments began to seriously challenge both Iraqi identity and its "pan-Arab" component.

The first was the rise of a separate Kurdish entity in the three northern Kurdish provinces in 1991. Fearing a second Anfal following the collapse of the Kurdish revolt of March 1991, over one million Kurds fled to Iran and

Turkey. This forced the hands of France, the United States, and Britain. They declared a safe haven in Kurdistan, and later a No-Fly Zone over areas of the north. Under political and military pressure, Saddam withdrew his administration from the three northern provinces, leaving the Kurds to govern themselves.

The Kurds themselves had numerous divisions—between tribal elements and urban intellectuals; Islamists and secularists; and above all the two main parties, the KDP and the PUK, which now spearheaded the Kurdish nationalist movement. But in the 1990s, it was the Kurdish political parties that displaced other contenders, including tribal contingents and Islamic parties. Hence it was their definition of identity—secular, Western-oriented, relatively open, and above all, based on Kurdish identity and language—which would come to prevail in their territory. After more than a decade of self-rule and development—including a generation of education in Kurdish, rather than Arabic—the strength of this new entity and its identity would constitute one of the major challenges for the post-2003 Iraq and any all-embracing Iraqi identity.[50]

Less obvious but also growing was the Shi'i revival that started with the Da'wa movement, but virtually smashed inside Iraq with the death of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr and his followers' dispersal. The Iran-Iraq War gave the movement a second life. In 1982, under Iranian auspices, the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) was founded. It was meant to be an ingathering of all Iraqi Shi'i movements, but soon became limited to those following its leader, the Iraqi cleric Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, that took its lead from Iranian religious authorities. SCIRI fought in the Iran-Iraq War on the Iranian side (as did the Kurdish nationalist parties) but lost. In 1991, it participated in the rebellion but lost again and had to remain outside Iraq. But the bloody suppression of the intifadha that resulted in tens of thousands of dead left its mark on the Shi'i community. It created the same level of antiregime (possibly even anti-Sunni) hostility that the Anfal campaign had created among the Kurds.

Meanwhile, by the late 1990s, inside Iraq a second Shi'i front emerged under Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr, a conservative cleric. His earlier quietist (nonpolitical) modus operandi had impressed Saddam, and he encouraged Sadr's emergence as Chief Marja' (religious reference) for the Shi'a, hoping to foster an Iraqi—and Arab—identity.[51]

Instead, Sadr became a charismatic cleric, stirring anti-Saddam and pro-Shi'a sentiment among the Shi'a population, and providing yet another challenge to the state. He was assassinated on February 1999, along with his two eldest sons. This stirred serious Shi'i unrest, but the regime nipped it in the bud. The removal of Sadr left the Shi'i opposition to the regime inside

Iraq without an active leader. The most senior cleric, Grand Ayatallah Ali al-Sistani, a quietist, was still in place in Najaf, but played little role in this period. The assassination left the Shi'i community sullen, alienated, and deeply opposed to the regime, if not necessarily to the state.

These movements meant that by the late 1990s, Iraq's government was tied essentially to Saddam and those from whom he could compel support—largely, the Arab Sunni community that now dominated the Ba'th Party, and the tribal and provincial groups from the Anbar and Salah al-Din provinces, which manned his security forces.[52] Even among these, commitment was weak, as continual coup attempts indicated. Iraq's intense isolation in this period, its alienation from Europe, the United States, and virtually all of its neighbors, intensified the sense of paranoia, anti-colonailism, and xenophobia felt by the regime and those in charge of it. It is this kind of orientation that the remnants of the Arab Sunni community inherited.

By this time, Iraq's identity had badly eroded. In the Kurdish north, new institutions and a new identity were taking shape. The content of this new identity was clearly pro-Western, mainly secular, and more liberal, although not yet democratic. The Arab community was left with a narrow political base whose leaders espoused an intense nationalism—partly Iraqi, partly Arab—underpinned by a revival of the old tribal paradigm and a new mix of fundamentalist Sunni Islam. The Shi'a, not yet united, had spawned several movements, one outside mainly in Iran, the other inside Iraq, both under religious leadership. Meanwhile, Saddam's Faith Campaign had two unintended consequences. In some Sunni circles (notably among clerics), it gave Islamic rhetoric legitimacy and turned the mosques into fully legitimate gathering places. As such, they started to compete with the party centers. Many young people, who otherwise would have been active in the party's youth organizations, began frequenting mosques instead. In the late 1990s, the Sunni Arab population demonstrated more religiosity than it had previously in the twentieth century. As for the Shi'a, they felt less at ease in the Ba'th Party, and fewer young people joined the party to secure a professional career. Instead, religion became an attractive alternative. Thus, mosques and *Husayniyyat* (Shi'a religious and social centers) became *foci* of communal identity, even for people who had not been practicing Muslims.

Liberal Iraqis, the strongest adherents of an Iraqi identity, were scattered in opposition movements, mainly located in the West. They formed the backbone of an opposition movement that captured the attention of the Western media and political leaders, but they had few roots on the ground. Thus, by the end of Saddam's long rule, the Iraqi state and the ideology on which it was founded were already badly eroded; the occupation merely pushed it over the edge.

Iraq Since 2003

The final outcome of the coalition occupation will not be known for years, but several of the immediate results seem clear. First, the occupation (unlike the Qasim regime) did not limit itself to the removal of the regime and its top personnel, but went on to disband and eliminate the Iraqi military, the Ba'th Party, and, with them, much of the state bureaucratic structure. The result was an administrative and security collapse, leaving a huge political and security vacuum, which could not be replaced by U.S. and British forces.[53] Second, a predictable "nationalist" insurgency was mounted against occupation, mainly by the ousted Ba'thists and their supporters, now joined by Salafist religious elements. In these circumstances, the economy could not revive; indeed, it eroded even further. And as the insurgency grew and insecurity increased, the exodus of what was left of the middle class ensued.

In an attempt to fill the political vacuum and to put Iraqis in power, elections were held in 2005.[54] In three elections that year, voters cast their ballots almost wholly on the basis, not of political platforms, but communal identity. (The last of these elections, in December, was for the permanent parliament.) Political alliances that formed on the basis of appealing to Kurdish, Shi'a, and Sunni identities won. Secularists, liberals, leftists, and others, who had formed the backbone of an Iraqi identity, lost—winning less than 10 percent of the vote. Despite their importance in the countryside, tribes lost too, due to a countrywide, proportional, representational electoral system that eliminated the chances for local leaders to emerge. Sunnis, who boycotted the first of these elections but not the others, won only about 20 percent of the seats in parliament. The government that emerged from this election was a coalition of Shi'a (mainly religious) parties allied with the two main Kurdish parties. The most surprising new movement among the Shi'a was that of the young, firebrand cleric, Muqtada al-Sadr, whose Sadrist Movement won seats by appealing to the poorer, disaffected members of the Shi'a community, and to antioccupation sentiment. This new government, formed only in May 2006, represented a major shift in the ethnic and sectarian balance of the governing elite in Iraq, putting Shi'a and Kurds in office, and essentially reducing Sunnis to an ineffectual minority.

Nonetheless, while all of the elected blocs appeared to have garnered votes on the basis of sectarian or ethnic identity, it is also clear that they were divided among themselves into various political parties and factions, with differing visions and tendencies. The strongest political parties had identifiable leaders, anxious to gain and keep power; some had armed militias. This was particularly true of the Kurdish and Shi'a parties, led respectively by the KDP and the PUK, and the Supreme Council, the Da'wa,

and the Sadrists.[55] The Sunnis were left largely leaderless and splintered among ex-Ba'thists, tribal leaders, and Salafists. At the national level, their most prominent party was the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP), a reincarnation of the older Muslim Brotherhood, apparently without much grassroots support.

Meanwhile, the growing insurgency and uncertainty, created by the long delay between the December election and the formation of a government, allowed sectarian animosity to grow, especially in Baghdad, where violence between Sunnis and Shi'a reached a crescendo after the bombing of the Samarra mosque in 2006. Unprecedented acts of sadistic violence and widespread demographic dislocation in Baghdad and its environs followed, along with a new exodus of refugees to neighboring countries. Although this violence subsided in 2008 after a "surge" of U.S. troops and a marked shift among many elements of the Sunni population, especially tribal groups in Anbar who turned against al-Qa'ida, the sectarian strife left lasting scars and naturally deepened sectarian divisions, even among educated groups in which the differences may have been marginal before.

In the north, too, the Kurdish parties moved to solidify their position on the basis of ethnic identity in the autonomous Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) and in surrounding areas—Kirkuk and parts of the Ninawa and Diyala provinces (disputed territories)—heavily populated by Kurds. While the Kurds showed greater cohesion and consensus on identity, they, too, faced divisions between the two main political parties and their leaders, and between these parties and the ethnic and religious minorities (Turkmen, Christians) in their territory. Growing generational tensions and protests over official corruption and insufficient democracy also created difficulties in the KRG. In 2009, the PUK split and a new Kurdish opposition party, *Gorran* (Change), emerged to challenge the Kurdish status quo.[56]

A series of elections were held in 2009 and 2010 for provincial councils, the KRG parliament, and finally a new national parliament. The results revealed a shift in public opinion away from identity politics in favor of a more pragmatic, centrist government in Baghdad. Outside the KRG, a sense of Iraqi identity appeared to be growing. Nonetheless, voting patterns showed that communal identity was still the basis of the political system, with little cross-sectarian voting. Kurdish-Arab differences remained sharp, with Shi'a-Sunni mistrust still festering, focused mainly on whether Sunnis, including former Ba'th supporters, would be allowed a greater role in government.[57]

This has left Iraq's future—and its identity—uncertain. Iraq is currently a fragile state with a weak central government. Although its security and its

economy are slowly improving, the cohesion of the state is still in a work in progress.

One thing seems clear. Any new "Iraqi" identity, if it emerges, will have to develop new content and a new political paradigm. This new content has not yet emerged. Instead, in the political realm, much of the leadership (and if the 2010 elections are any evidence, then also most of the population) has fallen back on older paradigms of identity: religious community and linguistic and ethnic identity. Tribe and family did not surface in the elections, but in the reality of today's Iraq, they, too, represent a powerful sociopolitical force. But as previous attempts to form government systems in Iraq show (whether Ottoman, British, or, certainly, Ba'thist), unless the new Iraqi identity is accompanied by effective and legitimate government, equality of opportunity, and ways of achieving economic development, it will be no more lasting that its predecessors.

Notes

1. For Ottoman times, these include the classic work by 'Abbas al-Azzawi, *Ta'rikh "Ashar' ir al-'Iraq (History of the Iraqi Tribes*), 4 v. (Baghdad: Matba't Baghdad) 1937–1955 and Ali al-Wardi, *Lamahat Ijtima'iyyah Min Ta'rikh al-'Iraq al-Hadith (Social Aspects of the Modern History of Iraq*) (Baghdad: Irshad Press), v 1–2, 1969–1971. This is also born out by numerous reports of British officers in Iraq and the extensive account given in British Naval Handbook, *Iraq and the Persian Gulf* (London: H.M. Stationery Office) 1944. Its continuance into the mid-1950s is born out in the key anthropological study, Robert Fernea, *Shaikh and Effendi* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 1970 and Elizabeth Fernea's classic on the ground report, *Guests of the Sheik* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday) 1964. Good studies of tribe and kin in contemporary times include Faleh Jaber and Hosham Dawod, eds, *Tribes and Power: Nationalism and Ethnicity in the Middle East (*London: Saqi) 2003; Amatzia Baram, "Neo-tribalism in Iraq," *International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES)* (29: 1997) and Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State, the Social and Political Structures of State in Kurdistan* (London: Zed), 1997.
2. The Naqib families of both Baghdad and Basra provide good examples. (Naqib al-Ashraf was a title given to the head of the descendants of the prophet in a town, usually a leading notable). The former, a Gailani, descended from the founders of the Qadarite sufi order, who controlled the shrine built for the founder, Abd al-Qadir al-Gailani, in Baghdad; the latter spawned Talib al-Naqib, who led a separatist movement in the Gulf and tried to make himself a leader in Iraq before being removed by the British in 1921. On Talib al-Naqib, see Reidar Visser, *Basra, the Failed Gulf State* (Munster: Lit Verlag) 2005.
3. For a good description, see Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2000, p. 5.

4. For the intrusion of Bedouin values and ways in Iraq during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, under weak Ottoman rule, see al-Wardi, *Lamahat*, v. 1, pp. 17–25, 93–98.
5. Baram, "Neo-tribalism in Iraq." For an excellent essay on tribalism, see Michael Eisenstadt, "Iraq: Tribal Engagement: Lessons Learned," *Military Review* (September–October, 2007), pp. 16–31.
6. This system in Ottoman Iraq—as elsewhere in the Middle East—has been widely described. Among the best depictions in English is Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1976, v. I, pp. 58–59. Heterodox sects, such as the Yazidis and the Sabians, had considerable local freedom, but these groups constituted only a tiny percentage of the population.
7. For example, see Yitzhak Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p 28 and Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 1978, pp. 17–18.
8. Sectarian differences in Iraq were intensified by the Safavid conquest of Iran and Iran's forced conversion to Shi'ism, and the subsequent Sunni Ottoman conquest of Iraq to stop the Safavids. From then on, sectarianism became a bone of contention between the two empires, while the population of Iraq, on the frontier between both, was split in seeking protection from either side. The imperial struggle intensified, rather than mitigated, sectarian differences right up until the mid-nineteenth century, when relations with Iran eased somewhat. (al-Wardi, *Lamahat*, v. 1, pp. 9–13, 42–92, 111–160; v.2, pp. 109–111.
9. al-Wardi, *Lamahat*, v. 1, pp. 183–193.
10. *al-Wardi, Lamahat, v.1., chap. 7.* For this period see also Pierre-Jean Luizard, *La Formation de l'Irak Contemporain: Le Role Politique des Ulema Chiites a la Fin de la Domination Ottomane et au Moment de la Construction de l'Etat Irakien* (Paris: Edition du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique), 1991, and Meir Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of Nineteenth Century Iraq: the 'Ulama' of Najaf and Karbala'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2002.
11. For the interaction between the Ottomans and the local population, see Visser, *Basra,* chap. 3; Sarah Shields, *Mosul Before Iraq* (New York: State University Press), 2000; Hala Fattah, *The Politics of Regional Trade in Iraq, Arabia and the Gulf, 1745–1900* (Albany: State University of New York), 1997, and Dina Khoury, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire, 1540–1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1997.
12. Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, pp. 4–5.
13. Faleh Abdul Jabar, "The Genesis and Development of Marja'ism versus the State," in Faleh Abdul Jabar, ed. *Ayatallahs, Sufis and Ideologues: State, Religion and Social Movements in Iraq* (London: Saqi), 2002.
14. On these institutions, see Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*.
15. For a vivid description of the differences, even in the 1950s, see Hani Fukaiki, *Awkar al-Hazimah (Dens of Defeat)*, 2nd. ed. (Beirut: Riad al-Rayyes), 1997, pp. 20–21. Ceremonies and rituals often emphasized the roles of the Shi'i

imams, their persecution historically at the hands of Sunnis, and a sense of injustice felt by Shi'a at their failure to achieve leadership in the Muslim world. See also, Ibrahim Haydari, "The Rituals of 'Ashura: Geneology, Functions, Actors and Structures," in Abdul Jabar, *Ayatallahs, Sufis and Ideologues*.

16. For the emergence of Arab nationalism and its impact on Iraq, see Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 2005. For Kurdish nationalism, see David McDowell, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Taurus), 1997.
17. For example, *derebeys* (valley lords) had established territorial principalities in Kurdish areas. Among the best known was the family of the Babans, established in territory between the Diyala and the Lesser Zab rivers; the Bahdinan family in the Amadiyya region and the Surans of Qoy Sanjak. Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, 1st. ed, (Boulder, Colo: Westview), 1985, p. 50.
18. McDowell, *Modern History of the Kurds*, pp. 89–95.
19. For a good analysis of regionalism in Iraq, see Reidar Visser and Gareth Stransfield, eds., *An Iraq of its Regions, Cornerstones of a Federal Democracy?* (New York: Columbia University Press) 2008.
20. For this movement, see Visser, *Basra*.
21. For an excellent analysis of this region and the way the Iraqi-Syria border bifurcated it, see James Denselow, "Mosul, the Jazira Region and the Syrian-Iraqi Borderlands," in Visser and Stansfield, *An Iraq of its Regions.*
22. A good discussion of this issue is found in Alastair Northridge, "Al-Iraq al-Arabi," in Visser and Stansfield, *An Iraq of its R*egions.
23. See 'Ali al-Wardi, *Lamahat*, for example, v.1, pp. 18–29, 93–93; v.2, p. 8.
24. See Reidar Visser, "Introduction," and Northridge in Visser and Stansfield, *An Iraq of its Regions*.
25. *Shu'ubiyya* refers to a movement within the early Islamic commonwealth of those who refused to recognize the privileged position of the Arabs. In the Iraqi context, it has been used pejoratively against those rejecting Arab nationalism and favoring Iraqi particularism.
26. Sati-al-Husri, a Syrian-born, Ottoman-educated bureaucrat, was a late, but intense, convert to Arab nationalism. After the collapse of the Ottoman state, he was employed by the new Iraqi administration as Director of General Education. To aid in shaping his curriculum and its teaching, he brought with him some Syrians and Palestinians of the same persuasion. His conflicts with Kurds and numerous Arab Shi'i intellectuals and ministers finally resulted in his resignation in 1927. For his life and thought, see William Cleveland, *The Making of an Arab Nationalist: Ottomanism and Arabism in the Life and Thought of Sati'-l-Husr*i (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 1971. For his role in this controversy in Iraq, see Hasan al-'Alawi, *Al-Shi'ah wa-l-Dawlah al-Qawmiyyah fi-l-'Iraq, 1914–1990 (Shi' ism and the (Arab) National State in Iraq*) (Paris: CEDI) 1989, pp. 254–276; Abd al-Karim al Uzri, *Mushkilat al-Hukm fi-l-'Iraq (The Problem of Governance in Iraq*) (London: 1991), pp. 191–217, and al-Husri, *Mudhakkirat*i fi-l-'Iraq (My Memoirs in Iraq), v. 1, 1921–1927 (Beirut: Dar al-Tali'ah) 1967, pp. 321–334; 585–602.

27. For these challenges, see Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, chaps 2–4.; Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, Chaps. 2–4.
28. For these ideas and institutions in this period, see Adeed Dawisha, "Democratic Attitudes and Practices in Iraq, 1921–1958," *Middle East Journal*, 59:1 (Winter, 2005).
29. Military officers and nationalists favored conscription as a means of shaping Iraqi identity in a new nationalist direction. The British, fearing an assertive army, resisted this during the mandate, but conscription was instituted soon after independence in 1934. See Mohammed Tarbush, *The Role of the Military in Politics* (London: Kegan, Paul), 1982, pp. 79–94.
30. Tarbush, *The Role of the Military*, pp. 73–83.
31. Liberals and leftists have focused on social and economic causes of the regime's overthrow. This school is best found in Batatu, *Old Social Classes*. Others have also cited maldistribution of land the influence of landlord-shaykhs in parliament. See David Pool, "From Elite to Class," *IJMES*, 12 (1980).
32. According to one study of political leaders (ministers and monarchs) in the last decade of the monarchy (1948–1958), 44 percent of all leaders were Arab Sunni, 33 percent Arab Shi'a, and 19 percent Kurds or Turkmen. This still underrespresents Shi'a, but gives Kurds positions about equal to their proportion of the population. At top levels, Arab Sunnis were more dominant (61 percent), Shi'a 21 percent, but Kurds hold their own at 15 percent. At lower levels, Sunnis dropped to 31 percent, Shi'a rose to 43 percent, and Kurds to 22 percent. Although representation was still inadequate with respect to Shi'a, no subsequent periods did as well in ethnic and sectarian distribution of leaders. Between 1958 and 1968, when military regimes dominated, Arab Sunnis occupied 54 percent of all positions, a whopping 79 percent of top positions; Arab Shi'a dropped to 30 percent of all leaders, 6 percent at the top; while Kurds dropped to 5 percent of all leaders, and disappeared from top levels. In the mid-1970s, under the Ba'th, the situation improved somewhat, but Arab Sunnis now constituted 57 percent of all leaders, 48 percent at the top. Shi'a were only 22 percent of all leaders, but 29 percent at the top; and Kurds were 13 percent of all leaders, and were absent from the top. (Some 15 percent of this group were unknown.) By the end of the Ba'th regime—in 1998—Arab Sunnis were 40 percent of all leaders, 61 percent at the top. Arab Shi'a were 29 percent of all leaders, 28 percent at the top; and Kurds only 9 percent of all leaders, 6 percent at the top. (A high 22 percent were unknown) (Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, 2nd p. 310.
33. Shi'a prime ministers in the post-World War II period included Salih Jabr (1947–1948), Muhammad al-Sadr (1948), Fadil al-Jamali (1953–1954), and 'Abd al-Wahhab Mirjan (1957–1958).
34. For the Qasim regime, see Uriel Dann, *Iraq Under Qassem* (New York: Praeger), 1969; Majid Khadduri, *Republican Iraq* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1969, chaps. 4–7; Batatu, *Old Social Classes*, chaps. 42–53; Marion Farouk Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, *Iraq since 1958* (London: I.B. Taurus), 1990, chap. 2.

35. These were the Qasim regime, July 1958–February 1963; the first Ba'th regime, February to November, 1963; the Arif regime, November 1963 to July 1968, and the Second Ba'th regime, which came to power in July 1968. For an account of this decade see Batatu, *The Old Social Classes;* Chaps. 41–59; Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq,* Chaps. 5–6;and Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, Chap. 5.
36. On the Kurdish struggle in this period, see McDowell, *The Modern History of the Kurds,* Chap. 5 and Sa'd Jawad, *Iraq and the Kurdish Question, 1958–1971* (London: Ithaca Press) 1981.
37. For the emergence of the Da'wa, see Faleh Abdul Jabar, *The Shi'ite Movement in Iraq* (London: Saqi), 2003; Joyce Wiley, *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'a* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Reiner), 1992; Chibli Mallat, "Religious Militancy in Contemporary Iraq," *Third World Quarterly,* 10:2 (April, 1989) and Ali al-Mu'min, *Sanawat al-Jumar: Masirat al-Harakah-l-Islamiyyah fi-l-'Iraq, 1957–1986 (Years of Embers: Journey of the Islamic Movement in Iraq*) (London: Dar al-Masirah) 1993.
38. For this period and the 1968 coup, see Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*; Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq;* Tripp, *A History of Iraq*; Kanan Makiya (Samir al-Khalil), *The Republic of Fear* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1989; and two biographies of Saddam Husayn: Efraim Karsh and Inara Rautsi, *Saddam Husain, a Political Biography* (New York: Free Press), 1991 and Said Aburish, *Saddam Husain, the Politics of Revenge* (New York: Bloomsbury) 1999. A good collection of works by authors opposed to the regime is found in CARDRI (Committee Against Repression and for Democratic Rights in Iraq*), Saddam's Iraq: Revolution and Reaction* (London: Zed), 1981.
39. By 1977, 64 percent of Iraq's population was urban. (Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, 2nd ed), p. 166. In 1905, 17 percent of the population had been nomadic, 60 percent rural, and the rest urban. (M.S. Hasan, "Growth and Structure of Iraq's Population, 1867–1947", in Charles Issawi, ed., *The Economic History of the Middle East 1800–1914* (Chicago: Chicago University Press,) 1966, p. 155.
40. Amatzia Baram, *Culture, History and Ideology in the Formation of Ba'thist Iraq, 1968–1989* (Oxford: MacMillan), 1991. Much of the following section is taken from this work.
41. Baram, *Culture, History and Ideology*. For another perspective on the way in which cultural memory has influenced Iraqi history, see an excellent study by Eric Davis, *Memories of State: Politics, History and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 2005.
42. The Ba'th began implementing its autonomy plan on March 11, 1974. The plan allowed the region to elect a legislative council and a president, appointed from among the legislators. The president of Iraq could dismiss the Kurdish president and dissolve the legislature. (Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, 2nd. Ed.) p. 157. See also McDowell, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, chap 16. For the Iraqi Kurdish struggle in general see Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq: Tragedy and Hope* (New York: St. Martin's Press), 1992.

43. On the Shi'a in this period, see Abdul Jabar, *The Shi'ite Movement in Iraq*; Shaikh Muhammad Rida al-Na'mani, *al-Shahid al-Sadr: Sanawat al-Mihna wa-l-Ayyam al-Hisar (The Martyr Sadr: Years of Tribulation: Days of Blockade)* (n.pl: 1997) and al-Mu'min, *Sanawat al-Jumar*, the latter two both sympathetic views of participants. See also Abdul Halim al-Rumaihi, "The Da'wa Islamic Party: Origin, Action and Ideology," Abdul Jabar, *Ayatallahs, Sufis and Ideologues*.
44. On the Iran-Iraq War, the best work on its impact inside Iraq is Tripp's portion of Shahram Chubin and Charles Tripp, *Iran and Iraq at War* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview), 1988. Other good accounts include Jasim Abd al-Ghani, *Iran and Iraq* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press), 1984; Ibrahim Ibrahim, ed. *The Gulf Crisis: Background and Consequences* (Washington, DC: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies), 1994 and Dilip Hiro, *The Longest War: The Iran-Iraq Military Conflict* (New York: Routledge), 1991.
45. Very little has been written on the *intifadha* in English. The best, short piece is Faleh Abdul Jabar, "Why the Uprisings Failed," *Middle East Report* (May-June), 1992). A second trenchant analysis is contained in Kanan Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence* (New York, W.W. Norton), 1993. In Arabic, good accounts include Najib al-Salihi, *al-Zalzal (The Earthquake*) (London: Rafid), 1998, a first hand account by a retreating army general; Fa'iq al-Shaykh Ali, "al-Intifadha", a series published in *al-Hayyat* (London, 22–26 March, 1996) and Majid al-Majid, *Intifadat al-Sha'b al-'Iraqi (Uprising of the Iraqi People)* (Beirut: 1991).
46. On the Kurdish uprising, see Jonathan Randall, *After Such Knowledge, What Forgiveness?* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux), 1994; Peter Galbraith, "Civil War in Iraq," Staff Report for the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, May 1991 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office) 1991. Both authors were on the ground at the time. On the Anfal, the most authoritative work is Joost Hiltermann, A Poisonous Affair: America, Iraq and the Gassing of Halabja (New York: Cambridge University Press), 2007. See also Human Rights Watch, *Genocide in Iraq* (New York: Human Rights Watch), 1993.
47. On sanctions, the best work is Sarah Graham Brown, *Sanctioning Saddam* (London: I.B. Taurus), 1999. The economic situation under sanctions has been dealt with in numerous reports, including those from the FAO, WFP, UNICEF, the Human Rights Commission, and others. A good critique of the sanctions program can be found in Amatzia Baram, "The effect of the Iraqi sanctions," *Middle East Journal* (Spring, 2000). On Iraq after the Gulf war, see Fran Hazelton, ed. (CARDRI), *Iraq Since the Gulf War* (London: Zed) 1999; Anthony Cordesman and Ahmed Hashim, *Iraq: Sanctions and Beyond* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview), 1997; Isam al-Khafaji, "The Myth of Iraqi Exceptionalism," *Middle East Policy*: 7:4 (October, 2000).
48. Amatzia Baram, *Building toward Crisis: Saddam Husayn's Strategy for Survival* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy), 1998.
49. On Saddam's tribal policy, see Baram, "Neo-tribalism in Iraq."

50. On the Kurds in the 1990s, the best work is Gareth Stansfeld, *Iraqi Kurdistan: Political Development and Emergent Democracy* (London: Routledge Curzon), 2003. See also Michael Gunter, "The Kurdish Perdicament in Iraq" *Middle East Journal*, 50:2 (Spring, 1996) and Denise Natali, *The Kurdish Quasi-State* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press) 2010. The differences between the two political parties and their leaders resulted in a civil war lasting several years between 1994 and 1997, with thousands killed and tens of thousands displaced. A modicum of agreement was only achieved in 1997.
51. Little has yet been written on Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr and his movement. A good, short summary of his life and influence is found in Ali Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 2007, pp. 54–61. See also Adil Ra'uf, *al-Amal al-Islami fi-l-Iraq bayn al-Marja' iyyah wa-l- Hizbiyyah (Islamic Action in Iraq between the Marja' iyyah and the Parties* (Damascus, 2000) and Mukhtar al-Asadi, *al-Sadr al-Thani: al-Shahid wa-l-Shahid (The Second Sadr: the Witness and the Martyr)* (Tehran: Amin Press), 1999.
52. For Saddams' survival in this period see Baram, *Building toward Crisis*; Andrew and Patrick Cockburn, *Out of the Ashes: the Ressurection of Saddam Hussein* (New York: Harper Collins), 1999, and Baram, "Saddam's Power Structure: the Tikritis before, during and after the War," in Toby Dodge and Steven Simon, eds. *Iraq at the Crossroads* (London: Oxford University Press for the IISS), 2003.
53. Many accounts of the occupation have made this point. The best study of what happened inside Iraq is Ali Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq*. The failures of the occupation have been dealt with in numerous works, too voluminous to mention. Among the best are George Packer, *Assassin's Gate, America in Iraq* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux), 2005; and Anthony Shadid, *Naked in Baghdad* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux), 2003. A good account by a political scientist who participated in the early efforts to establish a democratic government is Larry Diamond, *Squandered Victory* (New York: Times Books), 2005. Nir Rosen, *In the Belly of the Green Bird* (New York: Simon and Shuster), 2006 and Ahmed Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq* (New York: Cornell University Press), 2006. Both give an on-the-ground sense of ethnic and sectarian divisions. To follow domestic events more closely, among the best sources are the Iraq reports published by the International Crisis Group.
54. Among the best studies of these elections is Adeed Dawisha and Larry Diamond, "Iraq's Year of Voting Dangerously," *Journal of Democracy*, 17:2 (April, 2006).
55. On the emerging leaders and their parties, see Phebe Marr, "Who are Iraq's New Leaders? What do they Want?", *USIP Special Report*, No. 160, 2006 and Phebe Marr, "Iraq's New Political Map," USIP Special Report No. 179, 2007 (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace).
56. The best analysis of the Kurds in this period has been published by the International Crisis Group (www.ICG.org). See "Oil for Soil: Toward a Grand

Bargain on Iraq and the Kurds" (Middle East Report N.80, 28 October, 2008); "Turkey and Iraqi Kurds: Conflict or Confrontation?" (Middle East Report N. 81, 15 November, 2008); "Iraq and the Kurds: Trouble along the Trigger Line" (Middle East Report N. 88, 8 July, 2009), and "Iraq's New Battlefield: the Struggle over Ninewa" (Middle East Report N. 90, 28 September, 2009).

57. Reporting on these elections has been voluminous. Among the best accounts of the 2009 provincial elections is the International Crisis Group, "Iraq's Uncertain Future: Elections and Beyond" (Midle East Report N 94, 25 February, 2010), and on all of the elections, the online commentary by Reidar Visser, www.histariae.org.

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CHAPTER 2

The Clash of Identities in Iraq

Sherko Kirmanj

Many scholars (and other critics) suggest that the ethnic and sectarian strife in Iraq is a direct result of the U.S. invasion.[1] At the same time, there are some who blame the British for failing in the process of state building and nation building in Iraq in the early 1920s.[2] Others claim it was the Ba'th regime (1968–2003) that shattered Iraq's national identity.[3] Some even go further to argue that "Iraq has long been a secular country, where a majority of citizens identify with their national identity, rather than their ethnic or religious identity."[4] They state that "Iraq does not naturally, historically, ethnically, religiously divide into three separate parts . . . Iraq has a national identity that cannot be dismissed."[5] Yet others believe that Iraq is not composed of just one people, instead asserting that it is a conceptual flaw to assume that Iraq's three main communities, the Shi'is, the Sunnis, and the Kurds, share a common sense of being a nation.[6]

Although Britain and the United States are to some extent responsible for Iraq's current predicament, the roots of the ongoing clash extend much further back into history and have been entrenched in the long-standing conflict between the Sunnis, the Shi'is, and the Kurds. This conflict is represented by three nationalisms: pan-Arab nationalism, Iraqi, and Kurdish, each of which has been fighting to impose its version of identity on Iraq.

The Formative Years 1916–1921

Before the creation of the Iraqi state, the people living within the borders of what is now Iraqi territory did not constitute a nation.[7] In 1914, British forces

occupied Basra, the first of the three Ottoman provinces from which the British later combined to form Iraq. British forces entered Baghdad in 1917, and then moved north and invaded Mosul in 1918.[8] During the invasion, the Shi'a *mujtahids* (senior religious scholars) led a resistance movement,[9] and the Kurds, led by Shaykh Mahmud, fought alongside the Shi'a tribal fighters in the south.[10] It is relevant to note that at the same time, the Sunni Arabs of eastern Arabia, under the leadership of the sharif of Mecca, were fighting alongside the British forces against the Ottomans, in the hope of achieving statehood.

Faysal the Figure of Unity: The Start of the Process of National Integration 1921–1933

After the suppression of both the Kurdish and Shi'a rebellions in 1919 and 1920 respectively, the British appointed Faysal bin Hussayn, the son of the sharif of Mecca, as the first king of Iraq. The clash of identities was immediately apparent in the way the communities voted in the plebiscite to formalize the king's inauguration. The Sunni-dominated areas voted in favour of the king.[11] However, the Shi'a province of Basra initially rejected the nomination, approving it only after assurances were given that their local demands, including self-rule, would be taken into consideration.[12] In the province of Kirkuk, the Kurds and Turkomans rejected Faysal's nomination. In Mosul, many voters expressed the hope for a merger with the proposed Kurdish state in southeastern Turkey.[13]

In addition to the aspirations of these competing groups, the clash was between several ideological factions, each of which viewed Iraq from a different perspective. The first one was an Iraq-centric view initiated and fostered by the British. Opposing it was a Sunni faction represented by King Faysal and by ex-Ottoman officers who had fought with him against the Ottomans during the Arab Revolution. This faction overwhelmed all rival groups, gaining ascendancy after the new officers who accompanied the king replaced those who had been appointed by the British. Consequently, the British faced difficulties in finding supporters within the Iraqi bureaucracy, turning instead to tribal leaders to counterbalance the pan-Arab nationalists.[14] In this scenario, King Faysal's goal of Hashemite unity was based on British wartime promises to the Arabs, who had ambitions for Arab unity. This was the start of a movement within the newly created country from an identity based on the nation-state to one based on pan-Arab nationalism. Later, under pressure from the British, Faysal revised his stance by adopting a more Iraq-centric vision.

In time, the clash intensified among the competing interests of Kurdish, Iraqi, and Arab nationalisms, with the Kurdish nationalists proclaiming that

"Kurdistan is not part of Iraq," and Arab nationalists declaring that "Iraq is an indivisible part of the Arab homeland." In November 1922, *al-'Iraq* (an Iraqi newspaper) published two articles urging the government to protect "the natural Iraqi borders" by incorporating the Silemaniya region into its territory.[15] In reply, the official paper of Shaykh Mahmud's government described the "allegations" as "unbelievable," declaring that "the Kurdish nation has lived as a distinct entity." It added that, since the majority population of the *wilaya* (former Ottoman province) of Mosul were Kurds, why would "other nations (*aqwam*) demand it?"[16] The clash intensified in 1922 when Shaykh Mahmud returned to Silemaniya from exile and proclaimed himself to be "King of Kurdistan."[17] The shaykh's proclamation was a clear demonstration that the Kurdish leadership rejected an Arab king as head of state.

After the settlement of the Iraq-Turkey border disagreement in 1926, Shaykh Mahmud disagreed with the British and Iraqi authorities on the interpretation of the British promise to the League of Nations. The Kurds considered their annexation into Iraq as a betrayal of the League's promises of Kurdish independence, as specified in the Treaty of Sèvres in August 1920.[18] The Kurds' dissatisfaction was clearly stated in a letter from Sir Henry Dobbs to King Faysal on October 18, 1926. In the letter, he suggested that the king should declare that the two stars on the Iraqi flag should represent "the unity of the two nations, the Kurds and Arabs," regardless of their historical origin.[19]

With regard to the Shi'is, a few incidents in the 1920s highlighted the tension between the Shi'a community and the Sunni-led government, including the Kadhimiya and Samarra riots in 1927.[20] Additionally, the publication of two books further aggravated the Sunni-Shi'a relationship. The first book, entitled *al-Dawla al-Umawiyya fi al-Sham* (The Umayyad State in Syria), by Anis al-Nusuli, was published in 1927. It glorified the Umayyads, who are seen by the Shi'is as the killers of Shi'a imams. The second book, published in 1933 and titled *al-Uruba fi al-Mizan* (Arabism in the Balance), was penned by Abdulrazzaq al-Hassan, who questioned Shi'a loyalty to Iraq and stated that the Iraqi Shi'is are remnants of the Safavids. In response, protests erupted in most southern Shi'a cities. Meanwhile, the Sunnis in Baghdad demonstrated in support of al-Nusuli's views.[21]

After 11 years in power, the king expressed doubts as to whether the creation of an Iraqi nation was really possible.[22] His skepticism was expressed in a well-known memorandum dated March 1932.[23] In the memorandum, the king admitted the depth of the divisions between Iraq's communities, and he pointed out that Iraq lacked the most important element of social life, "national, religious and ideological unity." The memorandum was important

because it defined the central issue confronting "the nation"—the question of identity. At the conclusion of the memorandum, the king asserted that if these factors were not properly addressed, the country would never achieve stability and nationhood.

The Clash of Ideologies Embedded in Ethnic and Sectarian Lines 1933–1958

After the death of Faysal in 1933, his son, Ghazi, succeeded him. The young king was openly anti-British and a fervent believer in the pan-Arab cause. In the 1930s and 1940s, the clash of identities took another turn with the establishment of several political organizations, and the emergence of two new schools of thought. The first of these reflected the rise of dictatorships in Europe.[24] The supporters of this group formed an association called the al-Muthana Club, which was an outgrowth of the pan-Arab–oriented *al-'Ahd* (Covenant) group. The second school, the Iraq-centric *Ahali* (Popular) group, appeared in the early 1930s and emphasized the issues of social justice and equity.[25] In addition to these associations, in 1934 a new and clandestine force emerged, the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP).

The first major clash between the two main factions was the Bakr Sidqi coup in 1936. Sidqi was of Kurdish origin. The coup removed the Arab nationalists from power. A new cabinet was formed by Hikmat Suleiman, a member of the *Ahali* group,[26] and for the first time in Iraq's modern history, Arab nationalists lost majority control in the government. Consequently, the Arab nationalists accused Suleiman's government of espousing policies that favored Iraq's non-Arab neighbors. Additionally, Sidqi was accused of encouraging Kurds to join the army. The tension reached a point in which Sidqi was assassinated on the orders of Arab nationalists in Mosul.[27]

On April 4, 1939, King Ghazi died in a mysterious car accident. Abd al-Ilah, Ghazi's cousin, was appointed as a regent. In contrast to King Ghazi, Abd al-Ilah was closer to the British and not so sympathetic to the cause of Arab nationalism.

The continuing clash of identities led to a second coup. This time, Arab nationalist officers marched their troops into Baghdad and installed Rashid Ali al-Gailani as prime minister in April 1941. Al-Gailani was an Arab nationalist, but his tenure was brief because the British removed him and installed Nuri al-Sa'id in July 1941. This further reinforced the relationship between Nuri al-Sa'id and the British. However, his relationship with pan-Arab nationalists deteriorated.[28] Sa'id purged many Sunnis from the higher echelons of both the administration and the army, leaving a vacuum to be filled by Shi'is and Kurds.[29]

Pan-Arab sentiment flourished during the late 1950s. The Ba'th Party formed its first cells at that time, and with the Istiqlal Party, they became the leading organizations of the *qawmiyya* (pan Arab)nationalist faction.[30] Initially headed by an Arab Shi'a, Fu'ad al-Rikabi, the Ba'th Party was nonsectarian and appealed to both Shi'is and Sunnis, but not Kurds. The *qawmiyya* nationalism coexisted with *wataniyya* (Iraqi) nationalism, a territorial strain of the Iraq First movement,[31] which was far more inclusive towards non-Arab groups. The ICP and the National Democratic Party (NDP) were the major advocates of the *wataniyya* concept.

However, since the mid-1940s, political organizations and parties became a powerful force on Iraq's political stage, but the most notable aspect of political activism in Iraq since then is that political ideologies have been embedded along ethnic and sectarian lines. For example, the historical roots of the NDP go back to the *Ahali* group. The founding committee of the party was a mixture of Shi'a Arab and Sunni Arab politicians, among them Kamil al-Chadirchi, a Sunni Arab who led the party for most of its life. The party's program focused on domestic issues. Because of this, and its lack of interest in pan-Arab issues, it appealed more to Shi'is. A Sunni member of the party, Muhammad Hadid, exerted enormous influence, however, it still faced difficulties in establishing a power base in the Sunni-dominated al-Anbar and Ninawa provinces. The party's Iraq-centric orientation attracted reasonable support from Kurds.[32]

The second major political organization that rose to prominence in the 1940s and 1950s was the Istiqlal (Independence) Party, an outgrowth of the *al-'Ahd* group and the al-Muthana Club. The founders of the party were mainly Arab nationalists. The most prominent member was Muhammad Mahdi Kuba, a Shi'i Arab. The Istiqlal strongly supported pan-Arabism and positioned itself against the development of a separate Iraqi national identity. Although it was headed by a Shi'i, it drew its support mainly from the Sunni Arab population.[33]

In the Kurdish area, after the failure of the Barzan rebellions in the early 1940s, Mula Mustafa Barzani headed to Iran, where he (together with other Kurdish intellectuals) founded the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). The party's main objective was autonomy for Kurdistan within Iraq, but because of its ethnocentric agenda, it appealed to Kurds only.

Among the unlicensed political organizations, the ICP was the major player on Iraq's political stage, it being the only party whose membership transcended sectarian and ethnic lines. Also, it was the largest organization in the *wataniyya* camp. Social reform and the liberation of Iraq from foreign influence were the priorities on the party's program, and in comparison to the other political parties, the ICP was far less concerned with

pan-Arab issues.[34] However, close scrutiny of the party's history reveals a striking aspect of Iraqi politics, for whenever Arab Shi'is or Kurds held the leading positions in the ICP, the party's agenda reflected Iraq-centric issues. Conversely, whenever Sunni Arabs controlled the central committee, the party's activities and rhetoric focused on pan-Arab issues.[35] Nonetheless, most of the support for the ICP came from the marginalized sectors of society, and, in particular Kurds and Shi'is. This pattern of support was also reflected in newspaper readership: between 1947 and 1948 (and also in 1952), the distribution of the ICP's main newspapers corresponded to the ethnic and sectarian distribution of the population.[36] Another clandestine organization was the Free Officers' Movement. Of the 15 members of the committee, 12 were Sunni-Arabs, this dominance is seen in the Free Officers' agenda, for of the eight points that they espoused, four concerned pan-Arab issues.[37]

By the late 1950s the opposition groups, both *qawmiyya* and *wataniyya*, had won strong public sentiment. This support became even more pronounced after the government banned all political parties, and it was further fueled by the success in Egypt of the Egyptian Free Officers' Movement. These events laid the foundation for the 1958 revolution, which was organized and conducted by the Free Officers and supported by the public.

Accelerating the Process of National Integration 1958–1963

The Free Officers, led by the movement's President, Abd el-Karim Qasim and Abd el-Salam 'Arif, members of the high committee, overthrew the monarchic regime at an opportune moment. Their first announcement stressed *wataniyya* rather than *qawmiyya* ideology.[38] In addition, the ethnic and sectarian diversity of Iraq's society was mirrored in the first cabinet formed after the coup.[39] A new constitution was drafted identifying Iraq as a republic and "part of the Arab nation (*umma*)." However, it considered the Kurds and the Arabs to be partners in Iraq.[40]

Following the coup, the first sign of division in the new leadership appeared when discussion on unification with other Arab countries resurfaced. The conflict was between those who considered that the first priority should be Arab unification and those more interested in Iraqi independence and social reforms. Qasim represented the Iraq-centric faction and 'Arif the Arab nationalists. Qasim's main focus was an Iraqi state in which various communities could have a greater share in power. 'Arif's main concern was to merge Iraq into a larger Arab entity. This faction appealed mainly to Arab Sunnis, while the Iraq-centric faction had more appeal for the Shi'a, the Kurds, and the Iraqi intelligentsia.[41]

Qasim's idea of *wataniyya* identity was that "we must not forget that Iraq is not only an Arab state, but an Arabic-Kurdish state." More importantly, it implied that we should be "Iraqis first, and Arabs and Kurds later."[42] However, these gestures of unity did not last long, for early in 1961, Qasim started a campaign against all opposition parties, including an organized campaign against the Kurds. Arab nationalist intellectuals led the campaign. For example, Clovis Maqsud, the official representative of the Arab League in Baghdad, inflamed tensions by provocatively asserting that "anybody who is historically a Kurd and resides in a country which is part of the Arab homeland is an *Arab*... it is necessary for the *minority* nations to show their readiness to become part of the *majority* nation."[43] In fact, the Kurds had already indicated their vision for Iraq's national identity when Ibrahim Ahmad, the secretary of the KDP, published an article that criticized the version of Iraqi identity propounded in the temporary constitution. He stated that:

> To say that Iraq is part of the Arab nation is wrong... Iraq as a whole cannot be considered part of the Arab nation... a satisfactory formula should state that the eternal Iraqi Republic identity [is] formed of a Kurdish part—Iraqi Kurdistan and an Arab part—Mesopotamia. Only the Arab part forms part of the greater Arab nation.[44]

In early 1961, Qasim shifted his position and became more inclined to the cause of Arab nationalism. The primary reason for this change was to contain the Communists' influence.[45] Qasim started to refer to Iraq as one *nation* rather than a *bi-nation,* as defined in the constitution. Qasim's shift in position, together with Arab nationalist attacks on the Kurds, led to a media war between the two sides.[46] The media row (combined with other factors) laid the foundation for a Kurdish revolt later in 1961.

With regard to the Shi'a, the 1958 revolution was a turning point for two reasons. First, initial signs of goodwill suggested that it would end the domination of the Sunnis. However, Qasim's inclination towards the Communists, as well as his land reform policies and amendments to Iraq's Personal Status Law, turned the Shi'a *mujtahids* against the revolution.[47]

As pointed out above, the major political dividing lines were on ideological principles, although these were aligned along communal lines. This situation continued through the Republican era. The predominantly Shi'a provinces and suburbs, together with the Kurdish provinces and suburbs of Baghdad, became strongholds of the *wataniyya* camp. Opposing these were the provinces of Mosul and Anbar and the Sunni-dominated suburbs of Baghdad, all of which became strongholds of the *qawmiyya* camp.[48] The

Mosul and Kirkuk incidents are exemplars of the embedded ideology along ethnic and sectarian lines.[49] However, if Qasim is to be remembered, it will be for his support of the *wataniyya* notion. Furthermore, the policies that he initiated could have been used to pave the way for the creation of an Iraqi national identity based on the *wataniyya* concept.

Failure of the Process of National Integration 1963–1968

On February 8, 1963, 'Arif, with the support of the Ba'thists, overthrew Qasim's regime. The first statement by the coup leaders criticized Qasim for "distancing Iraq" from the "Arab liberation journey."[50] A National Council of the Revolutionary Command (NCRC) was formed, but it was dominated by the Ba'thists, and of its 18 members, 12 were Sunni Arabs. There were five Shi'i members, because this element still dominated the Ba'th civilian wing. The Kurds had only one Arabized member, Ali Salih al-Sa'di.[51] During 'Arif's era, the role and influence of the Sunnis was greatly extended, and this marked the starting point of the "Sunnicization" and "Arabization" of the Iraqi state.

'Arif removed the Ba'thists within his government in a swift action in November of that year. The new regime drafted a constitution that reflected 'Arif's ambition for Arab unification. It opened with the assertion that "*al-Sha'b al-Iraqi* [the Iraqi people] is part of the Arab *umma* (nation), its aim is a comprehensive Arab unification." The constitution acknowledged Kurdish national rights, but did not recognize the Kurds as partners. It is significant that the notion of *wataniyya* was absent, though it stressed the concept of *qawmiyya*.[52] 'Arif's quest for Arab unity further alienated the Kurds when he signed an agreement of unification with Nassir in May 1964. In response, the Kurds published a memorandum that virtually demanded a bi-national state.[53]

Shi'a hopes for equal status in the system were diminished by the removal of Qasim and by the heavy blow given by the Ba'thists to the Communists. 'Arif accused the Shi'is of being *Shu'ubi* and anti-'*urubah*.[54] Having said that, the resulting clash between Sunnis and Shi'is remained embedded along ideological lines, between pan-Arabism and Iraqi nationalism.

Sunni Arabs exercised increasing power throughout the country, especially 'Arif's tribe and people from the Sunni region of western Iraq, but simultaneously the process of tribalization of the state system reached unprecedented levels, with loyalty to family, kin, tribe, ethnicity, and sect gaining momentum. The Kurds in the north and the Shi'is in the south were further marginalized.[55]

During 'Arif's era, the Sunni areas again constituted the heartland of the Arab nationalists. For example, following 'Arif's seizure of power in

"the February 8th Coup," people from the predominantly Shi'a suburbs of Baghdad, such as al-Thawra (now al-Sadr) and al-Kadhimiya, together with the Kurds, poured into the streets of Baghdad and headed towards the Defense Ministry to defend the regime. At the same time, the residents of the Sunni suburbs of al-Adhamiya and other suburbs west of the Tigris River came out to support the Arab nationalists and the Ba'thists in their attempt to overthrow the regime.[56]

In early 1968, Arab nationalist support for 'Abd al-Rahman 'Arif, who succeeded his brother 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif as president, fell into disarray. At the same time the Ba'thists gained increased support from some influential figures in the army, such as Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr. In addition, the Kurdish opposition escalated because of dissatisfaction with the government's refusal to implement the 1966 Accord, a pact signed between the Kurdish leadership and the Iraqi regime that acknowledged most of the Kurds' rights. All these factors combined to pave the way for the second return of the Ba'thists in 1968.

The Start of the Process of National Disintegration 1968–1991

In 1968, the Ba'th Party regained power in a coup led by Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr and supported by Saddam Husayn. The former became the president, and the latter his vice president. In 1970, the regime introduced an interim constitution; pan-Arab rhetoric was particularly evident in the document, which defined Iraq as "a part of the Arab Nation," with its [Iraq's] basic objective to be "the realization of one Arab State." However, the Iraqi people were acknowledged to comprise two principal nationalities, "Arab and Kurd."[57]

Initially, the Ba'th Party instigated Iraq-centric policies, but these were part of Saddam's survival strategy, rather than a genuine concern for the Iraqi identity.[58] However, when Saddam assumed the post of president in 1979, a new era in Iraqi history commenced, and this consisted of the "Saddamization" of Iraqi identity. Saddam then appointed himself head of state, the symbol of the people, and the sole lawmaker. Signs bearing the slogan "if Saddam said, Iraq said," appeared on every corner across Iraq.[59]

In 1970, following two years of negotiations with the Kurdish leadership, both sides reached an agreement known as the March 11 Declaration. A peace agreement was signed between Barzani and Saddam Husayn that granted autonomy to the Kurds. However, from the outset, it was clear that the Ba'thists had no intention of implementing the agreement, and consequently, in March 1974, a military conflict erupted between the central government and the Kurds. The struggle continued for a year and culminated

in the collapse of the Kurdish rebellion, resulting from the so-called "Algiers agreement" signed between the shah of Iran and Saddam Husayn. Soon after, the regime launched a comprehensive program of Arabization, which entailed displacement and deportation of Kurds in several areas called "strategic axes": the Iraqi borders with Iran, Turkey, and Syria; the oil-rich regions of Kirkuk and Mosul; and the strategic areas around Sinjar, Mandali, and Khanaqin.[60] These policies resulted in a genocidal campaign known as the Anfal operations, which took place during 1987 and 1988.[61] The policies were implemented systematically, the intention being to crush the Kurdish national movement (as the regime called it), and to eliminate the Kurds in Iraq so that Arabs could claim lands historically occupied by Kurds. These objectives were defined in the speeches of Ali Hassan al-Majid, the commander of Iraqi troops during the campaign. Openly, al-Majid declared, "I will kill them [the Kurds] all with chemical weapons."[62] During the operations, over one million Kurds, mostly women and children, were arrested and sent to detention centers, where they vanished.[63] With cruel irony, al-Majid asked his commanders, "Where am I supposed to put all this enormous number of people?…I had to send bulldozers hither and thither"[64] to bury them alive. An estimated 4,000 villages and hamlets were burned and bulldozed. In addition to the well-known chemical attack on the city of Halabja, the Human Rights Watch reported a further 40 chemical attacks being conducted at that time, the campaign no longer narrowly targeting the supporters of rebels, but the entire Kurdish population. These actions not only fostered intense hostility among the Kurds, but it heightened their feelings of unity and shared destiny, and led to their total alienation from the Iraqi state.[65]

Like the Kurds, the Shi'a also suffered from hostility by Saddam and the Ba'thists, who soon took decisive action to limit both Shi'a influence within the party and their activism elsewhere. The first significant clash between the Shi'is and the Ba'th happened within the party itself when Nazim Kzar (a high-ranking Shi'a member of the party) expressed resentment at the growing monopoly of power by Sunnis. In June 1973, Kzar attempted a coup that almost eliminated the regime.[66] However, the failure of the coup further marginalized the Shi'is within the Ba'th ranks. In 1977, the government tried to stop the ritual *Ashura* (ritual mourning over the death of the Imam Husayn) procession from Najaf and Karbala. A crowd numbering 30,000 gathered and chanted anti-government slogans. The government brutally crushed the protesters.[67] Meanwhile, the dismissal in 1978 of the ICP from the Progressive Patriotic and Nationalist Front, and the subsequent arrest and execution of several leading figures, further weakened the ICP, and reduced the avenues for the Shi'is to express themselves politically.

Consequently, the Shi'is turned to sectarian-organized political parties, especially the Islamic Da'wa Party. But this strategy, too, alienated Sunnis and Shi'is even more, and restricted political activism to sectarian lines.

In 1979, the Iraqi regime expelled thousands of Arab Shi'is and Faili Kurds, ethnic Kurds who follow Shi'ism, to Iran. Yet the success of the Islamic revolution in Iran that same year emboldened the Shi'a opposition. The first reaction came from the chief *marja'* (the highest Shi'i religious authority in Iraq), Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, who published several books projecting the new constitution in Iran. In May 1979, a series of demonstrations began. When Sadr and his sister were arrested, another wave of protests erupted: these soon spread to other major Shi'a cities. As a result, Sadr and his sister were released.[68] But then on April 4, 1980, the two siblings were rearrested, tortured, and executed. This episode laid the foundation for further Shi'a activism.

In September 1980, Iraq launched a massive attack on Iran that resulted in a bloody eight- year war. Initially, the fighting provoked a spasm of patriotic feeling that, for a period, affirmed an Iraqi identity. However, this assessment, while not inaccurate, is incomplete.[69] In the first years of the war, there were about 45,000 Kurdish army deserters.[70] However, it should be noted that despite these turbulent events, until the 1991 uprising, national cohesion in the south of the country was relatively stable, though signs of alienation were becoming more apparent.[71]

The 1991 Uprising: The Disintegrated "Iraqi Nation"

For the first time in modern Iraqi history, a widespread uprising against the regime took place, in March 1991. Iraq has 18 provinces, and of these, all of the northern Kurdish-dominated provinces and all southern Shi'a-dominated provinces revolted against the regime. However, the central provinces (which were predominantly Sunni) refused to participate, and strenuously defended the regime. This event changed the political dynamic within the country, for the protesters had mainly targeted the regime's security apparatus, made up of Sunni Arab elements.[72] The resulting brutal reprisals further destroyed any remaining sense of cohesion within the Iraqi society. The sectarian divisions were fueled more and more by hatred, as evinced by the popular slogans used during the uprising. For example, the Shi'is in the south chanted "Maku wali ila 'Ali, nuridu qa'id ja'fari" ("No custodian only Ali, we want a Shi'i commander"),[73] and in reply, the government troops attacked the Shi'a population with the words "La Shi'a ba'd al-yawm" ("No more Shi'is after today") painted on their tanks—which destroyed Shi'a centers of resistance.[74] The acts of cruelty during the

uprising, and the brutal suppression that followed it, further alienated the Kurds and the Shi'is from both the state and the Sunni community to a point never before seen in Iraq's modern history.

After the failure of the uprising, the Shi'a intellectuals abroad organized a meeting in London in 1993 and issued the so-called "Shi'i Declaration," an act which fostered a new Shi'a consciousness. For the first time, it rejected Sunni domination of Iraq.[75]

In Kurdistan, the 1991 uprising and the imposition of the No-Fly Zone led to the withdrawal of the central government's military and administrative apparatus from three-quarters of the Kurdish areas. After the withdrawal in 1992, the Kurds organized their own elections that led to the establishment of the Kurdish Regional Government. This important process of Kurdish self-rule strengthened and deepened the sense of Kurdish identity, so that by 2003, the semi-independent "nation" of Kurdistan had produced a generation of young people who had experienced minimal contact with other Iraqis. Additionally, the new generation does not speak Arabic and has studied a school curriculum that stresses the sense of belonging to Kurdistan and their Kurdishness, rather than Iraq and Iraqiness.[76]

Conclusion

Iraq was an artificial creation of the British: its identity was manufactured during the process of state building. During the period of the monarchy, and particularly in the late 1940s and 1950s, the process of national integration emerged as a result of the government's inclusive policies and the leftist *wataniyya* tendencies within the opposition. The process was later accelerated by the inclusive policies of Qasim. However, the lack of democratic institutions and the resurfacing and intensifying of the clash of identities halted the process of integration, which was finally extinguished when Arab nationalists assumed power in 1963.

The February 8 coup marked an important turning point—it brought an end to the political party system that had been relatively open and participatory during the monarchy, and, to an extent, during the Qasim era. This led to the eradication of political divisions based on ideologies, replacing them with divisions representing ethnic and sectarian affiliations. Consequently, after 1963, the deep divisions within Iraqi society were more exposed, and the conflicts that erupted from time to time were not based on ideological principles, but primarily on ethnic and sectarian factors.

In addition, the ICP historically was the only political party in Iraq that was able to work across ethnic and sectarian lines, though in 1963, the Ba'th dealt it a devastating blow. Greatly weakened, the ICP survived, but in the

late 1970s, the Ba'thists struck again, this time with the intention of destroying its roots and branches. Furthermore, the Ba'th's exclusionist policies of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s resulted in the emergence of what might best be termed the process of national disintegration. This process continued until 1991, when the Kurds in the north and the Shi'is in the south rose against the regime. The rebellious attack by the Kurds and the Shi'is against the state apparatus (composed mainly of Sunni Arabs) during the uprising, and the regime's brutal suppression of it, led to the total disintegration of the Iraqi society. Thus, when the regime fell to U.S. forces in 2003, it became apparent to all that the clash of identities had led to the total disintegration of the so-called "Iraqi nation."

Notes

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2. T. Dodge, *Inventing Iraq; the Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2003.
3. S. Matar, *Jadal al-Hawiyat (The Argument of Identities)*, al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabiyya li-l-Dirasat wa-al-Nashr, Beirut, 2003; Id. *al-Dhat al-jariha (The Wounded Self)*, al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabiyya li-l-Dirasat wa-al-Nashr, Beirut, 2000; M. al-Janabi, al-Hawiyya al-'Iraqiyya wa-afaq al-badil al-dimuqrati (The Iraqi Identity and the Prospect of Democratic Alternative)', *Modern Discussion*, no. 1066, January 2, 2005, http://www.rezgar.com/debat/show.art.asp?aid=29086, viewed June 2, 2005; J. Hoagland, "Restoring Iraqi Identity," *The Washington Post*, 12 December 2004, p. B07.
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7. H. Batatu, *al-'Iraq: al-Tabaqat al-ijtima'iyya wa l-harakat al-thawriyya min al-'ahd al-malaki hatta qiyam al-jumhuriyya (The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq)*, 2nd edn., trans. A. al-Razaz, Mu'asasat al-Abhath al-'Arabiyya, Beirut, 1995, p. 30, 33.
8. P. Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, 2nd edn., Westview Press, Boulder, Co., 2004, p. 22; K. M. Ahmad, *Kirkuk wa tawabi'uha; hukm al-tarikh wa-l-dhamir: dirasa watha'iqiyya 'an al-qadiyya al-Kurdiyya fi al-'Iraq (Kirkuk and Surrounding Territories; the Verdict of the History and Conscience: a Documentary Study on the Kurdish Issue in Iraq)*, vol. 1, Renwen Publishing, Suleimaniya, 2004, p. 100.
9. Y. Nakash, *The Shi`is of Iraq*, 2nd edn., Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2003, p. 60.
10. Ahmad, op.cit., p. 60; Nakash, op.cit., p. 156.
11. At the time, the population of Baghdad was predominantly made up of Sunni Arabs.
12. The Shi'as, especially the leading *mujtahids*, believed that to have a member of the Sharifian family would be in their favor to guard them from the *Ikhwan* of Ibn Sa'ud (the Wahhabi-Bedouin) raiders, because the Sharifian family were also under a severe pressure from the Sa'ud family in the Hijaz.
13. The Treaty of Sèvres (1920) asserted the establishment of a Kurdish state in southeastern Turkey. For the outcome of the plebiscite, see A. al-Hasani, *Tarikh al-wizarat al-'Iraqiyya (The History of Iraqi Ministries)*, 7th edn., vol. 1, Dar al-Shu'un al-Thaqafiyya al-'Amma, Baghdad, 1988, p. 58–60; Ahmad, op.cit., pp. 137–140. Also see the Gertrude Bell Archive, Letters, August 14, 1921, http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk, viewed January 11, 2007.
14. Dodge, op.cit., pp. 20–23.
15. At the time, Suleimaniya was not officially part of the new Iraq.
16. See *Roji Kurdistan*, no. 1, November 15, 1922, and no. 6, December 27, 1922; *Rojnamakani Sardami Hukmi Sheikh Mahmud (Newspapers During the Reign of Sheikh Mahmud)*, Rafiq Salih and Siddiq Salih (eds.), the Union of Journalists in Kurdistan, Suleimaniya, 2003; Ahmad, op.cit., pp. 178–179.
17. Ibid., pp. 169–170.
18. See articles 62, 63, and 64 of the Treaty of Sèvres; W. A. Terrill, *Nationalism, Sectarianism, and the Future of the U.S. Presence in Post-Saddam Iraq*, July 2003, the Strategic Studies Institute (SSI), Carlisle, 2003, p. 3.
19. Ahmad, op.cit., pp. 143–145. Historically the two stars represented the two kingdoms of Jordan and Iraq.
20. al-Hasani, op.cit., vol. 2, pp. 109–116.
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22. R. S. Simon, "The Imposition of Nationalism on a Non-Nation State; The Case of Iraq During the Interwar Period, 1921–1941," in I. Gershoni & J. Jankowski (eds), *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1997, pp. 87–104.

23. For the full version of the Memorandum see al-Hasani, op.cit., vol. 3, pp. 315–321.
24. R. S. Simon, *Iraq Between the Two World Wars: the Militarist Origins of Tyranny*, updated edn., Columbia University Press, New York, 2004, pp. 104–105.
25. Marr, op.cit., pp. 44–46.
26. Ibid., pp. 46–47.
27. M. Walker, "The Making of Modern Iraq," *Wilson Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 2, Spring 2003, pp. 29–40.
28. Marr, op.cit., pp. 56–57.
29. A. Chalabi, "Iraq: The Past as Prologue?" *Foreign Policy*, no. 83, Summer 1991, pp. 20–30; Marr, op.cit., p. 58.
30. *Qawmiyya* is a nationalistic movement that emphasizes the unity of all Arabs.
31. *Wataniyya* is a nationalistic movement that emphasizes territorial identity and unity of Iraq.
32. Marr, op.cit., p. 63; H. al-'Alawi, *al-Shi`a wa al-dawla al-qawmiyya fi al-'Iraq 1914–1990 (The Shi`a and the Nation-state in Iraq 1914–1990)*, 2nd edn., Dar al-Thaqafa Liltiba'a wa al-Nashr, Qum, 1990, p. 236; Kurdistan Democratic Party, *Mawqif al-Ahzab al-Siyasiyya al-Iraqiyya min al-Qadhiyya al-Kurdiyya (The Stance of the Iraq's Political Parties on the Kurdish Question)*, Maktab al-Dirasat wa al-Buhuth al-Markazi, Erbil, 1997, pp. 23–25.
33. Marr, op.cit., p. 63; Kurdistan Democratic Party, op.cit., pp. 26–28.
34. Marr, op.cit., p. 63.
35. H. Batatu, *al-'Iraq: al-Shu'iyyun wa l-Ba`thiyun wa-l-Dubat al-Ahrar (Iraq: the Communists, the Ba`thists and the Free Officers)*, 2nd edn, trans. A al-Razaz, Mu'asasat al-Abhath al-Arabiyya, Beirut, 1999, p. 57 & 133; Natali, op.cit., p. 85.
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37. Marr, op.cit., pp. 82–84; Batatu, *al-'Iraq: al-shu'iyyun*…p. 74 & table 6–3, p. 95.
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40. Articles 1, 2 & 3 of the 1958 temporary Iraqi constitution, see al-Hasani, *Tarikh al-Wizarat*…, vol. 10, pp. 326–328.
41. Natali, op.cit., p. 97; Batatu, *al-'Iraq: al-Shu'iyyun*…, pp. 127–130; Marr, op.cit., p. 82.
42. Natali, op.cit., p. 266.
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45. Batatu, *al-'Iraq: al-Shu'iyyun*…, p. 223.
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47. al-'Alawi, op.cit., p. 210; Nakash, op.cit., p. 135.
48. Batatu, *al-'Iraq: al-Shu'iyyun*…, p. 263; al-'Alawi, p. 211.
49. For details on both incidents see Batatu, *al-'Iraq: al-Shu'iyyun*…, pp. 223–232 & pp. 179–200.
50. See al-Jamahir, February 12, 1963, then an organ of the Ba'th Party.
51. Batatu, *al-'Iraq: al-Shu'iyyun*…, p. 290 & pp. 320–323.
52. Article 1, 10 & 19 of the 1964 Iraqi Constitution.
53. Marr, op.cit., p. 120.
54. al-'Alawi, op.cit., p. 225, the term *shu'ubi* is used historically by Sunni Arabs to describe non-Arab Muslims, especially Iranians.
55. Marr, op.cit., p. 138.
56. Batatu, *al-'Iraq: al-Shu'iyyun*…, p. 293 & pp. 297–298.
57. See articles 1, 3, and 5 of The 1970 Interim Constitution of Iraq, http://www.iraqidustour.com/arabic/cons-archive/cons-archive6a.htm, viewed June 20, 2006.
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62. Human Rights Watch, *The Ali Hassan al-Majid Tapes*, http://hrw.org/reports/1993/iraqanfal/APPENDIXA.htm, viewed on July 24, 2006
63. Human Rights Watch, *Genocide in Iraq*…; Kurdish sources estimate the number of people killed at 182,000, but this figure has never been verified.
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p. 119; M. M. Gunter "The Kurds in Iraq; Why Kurdish Statehood is Unlikely," *Middle East Policy,* vol. XI, no. 1, Spring 2004, p. 107.

66. Marr, op.cit., p. 144.
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70. The author heard this figure on Iraqi TV in 1982 from Saddam Husayn, the then Iraqi President, but I don't recall the exact date.
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73. R. al-Khayun, "Iraq: Maku wali ila 'Ali nuridu qa'id Ja'fari" ("Iraq: 'No custodian only Ali, we want a Shi`i commander' "), *Asharq al-Awsat*, no. 9990, April 5, 2005; A. al-Sammak, 'Maku wali ila 'Ali nuridu qa'id Ja'fari, http://forum.maktoob.com/t217869.html, viewed on January 23, 2007.
74. N. al-Salihi, *al-Zilzal: Madha hadatha fi al-'Iraq ba'da al-insihab min al-Kuwait (*Earthquake: What Happened in Iraq after the Withdrawal from Kuwait*)*, Khak Publishing, Suleimaniya, Kurdistan, 2000, p. 321; P Sullivan, "Who are the Shi'a?," http://hnn.us/articles/1455.html, viewed on December 26, 2006.
75. Marr, op.cit., p. 300. Another, more complete, version of the Declaration was issued in July 2002, http://www.al-bab.com/arab/docs/iraq/shia02a.htm, viewed on March 30, 2006.
76. For example see Kurdistan Regional Government—*'Iraq*, *Khwendnaway Kurdi bo Poli Chwarami Saratayi (Kurdish Textbook for Grade Four Primary School),* Erbil, Kurdistan, Ministry of Education, 2006, pp. 48–52.

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CHAPTER 3

On the Brink: State and Nation in Iraqi Kurdistan

Ofra Bengio

In September 2003, just months after the occupation of Iraq by the United States and its allies, a memorial was inaugurated in Halabja, the Iraqi Kurdish town where some 5,000 Kurds had been killed in the Ba'th regime's chemical weapon's attack on March 16, 1988. The Halabja attack and the memorial may serve as a case study for tracing the vicissitudes in the fortunes of the Kurds in Iraq at the turn of the twenty-first century.[1] Taking place 16 years after the event, with the participation of Paul Bremer, who was then American proconsul in Baghdad, the inauguration illustrated the big transformation in the Kurds' standing in Iraq, and the U.S. policy vis-à-vis the Kurds. The Halabja massacre may be considered as the formative event for Kurdish nation building. Taking the Halabja affair as a starting point, this paper will analyze these sea changes from differing viewpoints: the internal Kurdish scene itself, the regional angle, with special emphasis on the Arab discourse; and the Americans' change of heart and its causes.

Halabja: From Ethnie *to Nation?*

Analyzing the question of ethnicity, Martin van Bruinessen stated that "ethnicity" is a fluid thing and, to some extent at least, "voluntaristic" namely, that it may change according to historical and political circumstances.[2] Whether one agrees with this thesis or not, it is clear that in modern history, wars have served as a kind of booster for Kurdish identity as well as an

opportunity for changing their lot as a people and achieving autonomy, and/or building a state of their own. World War I, World War II, and the Iran-Iraq War were such windows of opportunity, but all of them turned out to be missed opportunities. The results of all three were disastrous for the Kurds. The first divided their lands in five countries; the second, though allowing for the formation of the Republic of Mahabad, ended with disastrous results for the Kurds in Iran and Iraq. The third brought about the annihilation of approximately 200,000 Kurds and the destruction of thousands of Kurdish villages in Iraq.[3]

However, this vicious circle seemed to have been broken in the following two Gulf wars (1991 and 2003), which dramatically changed the status of the Kurds of Iraq. Jalal Talabani, head of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and president of Iraq, explained this success by the fact that for years, the Kurds have been enjoying political freedom and rights that turned Kurdistan in Iraq (*Kurdistan al-'Iraq*) into a model for the rest of the country.[4] Mas'ud Barzani, head of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and president of the Kurdistan region (*iqlim Kurdistan*) said, for his part: "The success of the Kurdistan experiment is due to the culture of tolerance and the adoption of national (*wataniyya*) conciliation in the region."[5] Certainly, the conciliation between the KDP and the PUK, whose mutual hostility went on intermittently from the 1970s to the end of the twentieth century, did play a role. However, this in itself would not have sufficed had the Kurdish national movement itself not reached critical mass and cohesion, which thus enabled it to exploit the new opportunities for achieving its goals. In other words, pressure from below and from the Kurdish diaspora have played an important role in this conciliation, and in the Kurdish nation-building project.

A major turning point in the crystallization of Kurdish identity came with the chemical attacks on Halabja and other Kurdish sites during the infamous Anfal campaign (1987–1988), which came to be termed "the Kurdish holocaust."[6] Rather than break the back of the Kurds, as Saddam Husayn had hoped, these traumatic experiences only served to etch in the minds their separate national identity from the Arabs of Iraq, reinforcing their resolve to establish their own political entity, and helping bring their cause to the outside world.[7] According to one observer, the Halabja affair was a formative event for the Kurds because it transformed the idea of a Kurdish nation from theory to practice.[8] The existence of a large Kurdish diaspora in Europe (850,000) and the United States (about 20,000)[9] served as a catalyst for internationalizing the Kurdish issue, for arousing sympathy for the Kurds' plight in Iraq, and for mobilizing support for them in those countries.

Another factor that assisted the Kurds in in their nation-building project was the relatively open society and strong public opinion that developed in it, in spite of the existence of two old and, some would say, corrupt leaderships.[10] Indeed, there has been vivid and authentic participation among the population, not just by going to the ballots in the first-ever elections in 1992, and in later ones as well, but also in the formation of pressure groups that forced the leaderships to open up and accommodate themselves to demands from below. Thus, for example, in June 2004, some 60,000 to 70,000 Kurds reportedly demonstrated in Sulaymaniyya in a demand, for the first time in decades, for the separation (*infisal*) of the Kurdish *iqlim* from the Iraqi central government, and for turning Kirkuk into the capital of independent Kurdistan. Simultaneous demonstrations in other cities pressed for the unification of the two parties, and for a stronger stand on the issue of Kurdish independence.[11] Thus, the Kurdish street has been very critical of its leadership, and much more radical than it as well.[12] It was probably such pressure that ultimately forced the leaderhip to unite forces in May 2006. Demonstrations in which students, intellectuals, and others participated, have thus become part and parcel of political life in Iraqi Kurdistan, especially in Arbil, the political capital, and Sulaymaniyya, the cultural capital of the region. Such demonstrations came out against corruption, nepotism, difficult economic conditions, and deficiencies in the rule of law. The worst of these demonstrations was in Halabja in March 2006, where angry demonstrators burned down the memorial, because, as they maintained, the leadership had exploited it for their own political purposes, while neglecting the reconstruction of the town itself.[13] Strikes also became a common phenomenon in this part of Iraq.[14]

Another facet of the burgeoning civil society was the formation of non-govermental organizations (NGOs), one of which was "The Referendum Movement in Kurdistan" (*harakat al-istifta' fi Kurdistan*), established in July 2004, which found that 98.6 percent of Kurds supported independence.[15] With a view to internationalize the issue, it later sent a memorandum signed by 1.7 million Kurds to the UN, asking it to carry out a referendum of its own to verify this fact.[16]

The spread of Kurdish media and the proliferation of Kurdish Internet sites, which started in Kurdistan much earlier than in the Ba'th regime-controlled area, went a long way to explaining the boost in Kurdish identity and the engagement of the Kurdish public in political issues. Along with the hegemonic discourse in the Kurdish media there developed an alternative one on Internet sites that were highly critical of the Kurdish government and its policies. The "KurdishMedia" site, for example, which has been active since 1998, became a platform for airing grievances against the Kurdish

government, demanding reforms and criticizing the leadership for various misdeeds, especially for granting the *Peshmerga*—the Kurdish militias—too much power and economic benefits (claiming that their salary was three times higher than that of other government employees), while preventing the formation of a unified Kurdish army. Some went as far as to suggest the ousting of the existing leadership, since there was "a movement among the Kurdistanis desirous for a democratic change in southern Kurdistan."[17] The biggest challenge to the Kurdish leadership was the new list, "Change," headed by Nawshirwan Mustafa. In fact, in the last elections to the Kurdish parliament in July 2009, the biggest winner was "Change," with circa 24 percent of the votes, thus standing to pose as real opposition in the parliament. All of these developments may be interpreted as a sign of extreme weakness of the Kurdish polity. This writer views it, rather, as a manifestation of strength, indicating, as it does, the existence of a vibrant society that dares to challenge its leadership.

Kurdish nationalism is of an ethnic, secular brand that stands in contrast to Islamic nationalism, which has gained ground in the Arab world.[18] Examining this phenomenon, Faleh A. Jabar maintained that ethnic nationalism recognized the community as the focus of allegiance. Further, he said, "[i]f it was liberal, it would also recognize the people as the source of sovereignty and legislation," while Islamic nationalism abhored all these notions. Nevertheless, Jabar warns of the danger that Islamic nationalism might engulf the Kurds of Iraq as well.[19] Moreover, the Kurdish national movement in Iraq did not employ terrorist methods, like the PKK in Turkey or the Arab warring parties in Iraq.[20] This certainly helped buy it sympathy in the world at large. Similarly, since there was not a strong Iraqi army or central government to stop it, the movement used the Kurds' freedom in their territorry to turn it into a de facto state. The strategy that it successfully employed was to make quick and assertive moves, and to turn them into faits accomplis on the ground.

Establishing a De Facto Kurdish State, and its Implications

Although terrorism and the Shi'i-Sunni struggle in Iraq grab the headlines, it is the quiet development in the Kurdish region that is worthy of special attention in the context of the state-building and nation-building project in this country. While the Arab part of Iraq is undergoing acute identity crisis, finding it extremely difficult to normalize the internal relations between its two chief components—Shi'i and Sunn i—the Kurdish region presents a contrasting picture. It is chractarized by its relative stability, by its ability to act occasionally as a mediator between Shi'is and Sunnis, by the important

role it plays in the central government in Baghdad, and most importantly, by the development of a Kurdish national identity and symbols of independence that distinguish it from the Arab region of Iraq. Although there seems to be a contradiction between their role in the center and in the Kurdish region, the Kurds have nevertheless succeeded in finding a golden mean for acting simultaneously on both planes, without the one harming the other.

While the 1991 war cut the Kurds off from the center, the 2003 war brought them closer, transforming them into an important player in reshaping the state. In one of his interviews, Mas'ud Barzani stated that "after the fall of the [Ba'th] regime we the Kurds have safeguarded the unity of Iraq and to this day we are the main reason for Iraq's remaining unified."[21] To an extent, the Kurds have dislodged the Sunni Arabs from their pivotal role in the state. The vital aid that they extended to the Americans during the 2003 war made them trustworthy allies. Their adherence to secularism enabled them to rise above the Shi'i-Sunni sectarian war, and the political wisdom that they displayed in some critical moments in recent years helped them withstand potential attacks from their neighbors.

The leading role of the Kurds in the central government in Baghdad was manifested in their holding of key posts, such as that of president by Talabani since April 2005, and that of foreign minister by Khoshiyar Zibari since the establishment of the first Iraqi government in September 2003.[22] Another example of their penetration into the center was that the KDP had a branch in the southern city of Kut, while its organ, *al-Ta'akhi* had an office in Dhi Qar.[23] The Kurds also acted as "mediators" in disputes regarding the constitution, the elections, or the makeup of the government.[24] This made Talabani declare that "[t]he Kurds are fulfilling a true national (*watani*) role for the sake of preserving the unity of the state as a democratic, pluralistic, and unified Iraq, and not as was claimed after the fall of the previous regime, that the Kurds would turn towards separatism."[25]

Simultaneously, though, the Kurds did continue to develop their separate entity. Their experience in the aftermath of the Gulf War in 1991, and the de facto autonomy that they established in its aftermath, laid the groundwork for the quasi-independent Kurdish state institutions of today. Already then they had their own parliament, a government, a paramilitary force (the *Peshmerga*),[26] an intelligence organization (*Parastin*), and an autonomous economy. Marring this achievment, however, was the internal war between the KDP and the PUK (1994–1996), which divided Iraqi Kurdistan into two spheres of influence, "Barzanistan" and "Talabanistan."[27] Nevertheless, this might have been a necessary stage before the consolidation of the Kurdish polity. Indeed, since the end of that war, relations between the two rival groups have been improving, so that there is now greater cohesion and unity

of purpose than at any time in the past.[28] All these factors came into play during and after the 2003 war.

The constitution that was endorsed in October 2005 provides for federalism in Iraq. In practice, a quasi-state structure, rather than a more limited federative one, has developed in the Kurdish region,[29] as was evidenced in the language of the Kurdish media. Reporting a meeting between President Barzani and a Baghdadi delegation, *al-Ta'akhi*, for example, wrote that "decisions were taken to strengthen relations between the federal government and the government of the Kurdistan region".[30] The impromptu referendum, held in Kurdistan on the eve of the elections, in fact showed that the majority of Kurds supported independence.[31] A Kurdish intellectual, Kamal Mazhar Ahmad, pointed out that the prevalent view among the Kurds was that their leadership did not insist strongly enough on self-determination. In other words, the leadership was more moderate than the Kurdish public.[32] Nonetheless, whether because of such pressures or because it recognized the importance of the historic moment, the Kurdish leadership did take far reaching actions for establishing a Kurdish entity.

The process of reconciliation between the two rival factions, which began in the late 1990s and in which outside players, including the United States, took part, has been slow and drawn-out. Nevertheless, since the start of the 2003 war, the Kurds have been able to present a relatively united front—both internally and externally. This, in turn, enabled them to enlarge their autonomous activities. The Kurds hold elections for a Kurdish parliament independently of the central government, the last one in July 2009. They also have their own constitution and President, Mas'ud Barzani. No less important is the strenghthening of their paramilitary force, the *Peshmerga*, which (together with the Kurdish security organization, "Asayish") is the main body responsible for the stability in the region.[33] For example, the "Green Line" that delimits the borders of the Kurdistan region from the rest of Iraq continued to function as a real border, guarded by *Peshmerga* manning checkpoints.[34]

In May 2006, the Kurdish parliament voted for the unification of the two governments, a ceremony in which ambassadors from the United States, Britain, Russia, China, and even Iran participated.[35] The establishment of one single government enhanced the sense of unity among the Kurds, which found expression on the symbolic level, too. During the period of harsh rivalry, each faction adopted a distinct flag of its own—a yellow flag for the Barzanis and a green one for the Talabanis. Since the reconciliation, there is one flag, the Kurdish banner flown in 1920 after the Treaty of Sèvres, but which was later suppressed. In this context, one should note that the Kurds

have refused to display the Saddam-era Iraqi flag because, as they explained, he had committed genocide against the Kurds.[36] The Kurds have also been using their own anthem, which harkens back to the glories of Medya and Keyhusrev. Its first part reads thus:

> Hey enemy, the Kurdish nation is alive with its language
> It cannot be defeated by the weapons of time
> Let no one say the Kurds are dead
> The Kurds are living
> The Kurds are living, their flag will never fall.[37]

The Kurds now also cite a calendar of their own, which starts from the year 612 BC, when, according to the legend, the Kurds achieved independence from the Assyrians. Their new year, Newroz, celebrates this event.[38] Other means for reinforcing Kurdish identity are language, culture, and education. The constitution recognized Kurdish as an official language, alongside Arabic.[39] Thus, Kurdish has become the official language in the entire Kurdish educational system, one result of which was that the new generation did not know Arabic at all.[40] The Kurdish media have enjoyed an unprecedented boom, with a large number of newspapers, periodicals, radio and television stations, and broadcasting satellites.[41] Similarly, more and more writers and poets shifted to writing in Kurdish. In the past, they used to write in Arabic, either because they were forced to, or because the Arabic language was more "handy" to them.[42] Kurdish theater also began flourishing after a setback that had started in the 1970s.[43] All of these contributed to the dissemination of written and spoken Kurdish. If language is an important pillar of modern nationalism, then the Kurds of Iraq are reinforcing it significantly.

The Kurds are also seeking to attain economic independence. While reconstruction of the economy and infrastructure in the Arab part of Iraq was brought to a halt, it was accelerated in the Kurdish region. For the first time in their history, the Kurds now have two airfields, in Arbil and Sulaymaniyya, which enable them to overcome, partially at least, their dependence on the center, a consequence of their lack of access to the sea, as well as to broaden their external ties in an unprecedented manner. The relatively stable Kurdish region has attracted many entrepreneurs. Many companies wanted to drill in the Kurdish region,[44] and some have already started operating there.[45] Four oil refineries are being set up, two in the Arbil area and two in Sulaymaniyya. Among the foreign companies active in Iraq, 84 are Turkish, and 30 Iranian—in addition to Chinese, Malaysian, Lebanese, Gulf-Arab, U.S., European, and Australian companies.[46] The Kurdish cities

are developing quickly, with new high-rise buildings, up-to-date supermarkets, sports centers, and banks. Meanwhile, the American University of Iraq was opened (in January 2008) in Sulaymaniyya, not in Baghdad, which is telling of the U.S. administration's preferences as well as the relative stability of the Kurdish region.[47]

The Kurds' aspiration for economic independence might also be gleaned from the establishment of a central bank of their own, as well as from their struggle to include the oil-rich district of Kirkuk in their region.[48] A major bone of contention between the Kurds and various Iraqi regimes, Kirkuk has emerged once again as a problem that might break the coalition government and rip apart the alliance between the Shi'is and the Kurds.[49] The outgoing Shi'i Prime Minister, al-Ja'afari, who took a firm stand on this issue, moved the Kurds to act for his ousting. Meanwhile, the debate over Kirkuk came to include Iraq's neighbors, chief among them Turkey, which threatened to interfere if the Kurds included it in their region. Mas'ud Barzani replied that Kirkuk was "an Iraqi city with a Kurdish identity," and that if Turkey interfered in Iraqi affairs, the Kurds of Iraq would interfere "for the benefit of 30 millions Kurds in Turkey."[50] On the whole, Kurdish leaders keep referring to Kirkuk as "Quds al-Akrad," Jerusalem of the Kurds.[51] The Kirkuk problem is only one of many daunting challenges that the Kurds face. Still, on balance, the general trend seems more promising to them than at any time before.

Arab Attitudes

If the chemical weapons attack on Halabja and Anfal were seminal events for the Kurds, they went almost unnoticed among the Arabs of Iraq and elsewhere. Saddam's totalitarian regime did its best to stifle criticism inside Iraq.[52] Non-Iraqi Arab intellectuals and journalists, however, were freer, but as Kanan Makiya argued in his book *Cruelty and Silence*, they "chose silence when it came to the elimination of thousands of Kurdish villages by an Arab state."[53] Indeed, Makiya's book became the worst indictment against Arab intellectuals on this issue. Years later, an *al-Hayat* commentator emphasized that the Halabja affair did not leave its imprint on Arab consciousness and that, moreover, "Arab culture" either denied its existence altogether, blamed it on Iran, or justified it by security considerations. As for the Anfal campaign, he maintained that it caused a rupture between the Arab and Kurdish strata in Iraq, both on the cultural and social levels.[54] The Kurds hoped that after an Iraqi tribunal defined, in the summer of 2007, the Anfal campaign as genocide, the Arab world and international bodies would follow suit, but to no avail.[55]

The indifference regarding Halabja and the Anfal allowed room for greater engagement with the Kurdish issue at the turn of the twentieth century. Some Arab journalists reported the developments in Iraqi Kurdistan quite objectively, sometimes even with a kind of admiration verging on envy.[56] Others sounded the alarm bells regarding the rising power of the Kurds. One of these journalists warned against the "swallowing of Iraq" by the Kurds and "turning Arab Iraq with its more than seven thouthands years of civilization into the Kurdish region's tail." Under the title, "The Kurds are coming," another journalist spoke about the drive of "our brothers," the Kurds, to establish "greater Kurdistan" at a time when Arab Iraq was deteriorating steadily.[57] A third attacked the official status given to the Kurdish language, saying: "On what foundation did the legislators base themselves when they set the Kurdish language on the same level as Arabic namely, with the mother tongue that the inhabitants of Iraq in their various communities and components have been speaking since the dawn of Islam?"[58]

The Kurds were also accused of implementing the "imperialist project for splitting Iraq,"[59] of attempting to deny the Islamic identity of the state, and of refusing "to consider Kurdistan as part of the Arab nation."[60] The worst accusation was that they were Israel's agents, seeking to establish a "second Israel."[61] Reacting to such accusations, a Kurdish journalist maintained that the Arabs suffered from "the Kurdish Complex" and from "Kurdophobia," saying that "Iraqi and Arab pens" used "organized terrorism" to harm the Kurds and their leadership.[62] Mas'ud Barzani deplored the chauvinist and suspicious attitudes of the Arabs towards the Kurds, and their treatment as foreigners. Head of the Kurdish government, Nechirvan Barzani, complained that not only did Arab countries not extend any support to the Kurds, but that certain Arab and Muslim countries used secretly supported Islamist terrorist groups.[63] Regarding Israel, ambiguity was the rule. Most speakers stated that the Kurds had no such relations, and that they would not initiate such moves before the federal government. Moreover, they noted that Arab governments had had relations with Israel a long time before them—hence it would not be a sin for the Kurds to have such relations.[64]

Linked to this were the polemics that erupted between the Kurds and the Palestinians in October 2006, when the then Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority, Isma'il Haniyeh, referred to the *Peshmerga* as a gang. The Kurds reacted by accusing him of chauvinism and racism, by reminding the Palestinians of Yasir 'Arafat's support to Saddam Husayn, who had launched genocidal war against them, and by calling for the Palestinians to applogize for such support. They further stressed that the Kurdish question was no less just than the Palestinian one.[65]

While identity issues governed Arab-Kurdish polemics, the Arabs' main concern was the changing balance of power on the ground and their feeling of weakness vis-à-vis the Kurds. The collapse of the Iraqi state system went a long way to explaining this feeling. The flocking of Iraqi Arabs to Kurdistan in search of employment and security was an indication of their weakness at this moment of time, and of the new balance of power that was formed between them and the Kurds.[66] Similarly, the war of fratricide, which has been raging in Iraq for some years now, involved mainly Sunni and Shi'i Arabs, rather than Kurds and Arabs, as was the case throughout modern history.

This shift from national to religious strife has granted the Kurds a new status in the Arab world too, an illustration of which was the January 2007 appeal by Yusuf al-Qaradawi, head of World Union of Muslim 'Ulama', to the Kurds to help stop the war between Sunnis and Shi'is in Iraq. "I call upon our brothers the Kurds . . . Jalal al-Talabani and Mas'ud Barzani . . . the Islamic and patriotic Kurds to fulfill their duty in mediating between the two groups (the Sunnis and the Shi'is) since they (the Kurds) have influential power," he said.[67] This is another indication of the change of perception towards the Kurds, and their new role as power brokers in Iraq. However, not everybody took Qaradawi's call at its face value. Attacking Qaradawi's double standard and his manipulation of religion for political ends, one writer, Shakir al-Nabulsi, wondered where Qaradawi was when Iraqi governments perpetrated crimes against the Kurds of Iraq. Furthermore, he blamed Qaradawi for having issued *fatwas* (legal opinions) in 2004, calling for the killing of Americans and those who cooperated with them, knowing full well that this meant the Kurds themselves.[68]

Looking back at history, it should be noted that Arab attitudes towards the Kurds have always been ambiguous. On the one hand, there was a tendency to ignore the Kurds and their special identity, culture, and history, and on the other, to magnify the threat emanating from them. Anfal represented one pole, the burgeoning autonomy the other. Indeed, both the Arabs' denial of the Anfal and their magnifying of the autonomy threat reinforced the boundaries between Kurds and Arabs, thus helping the Kurds to further develop their different identity.

The Change of Heart in the West

The West's change of heart toward the Kurds went through two phases: the first was after the attack on Halabja; the second followed the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. The wide coverage by the international media of Halabja brought the Kurds sympathy and humanitarian support from certain

individuals and NGOs, but not much more. The open and strong support by Danielle Mitterand, wife of France's then President, François Mitterand, was a case in point. In fact, she turned out to be the most important supporter of the Kurds in the international scene following the Iran-Iraq War. In January 1989, Paris was the venue of a conference on the nonproliferation of chemical weapons, which the French president himself had convened after the attack on Halabja. In November of the same year, Danielle was involved in the convening of a Kurdish conference in Paris.[69] She also travelled to Iraqi Kurdistan, expressing publicly her sympathy with the Kurds. No doubt, the activities of The Kurdish Institute in Paris, headed at the time by Nezan Kendal, helped bring the Kurdish cause to her attention and that of the French people.

In the United States, Peter Galbraith, then staffer in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, also became involved in Kurdish affairs following the Halabja tragedy. Galbraith was instrumental in the Senate's passage of "The Prevention of Genocide Act of 1988," which actually called for imposing sanctions on Iraq.[70] However, the Reagan administration stopped the motion and even approved $1 billion in guarantees to Iraq.[71] In fact, the White House and some American journalists and scholars blamed the chemical attack on Iran.[72]

Initially, the new administration of George H. W. Bush sought to walk in its predecessors' footsteps. In a document titled "Guidelines for U.S.-Iraq Policy," the new administration stressed its intention to develop relations with Saddam's Iraq. Even though they described Iraq's human rights records as "abysmal," Bush's foreign analysts concluded that "in no way should we associate ourselves with the 60 year Kurdish rebellion in Iraq or oppose Iraq's legitimate attempts to suppress it."[73] It was only after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait that Washington began gradually and cautiously to change its stance vis-a-vis Halabja and the Kurds.[74] During the war over Kuwait, the U.S. administration used the Iraqi regime's chemical attacks against the Kurds as an important part of the justification for this "just war." No doubt, there was a lot of cynicism in this move, but in the final analysis, it did serve the Kurds' interests.

The reasons for the tilt towards the Kurds are too well known to be discussed here. However, its dramatic consequences need mentioning. Thanks to the U.S. umbrella, the Kurds enjoyed for the first time in Iraq's modern history real autonomy; the Kurdish issue was internationalized and their entity received certain legitimacy, with Kurdish representatives being established in Washington and other Western capitals at a time when Iraqi officials were banned due to the sanctions in the 1990s. The internal Kurdish war of 1994–1996 could have marred this support, but fortunately for the

Kurdish people, the United States stepped in to mediate between their leaderships, thus becoming even more involved in the issue.

Clearly, the change had to do with the entire U.S. establishment, yet certain individuals played a pivotal role. One of these was Peter Galbraith, who one might call "Balfour" of the Kurds. His activities included: lobbying for the Kurds in the U.S. administrations under different presidents; introducing Talabani and Barzani to the the corridors of power in Washington, where they had been personae non gratae; helping bring to the United States 14 tons of Ba'thi secret police documents captured by the Kurds in the aftermath of the uprising in March 1991[75]; and finally becoming the Iraqi Kurds' advocate in the media following the collapse of the March 1991 uprising and the flight of hunderds of thousands of Kurds to Turkey and Iran. In one of these interviews, which "struck a chord with many people," he said: "I asked, rhetorically, how George Bush [the father], who had compared Saddam Husayn to Adolf Hitler, could now allow a new holocaust while American troops were on Iraqi soil."[76]

After the 2003 war, Galbraith became the Kurds' chief adviser, suggesting, for example, that the Kurds write their own constitution before that of the central government, and adopt a certain formula of federalism, which would give priority to the constitution of Kurdistan over that of the state: "Any conflict between the laws of Kurdistan and the laws and constitution of Iraq shall be decided in favour of the former."[77] He went even further than the Kurdish leaders themselves by advocating the partition of Iraq and recognizing Kurdistan as a separate state: "Iraq's three-state solution could lead to the country's dissolution. There will be no reason to mourn Iraq's passing….Kurdistan's full independence is just a matter of time. As a moral matter, Iraqi Kurds are no less entitled to independence than are Lithuanians, Croatians or Palestinians."[78]

The Kurdish leadership is now on the horns of a dilemma. If it declares independence, it might invite attacks from all of its neighbors and lose all its achievements. But if it does not, then it might lose support of its public and the momentum. By choosing a middle way, it is taking bold actions on the ground while letting people like Galbraith make declarations.

Conclusion

The juxtaposition of different domestic, regional, and international factors made possible the Kurds' leap in post-Saddam Iraq. The relative internal cohesion and the development of the Kurdish *ethnie* (ethnic group) into a nation is the key to understanding this phenomenon. This is borne out by the fact that previous windows of opportunities were closed precisely because

of the Kurdish movement's weakness. The collapse of the Iraqi nation-state model and the shift of emphasis from the struggle between the Arab and Kurdish national movements to the Islamic Sunni-Shi'i struggle were other key facilitating factors. The Kurds' strength was highlighted against the weakness of the Arab world and the dilemmas of the three other countries with a Kurdish population: Syria, Iran, and Turkey. Each of these countries feared the establishment of a semi-independent Kurdish state, but each of them separately and together were unable, for various reasons, to stop the avalanche. Asked about fears of neighboring countries that, if realized in Iraq, the Kurdish dream might engulf the Kurds of other countries, Mas'ud Barzani said that there was no reason why Kurds should not realize this dream in those countries too, and that the Kurds of Iraq support their rights without interfering in their affairs.[79] Indeed, the three countries' relations with the Kurdish entity, especially in the case of Turkey, were more ambiguous than ever. On the declaratory level, Turkey, for example, was willing to go to extremes to stop the Kurdish project, but in practice, Ankara did business with Iraqi Kurdistan and even provided it with a lifeline to the outside world.

The sea changes in the international arena that were brought about by the collapse of the Soviet Union, the two Gulf wars, and, most importantly, the change of heart in the United States, formed the solid ground from which the Kurds could launch their project. The stakes are high, but it seems that the wheel cannot turn back anymore as far as the Kurds of Iraq are concerned. Taking a chance on prophecy, one can say that their autonomy is there to stay.

Visiting the region three years after the war, one journalist reported there was nothing to indicate that the Kurdish region was part of the Iraqi state.[80] Ayatullah 'Uzma Fadil al-Maliki went as far as to speak of two Iraqs: "al-'Iraq al-'Arabi" and "al-'Iraq al-Kurdi," saying that the Kurdish region was, practically speaking, separated *(munfasila)* from the Arab part.[81] The general picture that emerges is, therefore, of an Iraq that no longer functions as a unitary state, but as two units—connected via the Kurds at this moment in time.

Notes

1. *al-Hayat*, May 14, 2006, described this transformation under the title: *Kurdistan min al-anfal hatta al-istiqlal?* Kurdistan from the Anfal to independence?
2. Martin Van Bruinessen, "Kurdish society, ethnicity, nationalism and refugee problems," in *The Kurds* edited by Philip G. Kreyenbroek and Stefan Sperl, (London: Routledge, 1992), 47.

3. Peter Galbraith, *Saddam's Documents: A Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate*, May 1992, p. V
4. *al-Ittihad,* January 27, 2005.
5. *al-Mada*, December 17, 2006.
6. For this campaign and the meaning of the term, see Kanan Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1993), 156–178. Estimates on the number of Kurds who perished during that campaign were between 150,000 to 200,000. The government itself unintentionally admitted to 100,000. Quoted in David Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement: Opportunity, Mobilization and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 201. Kevin Mckiernan, *The Kurds* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006), 352.
7. The term *Anfal* has become part of the language baggage of the Kurds and even started to be used as an adjective: *mu'anfal,* namely a person who was subjected to the A*nfal* campaign. In 2007, there was a minister of the martyrs and the *mu'anfalin,* Janar Sa`d `Abdullah (a woman). *al-Ta'akhi,* 3 May 2007.
8. *al-Hayat,* May 14, 2006.
9. Institut Kurde de Paris http://www.institute.org/en/kurdorama.
10. Corruption has been the main problem militating against the solidarity of the Kurds with their leadership. Interview with anonymous, July 1, 2007.
11. *al-Ahali*, June 10, 2004.
12. Head of the Kurdish government Nechirvan Barzani emphasized that democracy reigned in Iraqi Kurdistan, part of which was free expression. He himself was severely criticized in the Kurdish media: *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, June 1, 2006.
13. It was claimed that Kurdish Islamists were behind the deed.
14. *al-Ittihad,* August 15, 2005; *al-Zaman,* August 21, 2006.
15. *al-Ittihad,* August 15, 2005.
16. "Country of Origin Information Iraq," Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), October 2005, p. 75 n.
17. KurdishMedia, March 27, April 4, 2006; January 6, February 8, 2007. http://www.kurdmedia.com/printarticles.asp?id=14206. South Kurdistan refers to Kurdistan in Iraq.
18. In May 2007, a signature collecting campaign was initiated for secularizing the constitution of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG). *The Kurdish Globe*, May 9, 2007.
19. Faleh A. Jabar, "Arab Nationalism Versus Kurdish Nationalism: Reflections on Structural Parallels and Discontinuities" *The Kurds: Nationalism and Politics,* edited by Faleh A. Jabar and Hosham Dawod (London: Saqi, 2006), 303.
20. There are some Kurdish Islamist groups who do carry out terrorist attacks, but the mainstream groups do not.
21. *al-'Arabiyya*, April 9, 2007.
22. It is noteworthy that, unlike under the Ba'th regime, the powers of the president are far fewer than those of the prime minister in the new governmental structure.
23. *al-Ta'akhi*, May 3, 2007.

24. At the same time, one ought to recall that the Kurds were the ones who began to challenge Ja'fari's candidacy to serve as prime minister after the December 2005 elections. The main reasons were Ja'fari's stepping on President Talabani's toes and the question of Kirkuk.
25. *al-Usbu' al-'arabi*, January 9, 2006.
26. The *Peshmerga* force was estimated at 70,000 members. *al-Usbu' al-'arabi*, January 16, 2006. Israelis were reportedly training Kurds in the region itself. *Yedi`ot aharonot*, December 2, 2005. The Kurds received weapons at the outset of the 2003 war and then captured large amounts of heavy weaponry from the retreating Iraqi army. Romano reported that he himself had seen 40 Soviet T-67 tanks in a PUK base. Romano, 214.
27. For a discussion of this period, see: Gareth R. V. Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan: Political Development and Emergent Democracy* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).
28. Low-keyed competition continues between the two camps, but it has not prevented them from forming a joint list in the July 2009 elections to the Kurdish parliament, or presenting a united Kurdish front vis-à-vis the Center.
29. Qobat Talabani, Jalal Talabani's son and the Kurdistan delegate in the United States, said that federalism is the minimum that Kurds would agree to (*al-Hawadith*, September 9, 2005). On another occasion, he said that Iraq would never again be a unitary state.
30. *al-Ta'akhi*, July 12, 2007. It is like saying that Washington and Los Angeles decided to strengthen their relations.
31. According to *al-Hawadith*, September 9, 2005, 95 percent of the Kurds were in favor of separation (*infisal*).
32. *al-Watan al-'arabi*, December 30, 2005.
33. Mas'ud Barzani referred to the *Peshmerga* as an organized army rather than a militia. *Al-Mushahid al-Siyasi*, June 11, 2006.
34. Romano, 220; *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, June 1, 2006.
35. *The Economist*, May 13, 2006. *al-Hawadith*, September 9, 2005, reported that they started opening embassies abroad.
36. Barzani was more outspoken than others about this decision. See, *al-Mada*, September 4, 2006. Another justification he gave was that the constitution stipulates the introduction of a new flag; this has not been acted upon yet. Barzani was willing to raise the flag that was in use during the Qasim period. The Kurds look at this period as a kind of golden era in comparison to the Ba'th. See *al-Ahali*, February 15, 2006.
37. http://david.national-anthems.net/krd'.htm
38. Hadi Elis, "The Kurdish Demand for Statehood and the Future of Iraq," *the Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies* 29 (2004):193.
39. Article 3 in the constitution provides that "Arabic is the official language, and together with it is the Kurdish language in the Kurdistan Region (*iqlim*)." *al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabi*, September 2005, no. 319.

40. Interestingly, Iraqi Arabs who found refuge in Kurdistan began to learn Kurdish. Sometimes the language for communication was English. *al-Watan al-`arabi,* April 11, 2007.
41. The Kurdish Ministry of Culture alone publishes 16 periodicals. *al-Hayat*, March 12, 2006.
42. See interview with the Kurdish poet Khalat Ahmad, http.//www.alarab.co.uk, December 25, 2005. Ahmad said that Arabic literary works were being translated into Kurdish, but there was very little interest among Arabs in publishing or translating Kurdish works.
43. *al-Hayat,* March 21, 2006.
44. In September 2006, the Kurdish government threatened separation from the state if it was not given a free hand in signing agreements of its own with companies willing to drill in the Kurdish area. *al-Zaman,* October 23, 2006.
45. A Norwegian company started drilling near Zakho at the end of 2005. Another joint Turkish-American company started drilling too. *al-Zaman*, December 1, 2005. Other companies include Heritage Oil Ltd., Genel Energy, China Petrochemical Corp., Gulf Keystone Petroleum Ltd., Vast Exploration Inc., and Sterling Energy Plc., see Marianne Stigset and Anthony DiPaola, "Kurdistan Oil Spat With DNO Signals New Risk in Iraq," http://www.bloomberg.com, 23 September 2009.
46. *al-Zaman*, October 23, 2006.
47. The foundation stone was laid by Talabani at the end of 2005. Also $250 million were earmarked for education in that region. *al-Mada,* December 13, 2005.
48. Several private banks were also opened by 2006. Mariwan Hama-Saeed, "Kurdish Banks Slowly Win Trust," ttp://www.krg.org, May 4, 2006.
49. It is claimed that between the years 1991 and 2003, the Ba'th regime exiled 300,000 Kurds from the Kirkuk area and promulgated a law forbidding teaching of the Kurdish language in this area, in order to Arabize it and pull out the rug from under Kurdish demands for including the Kirkuk area in their autonomous zone. *Al-Siyasa al-Duwaliyya*, October 2005, no. 162, p. 73.
50. *al-`Arabiyya*, April 9, 2007.
51. *al-Watan al-`arabi*, March 14, 2007.
52. Many Iraqi Sunnis reportedly said privately that the Kurds deserved it because they sided with Iran in the Iraq-Iran War (1980–1988). *The Economist*, June 30, 2007.
53. Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence*, 201.
54. *al-Hayat*, May 14, 2006. Ironically, Kuwait accused the media of fabricating lies to discredit Iraq, but little did it know that it would be the next victim. Quoted in Romano, 202.
55. *The Economist*, June 30, 2007. The court sentenced 'Ali Hasan al-Majid, architect of the Anfal, to death in June of that year.
56. This was true especially for *al-Hayat* and *al-Sharq al-awsat*.
57. *al-Quds al-'Arabi,* May 17, 2006*; al- Watan al-`arabi*, May 19, 2006.

58. Daham Muhammad al-'Azzawi, "Al-Ihtilal al-Amriki wa-Mustaqbal al-Mas'ala al-Kurdiyya fi al-'Iraq," *Shu'un 'Arabiyya* 124 (2005): 188.
59. The raising of the Kurdish flag was considered as the beginning of such process. *Al-Musawwar*, September 8, 2006; *al-Hawadith*, September 15, 2006.
60. *al-Mujtama'*, August 20, 2005.
61. *al-Hayat*, October 15, 2006.
62. *al-Ahali*, June 7, 2006.
63. *al-Sharq al-awsat*, June 1,6, 2006.
64. *al-Sharq al-awsat*, June 1,6, 2006; *al-Mushahid al-siyasi*, June 11, 2006. The Kurds had secret relations with Israel, especially between 1965 and 1975.
65. *Ilaf,* October 8, 2006; *al-Ittihad*, October 11, 2006; *al-Hayat*, October 15, 2006; KurdishMedia, October 28, 2006.
66. Arab physicians and lecturers, for example found their way to Sulaymaniyya. To overcome problems of language, there were translators in the hospitals to help Arab doctors understand the Kurdish patients*; al-Zaman*, August 1, 2005.
67. http://www.qaradawi.net, January 27, 2007; *Ilaf*, February 9, 2007.
68. *Ilaf*, February 9, 2007.
69. David Mcdowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, (London, I.B. Tauris, 2004, third edition), 458.
70. Peter Galbraith, *The End of Iraq* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 29–35.
71. Romano, 202. He further quoted U.S. congressman Paul Findley, who published an essay at the end of 1988 advocating good relations with Baghdad. Findley's essay "The US Stake in good relations with Baghdad" appeared in *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, (December 1988) Romano, 203.
72. Khaled Salih, "Iraq and the Kurds: A Bibliographic Essay," *Digest of Middle East Studies* 4 (1995), 24–39.
73. Quoted in Salih, "Iraq and the Kurds."
74. Jon Lee Anderson, "Mr. Big" in *The New Yorker,* February 5, 2007, 53.
75. Galbraith, *Saddam's Documents*, 1–8.
76. Galbraith, *The End of Iraq*, 55.
77. Galbraith, *The End of Iraq,* 161–162.
78. Galbraith, *The End of Iraq,* 206.
79. *al-'Arabiyya*, April 9, 2007.
80. a*l-Hayat*, March 12, 2006.
81. al-Jazeera TV, November 29, 2006.

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CHAPTER 4

Kurdish Leadership in Post-Saddam Iraq: National Challenges and Changing Conditions

Michael Eppel

From its founding in 1946 until 1975, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the main Kurdish national force in Iraq, displayed a marked dichotomy that reflected the basic fault lines in Kurdish society in Iraq. On one side of the fault were the conservative tribal/clannish forces, with feudal characteristics led by the charismatic Mula Mustafa Barzani, the president of the KDP, and the leader of the Barzani clan and its tribal and landowning allies. (One must note that the development of the Barzani clan and its ascendancy since the early nineteenth century was around the Sufi-Naqshbandi status of the Barzani shaykhs). On the other side were the modern, educated urban middle class activists, with leftist or Marxist world-views and even Communist inclinations.

This division, of course, is rough and imprecise, as among Mula Mustafa Barzani's supporters and admirers were intellectuals with leftist-nationalist tendencies, and his bitter rivals came from those tribal forces that opposed the Barzani clan and Mula Mustafa's supratribal aspirations to national leadership. Nonetheless, the members of the modernistic leftist wing could not ignore the clan/tribal affinities and the popular Sufi traditions of the Kurdish population. Barzani himself was a pragmatist, and in his speeches, and talks he adopted terms and concepts borrowed from leftist or even Communist jargon and discourse.[1]

During Mula Mustafa Barzani's exile in the USSR (1946–1958), the party was de facto managed by the educated leftist urban activists Hamza 'Abdallah and Ibrahim Ahmad, whereas Barzani's conservative deputies, the landowning Shaykh Latif Barzinji and Ziyad Agha, were pushed aside. Most of KDP activity between 1946 and 1958 was focused on the Kurdish intelligentsia, urban middle class, and some educated workers. Its influence on the tribal and rural population, the majority of Kurdish society, was limited. The central pivot of the internal political history of the Kurdish national movement in Iraq between 1958 and 1975—which, to a great degree, parallels the history of the KDP—was the struggle between Mula Mustafa Barzani and his conservative loyalists, on one hand, and his leftist rivals, who controlled the party politburo and the party cadres in the cities of Kurdistan and in Baghdad, on the other. In this, Barzani relied on the conservative tribal population, the tribal landowners, and a considerable portion of the *Peshmerga* fighters. He also, however, received some support among the intelligentsia, who viewed him as the charismatic popular leader capable of heading a national struggle. His rivals in the party leadership, Ibrahim Ahmad and Jalal Talabani, enjoyed the backing of the intellectuals, urban middle class, and workers. However Talabani, with his leftist Marxist outlook and his connections in leftist circles, and among the heads of radical nationalist regimes worldwide, did not refrain from exploiting the tribal-Sufi status of his family and their traditional roots in and around Sulaymaniyya, Kirkuk, and Baghdad.

Early in 1964, Barzani's relations with Talabani and his supporters controlling the KDP politburo reached a crisis, amidst differences of opinion with regard to their policy vis-à-vis the ruler of Iraq, 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif. Barzani decided to adopt a line of dialogue with 'Arif and concluded a ceasefire agreement without the consent of the party leadership, by circumventing the politburo dominated by Talabani and Ibrahim Ahmad.[2] The Ahmad-Talabani faction tried to dismiss Barzani from the presidency of KDP. By resolute use of his supporters among the tribal leaders and among the *Peshmerga* commanders, Barzani overpowered the KDP apparatus and the leading institutions, ensuring his domination in the party and the armed *Peshmerga* forces. Talabani and his supporters were forced to flee Iraq and to ask for shelter in Iran. Later in the same year, Talabani reached an agreement with Barzani and practically accepted his leadership.

The 1975 Algiers Agreement between Iraq and Iran, under the auspices of the United States, enabled the Iraqi Ba'th regime to suppress the Kurdish revolt. The collapse of the Kurdish revolt, the crisis in the KDP, and the death of Mula Mustafa Barzani opened a new chapter in the development of the Kurdish national movement. An outcome of the vacuum left by the

crumbling of the KDP and the collapse of the revolt was the accelerated growth of various leftist groups into a new left-leaning nationalist party and the renewal of the KDP. Jalal Talabani, the most experienced of the leftist Kurdish activists, became the leader of the new national force, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which was to continue the revolt and the national struggle, and to give the Kurdish national movement a leftist-revolutionary character. Among the PUK's cofounders was Nawshirwan Mustafa, a relatively young (born in 1944) intellectual and journalist who edited the Kurdish monthly, *Rizgary* ("Salvation"), and headed the nationalist leftist organization, *Komala* ("Association").

The coalescence of the PUK from various Kurdish nationalist leftist groups, against the background of ideological disputes and personal rivalries, proceeded slowly and not without difficulty until the early 1990s. Meanwhile, following the crash of the KDP in 1975, the party began a process of renewal and rehabilitation, led by the sons of Mula Mustafa Barzani: Idris, who represented the more conservative rightist wing and who has cooperated with the shah's regime in Iran; and Mas'ud, whose power lay with the central faction. A major role in the rehabilitation of the KDP was played by Sami 'Abd al-Rahman, who led a faction with leftist tendencies and had the status of a military commander admired by the Kurdish fighters. Severe internal struggles broke out along with the rivalry between Sami 'Abd al-Rahman and Idris Barzani. After Idris's death in 1987, Mas'ud Barzani became the leader of the renewed KDP, along with Nechirwan Barzani, Idris's son and Mula Mustafa's grandson.

Since the coalescence of the Kurdish national movement in its post-1975 bipolar format, the struggle between the two parties has grown more acute, at times deteriorating into armed struggle. At the same time, both parties fought against Saddam's regime. Nevertheless, on several occasions, one party chose the way of tactical cooperation against its rival or with the enemies of the Kurdish national movement: Saddam, or alternatively, with Iran.

Following the 1990–1991 war in the Gulf, with the help of the sanctions on Saddam's regime and the No-Fly Zone restrictions, which prevented him from imposing his sovereignty on Kurdistan, the Iraqi Kurds began to prepare for autonomous rule. It was actually the Kurdish state- (or autonomy-) building process that rapidly led to a full-blown civil war between the two parties, prompted by the inability of the Kurdish leadership, Kurdish society, and political system to make the transition from armed struggle to the compromises of civil politics.

The elections to the Kurdish parliament in 1991 resulted in a tie, with each party gaining 50 percent of the votes. The attempts by both

parties to break the deadlock by fostering satellite parties and exploiting local tribal forces in the political arena led to the outbreak of hostilities between them in December 1993.[3] The violent conflict has been complicated by the issue of collecting and dividing the customs revenues from the Ibrahim Khalil border crossing between the Kurdistan region and Turkey. The bloody civil war that began in 1994 ended only in 1998, following U.S. mediation. Iraqi Kurdistan was divided into two separate regions controlled by the rival parties. In this way, two governments coexisted, two bureaucratic mechanisms sprang up and proliferated, and two sets of military and security forces were maintained. The division of Kurdistan enabled stability and provided a way out of the domestic crisis, as well as for conditions for the tranquil development and initial rehabilitation of the area.

The attempts at compromise and reconciliation between the two leaders and their parties increased, along with the rising tension around Iraq and the growing prospects of war, in 2002. In light of the uncertain future of Iraq and Kurdistan, and in view of the awareness of the weakness into which they had locked themselves and the Kurdish national movement by their own divisiveness, Talabani and Barzani increased their efforts toward a dialogue. The leadership of both parties may also have understood that there was no chance of either party overcoming the other, and that the continued strife and hostility, with no possibility of either side prevailing, would weaken the Kurdish national movement as a whole, might lead to the loss of a rare historic opportunity to create a strong Kurdish autonomy or possibly even an independent Kurdish state, and would weaken their personal statuses. Talabani and the PUK saw that, with no territorial link to Turkey, they were at the mercy of both Iran—which viewed the Kurdish national movement with hostility, although prepared to exploit it for its own ends—and Saddam. Mas'ud Barzani and Jalal Talabani grasped that only a united Kurdish front would give the Kurds the weight they needed, both against Turkey and as an ally of the United States in its plans against Iraq. Both Kurdish leaders were forced to overcome their personal antagonism and the scars of the past.

These understandings underlay the formation of a united Kurdish front against the other forces in and beyond Iraq and, as a result, led to significant achievements for the Kurds. This dialogue made the process of unification of the two regions of Iraqi Kurdistan possible. This process, fraught with obstacles, was a prerequisite for building a basis for Kurdish autonomy within Iraq, as well as for the option of secession—in other words, building a state within a state. At the same time, the development of the autonomous Kurdish region—tranquil, economically developing, and possessed of

a significant military force—gave the Kurds increased strength within the violent and chaotic political situation in Iraq.

The understandings between the Kurdish leaders made a "division of labor" possible: Mas'ud Barzani was elected president of Kurdistan by both parties, while Jalal Talabani was elected first as interim, then permanent, president of Iraq.

The Kurds' Political Achievements in Iraq Since the Fall of Saddam

The coordination and agreements between the Kurdish leaders have helped them to reach significant achievements since the fall of Saddam's regime in 2003. In view of the internal divisiveness of the Shi'is and Sunnis, the two Kurdish parties have presented a united front, and the Kurds have gained an important position of power as a stable factor. Their realistic policy of accepting the existence of Iraq, while preserving the option of secession from it—an option alluded to, time and again, by the Kurdish leaders and Mas'ud Barzani mainly, often in the same breath as declaring their loyalty to Iraq—helped them to maneuver and bolster their status between 2003 and 2009.[4]

In order to realize their realistic national objectives—broad and secure autonomy within the framework of the Iraqi state—the Kurds require the establishment of a federal, decentralized regime in Iraq, recognition of Kurdish autonomy in the Iraqi constitution, and a secure status for Kurds in the institutions of the Iraqi state and its political system so that future political changes in Baghdad cannot undermine their autonomy. There must also be building of independent economic, military, and international strength for the Kurdish regional administration, including an option of secession from Iraq if conditions within the Iraqi state do not allow the Kurds to maintain a broad-based autonomy.

The Kurds have conducted dialogue and negotiations with Shi'i leaders and forces who support a federal structure for the Iraqi state. Delegations of profederalist Shi'is from southern Iraq, as well as 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Hakim, leader of one of the main Shi'i organizations, the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), reached understandings with the Kurdish leaders on the basis of support for a federal regime in Iraq and recognition of Kurdistani autonomy.[5]

On the other hand, the Kurds have tried to find a common language with those Sunni secular forces that oppose the transformation of Iraq into a Shi'i Islamic state, or at least tried to preserve the Arab Sunni interests.

Thanks to their outwardly united front, the Kurds made important political gains that gave them a strong position vis-a-vis the fragmentation

of the Shi'is and the Sunnis. Among their achievements was the inclusion, in both the Temporary Administrative Law and in the permanent constitution of Iraq, of paragraphs that legitimize the autonomy of the Kurdistan region and regional autonomy in general. Even supporters of a centralized regime in Iraq and opponents of the federative structure among the Shi'is and Sunnis recognized the inevitability of some compromise with the Kurds, and accepted the principle that the Kurds should enjoy some measure of autonomy.

Accordingly, another achievement was the inclusion of paragraph 58 in the Temporary Administrative Law, and the following paragraph 140 in the permanent Iraqi constitution, which will let the Kurds include Kirkuk in the autonomous Kurdistan. The issue of the implementation of paragraph 140 became a central issue of dispute between the Kurds and the governments of Iraq.

The Kurds succeeded in winning key positions in the new Iraqi government. Jalal Talabani was elected, first as temporary president, and since January 2006, as permanent president of Iraq. Hoshyar Zibari was appointed as foreign minister of Iraq. This position is especially important to the Kurds, for, by controlling the Foreign Ministry, the Kurds can supervise the moves of the Shi'i prime minister, and can prevent the Shi'is and Sunnis in the Iraqi government from negotiating with Turkey and Iran against the Kurds. Significantly, the cooperation between the Iraqi government (and its Arab majority) and Turkey and Iran throughout the twentieth century was based on common anti-Kurdish interests.

When the temporary Prime Minister of Iraq, Ibrahim al-Ja'fari, adopted a policy of rapprochement with Turkey, hoping to block the Kurdish federalist trends for fear they would become a basis for secession from Iraq, the Kurds turned against him. In January 2006, they prevented his election as permanent prime minister. The Kurds did not forgive al-Ja'fari for plotting with the Turks behind their backs, and provoked a severe crisis with the Shi'i majority in order to keep al-Ja'fari from becoming prime minister again. Ultimately, the Kurdish maneuver succeeded: the Shi'is relinquished al-Ja'fari's candidacy, and Nuri al-Maliki was elected as prime minister.

The Kurds were soon disappointed Nuri al-Maliki, who abstained from implementing paragraph 140 of the Iraqi constitution, calling for a local referendum that would decide the future of Kirkuk. The Kurdish leadership took a very firm stand regarding Kirkuk, putting constant pressure on the government and other forces in Iraq. The relations between the Kurds and Nuri al-Maliki remained mutually suspicious. While al-Maliki tried to strengthen the central government and to limit the remaining powers

of the Kurdistani Regional Government (KRG), especially regarding the oil concessions, the strategic aim of the Kurds remained strong autonomous regional government with broad authority in the framework of a federal Iraq.

Al-Maliki's success in stabilizing Iraq, reducing violence and terror, strengthening the central government, and bringing the main Sunni forces and the Shi'i radicals under Muqtada al-Sadr into the political arena posed the Kurds with a dilemma. They supported his efforts to stop the violence and stabilize Iraq. However, they were worried by al-Maliki's intention to shape a strong central government in Iraq while limiting the powers of the regions, mainly of the KRG. The visits of the Shi'i leaders, including Muqtada al-Sadr, to Turkey have aroused Kurdish concern of renewal of the strategic historical cooperation between the Iraqi government, Turkey, and Iran against the Kurds. Since 2008, there has been a constant growth of tension between the Kurds and the Iraqi government over Kirkuk and 15 other regions populated by Kurds, and demanded by them to be included in the Kurdistan region. But aware of the support that al-Maliki's government enjoyed from the United States, Turkey, and Iran, the Kurds have been cautious not to undermine al-Maliki's government, and not to sabotage the fragile process of stabilization in Iraq.

The Obstacles to Unifying Iraqi Kurdistan

The unification of the two Kurdish regions is key to the continued development of a sustainable Kurdish autonomy in Iraq.

The moves toward unification of the separate regions and regimes—which have existed de facto since 1993 and formally since 1998—began in 2001 when the challenge of the radical Islamistic movement *Ansar al-Islam* pushed the leaderships of KDP and PUK toward cooperation. In 2002–2003, in the face of the growing tension and probability of war in Iraq, Mas'ud Barzani and Jalal Talabani understood that without union, the Kurds would not be able to secure their status within Iraq. Nonetheless, the process of unification has proceeded slowly. The difficulties on the way to union resulted from a combination of factors. In the two regions, separate regimes and bureaucratic systems developed, along with regional interests that could be harmed by unification.

The slow pace of unification has given rise to frustration and ferment in Kurdish public opinion, and has exacerbated the criticism and mistrust of both parties and bureaucracies.[6] Mas'ud Barzani and Jalal Talabani were forced to intervene on several occasions in order to extricate the process from a dead end.[7]

Following the Kurdish parliamentary elections in January 2006, and subsequent protracted, rickety negotiations, a united government headed by Nechirwan Barzani of the KDP and 'Omar Fatah, his deputy from the PUK, was formed that June. The government has 42 serving ministers and 111 members of parliament. In each of four key ministries—defense, interior, finance, and justice—two ministers were appointed, one from each party, each in charge of the ministry controlled by his party.

The emergence of the opposition movement *Goran* during the election campaign in the first half of 2009 pushed the leadership and establishments of the PUK and KDP to close ranks, and accelerated the unification. The final unification of the key ministries was announced in February 2009.[8] The formation of the new government under Burham Salih from PUK, after the regional elections on July 25, was a practical step in the unification process.

The most complicated is the project of unification of the *Peshmerga* military forces. In February 2009, Shaykh Jaafar from PUK was nominated as Minister of *Peshmerga* Affairs of KRG. However, until the end of 2009, the process of unification is still unfinished. Mas'ud Barzani, in the Kurdistani parliament at the swearing of the new KRG cabinet on October 28, 2009, declared: "The Region's main responsibility is to create a single military force for Kurdistan Region. We cannot have forces loyal to political parties from now on. Other security agencies must also be formalized into legal institutions."[9]

Again, in November 2009, he spoke about the Kurdish decision to create the unified army, or Kurdish National Guard.[10] Only on December 27, 2009, Mas'ud Barzani chaired a meeting of the two commands of *Peshmerga* and insisted that there be one unified force under the KRG Ministry of *Peshmerga,* and announced the decision to form a committee to implement the unification.[11] The continuous repetitions of Mas'ud Barzani and Burham Salih of the intention to unify the *Peshmerga* military forces and the security and intelligence services are an indication of the difficulties in implementing this unification.

Even more complicated is the unification of separate security agencies, *Parastin* (Protection) of KDP and *Dazgay Zinyari (*Information Agency) of PUK. The coordination between *Parastin* and *Zinyari* began in 2001, in face of the challenge of the radical Islamist group *Ansar al-Islam.* The different security agencies have to be united under Law 46, passed by the Kurdistan National Assembly on November 2004. KRG's general security agency *Asayish* Kurdistan Region Protection Agency (*Ajanci Parastini Asayishi Heremi Kurdistan*, or in Arabic*, al-Hay'a al-'Amma li-Amn Iqlim Kurdistan*), with its counterterrorism and internal security directorate, has

executive powers. The *Parastin* focuses on the intelligence gathering, and the *Asayish* is responsible for the internal security and carries out operations against security threats. Masrur Barzani, son of Mas'ud, is the director of both agencies. (Masrur has headed the *Parastin* since 1999.) The unification of the security services presented a very special challenge. Among their main purposes and activities were the mutual intelligence, spying, and even subversion on the service of the two adversary parties.

Their unification demanded a high degree of reconciliation and mutual trust between the leaders of the KDP and the PUK, who used these services as the most confidential tools in their intra-Kurdish struggles. A great deal depends on the ability of leaderships to abandon their past status of being the sole controlling force of separate regions, in favor of a political game within the united Kurdish region. This calls for nonviolent politics and a willingness to accept compromises and limits, to abide by the law, and to refrain from exploiting positions of power and victories in order to suppress the rival party. In an interview in September 2008, Masrur Barzani was ambiguous and vague regarding the actual unification of the security apparatus of the two parties.[12]

In 2009, the PUK still preserved the factual domination over the *Asayish* apparatus in Sulaymaniyya. Pavel Talabani, the son of Jalal Talabani, has continued to play a central role in the *Dazgay Zinyari*, the security and intelligence apparatus of the PUK, and Masrur Barzani has continued to run the security and intelligence in Irbil and in the KDP region.

The Complex of Challenges: State Building and Domestic Social Ferment

The two leaders and their party mechanisms, which grew during the decades of armed struggle against the Iraqi forces and during the Kurdish civil war (1994–1998) to become provisional governments under constant threat, now face a society in a state of accelerated changes and transformations. Since 1990–1991, Kurdish society has been transformed through process of urbanization, weakening of the tribes, development of an urban middle class, expansion of secondary and higher education, media exposure, and the resultant transformations of values and ideology.

This was a society in which the traumas of deportation, suffering, hunger, and poverty—both under the Saddam regime until 1991 and during the Kurdish civil war of 1994–1998—are still quite vivid. Yet this is a society of contradictions. The developing modern educated middle stratum, which has adopted the bourgeois values and ambitions of a civil society, is focused on raising the standard of living, creating economic well-being, and

providing services. This is a society undergoing a change from tribal, rural, and folk Islamic values, norms, and discourses among the majority population (and the revolutionary-nationalist leftist values and discourse among the educated PUK and some KDP cadres) to capitalist, contemporary urban, individualistic, and materialist models. At the same time, although tribalism has been weakened, tribal affinities and identities still provide fertile ground for protectionism, nepotism, and corruption. Young Kurds see affluent lifestyles displayed on their television screens and maintain contacts with hundreds of thousands of ethnic Kurds working in Europe who enjoy a European standard of living. Unemployment, unrealized expectations for a higher standard of living, and frustration at the rate of development, which fails to meet the basic needs of the poorer strata and of the rapidly growing educated middle class, have created social ferment, outbursts of violence, and increased emigration by the young. The overall lack of jobs and the scarcity of employment opportunities for high school and university graduates, the dismal prospects for personal advancement, and other social failures have driven many young Kurds to emigrate. The unemployment, disillusion, and emigration of the young educated Kurds present very serious challenges to the Kurdish leadership. Tragically for Iraqi Kurdistan, the educated young Kurds, who are the modernizing social force and the basis of the modern middle class, are striving to build their future in Europe, the United States, or Australia.

Urbanization has accelerated as a direct result of poverty in the villages. Rising prices in Iraq and Kurdistan have made it harder for local farmers to compete with cheaper products from Turkey and Iran. This situation provides an impetus for abandoning family agricultural plots and moving to the cities.[13] The flow of rural population to the cities, which are expanding at a rapid and uncontrolled rate (the population of Irbil/Hewler, for example, had increased from 485,000 in 1987 to some 932,000 residents in 2007), brought about a rise in housing prices and a severe housing shortage. The level of basic services is hardly keeping up with the rapid rate of urbanization, due to the defective functioning of the municipalities and local government. The interruptions in electrical power and water supply, along with widening economic gaps, constitute a hotbed for social tension and outbreaks of violence. The enrichment of a broad strata of bureaucrats, contractors holding government contracts, and exporters, importers, and smugglers to and from Turkey, along with the frustration and unrealized expectations of the masses of poor young ex-villagers and graduates of the educational system, have formed a background for social unrest. Although Kurdistan is an oil producer and has considerable hydroelectric potential, the lack of local refineries and the dependence on Iraqi and

Turkish refineries and electricity suppliers have caused severe electricity, gasoline, and heating oil shortages. During the years 2003–2008, these shortages have more than once provoked riots, leading to the burning of gas stations. Notwithstanding the hydroelectric potential of Kurdistan, its delayed development has created a situation dependence on Turkish and Iraqi power stations and caused severe power shortages. Riots and demonstrations erupted in Sulaymaniyya, Raniye, and Akre in September and October 2005. Social ferment reached a violent, symbolic zenith in the riots that broke out in the town of Halabja in March 2006 amidst economic distress, lack of development, and accumulated anger at the corrupt and inefficient government mechanisms. An angry mob burned down the national museum, which commemorated the victims of the chemical weapons attack on the Kurdish population of Halabja by Saddam's forces. Riots and demonstrations also broke out in Sulaymaniyya, Chamchamal, and Darbandikhan in August 2006. These were in protest against the shortages of fuel, the interruption of electricity, and of the poor housing conditions and the unfair distribution of services. At the same time, the governor of Sulaymaniyya, Dana Ahmad Majid, declared that he agreed with the demands of the demonstrators.[14]

The economic development, building, and infrastructure projects in 2005–2009 created workplaces and contributed to the improvement in the economic conditions. The efforts of the KRG were focused on upgrading the supply of electricity and water, on constructing homes and improving housing conditions, and on building schools and hospitals.[15] However, it was not enough to meet the growing social expectations.

The social tensions stemming from the growing socioeconomics gaps, from the frustration of the young over unfulfilled expectations, the inefficiency, the nepotism, and the corruption, real and imagined, continue to be a serious challenge for the Kurdish leadership. The poverty, economic gaps, social tensions, and lack of social vision, plus the incompatibility of the political field, are conditions prone to foster anger and alienation that could endanger the ability of the Kurds to withstand the external pressures and to build their nation.

The Internal Struggles and Fragmentation of the PUK

Since 2003, social ferment and governmental corruption, inefficiency, and nepotism have increasingly preoccupied the critics of the Talabani and Barzani establishments and the leadership of both parties. In the last three years, both in the PUK and the KDP, more and more voices have been calling for reforms, democratization, and the eradication of corruption in

the parties and in the Kurdistani Regional Government (KRG) controlled by them.

The ranks of those critical of the party leadership have increased since 2003, when senior PUK officials reprimanded Talabani for his methods of running the party. Since 2005, when Jalal Talabani was elected the president of Iraq and was forced to spend most of his time in Baghdad, the oppositional forces in his party have increased. Talabani's absence from Sulaymaniyya, due to his duties as the president of Iraq, has apparently weakened his control over the party. Criticism is heard among members of the PUK in Kurdistan, with the support of party sympathizers in the entire Kurdish diaspora. The critics have pointed to corruption, nepotism, nondemocratic and nontransparent management in both the party and the regional government, and have demanded reforms within the party and separation between the party and government administration, security forces, and economic institutions.

The opposition has criticized the party's economic and fiscal conduct, and has argued that Talabani's adherents and central party activists took control of funds that reached the Kurdish region, and exploited their status for personal enrichment. Talabani was criticized for his authoritarian, tribalistic conduct. Nokan, the biggest trade, finance, contracts, and real estate company in Sulaymaniyya, is owned by the Talabani family. Many of this family members and adherents hold key positions in the Sulaymaniyya regional government and in Kurdish diplomatic representations in other countries.[16]

The call for reforms was headed by Nawshirwan Mustafa, Deputy Secretary General of the PUK, a respected intellectual and military strategist, and was regarded as an honest and uncorrupted man of vision.

Nawshirwan Mustafa's initiatives to introduce reforms to the PUK apparatus, to separate party politics, regional administration, and the security forces, and to root out corruption have been blocked by the PUK establishment. Senior members of the PUK politburo Imad Ahmad, Mala Bakhtiyar, Arsalan Bayiz, and Diler Sayid Majid put their own plan for limited reforms in the PUK. However, their plan was defensive of the members of the PUK apparatus. Very soon Mala Bakhtiyar,[17] the politburo's spokesperson, and Arsalan Bayiz, the head of the PUK organization bureau, both strongmen of the party apparatus, became rivals and critics of Nawshirwan Mustafa. The call for reforms became an issue in the internal struggle among the factions in the PUK. Nawshirwan met very strong opposition from central PUK activists and close followers of Talabani, who felt that their political status and personal benefits would be endangered by the proposed changes.

In response to the demand for reforms within the party and the ferment among its ranks, internal elections were held in September 2006. In the

elections, Talabani's adherents, with the help of Kosrat Rasul and Burham Salih, retained control of the party. The opposition claimed that the scales have been tipped by voting irregularities and forged ballots. In December 2006, Nawshirwan Mustafa and Hama Tawfiq Rahim resigned from the party leadership. Many considered Nawshirwan's resignation as the failure of the opposition, and believed that it would eliminate any chance of reforms and renewal within the party.[18] Others appealed to him to establish a new, independent party that will run a separate list in the regional election. Still others raised arguments against Nawshirwan Mustafa, claiming that, as Talabani's deputy, he had not used his powers,to promote the reforms and to eradicate corruption.[19]

At the PUK conference of January 2007, Jalal Talabani retained control, but was forced to cope with severe criticism that focused on domestic Kurdish issues and inter-PUK affairs.[20] However, the opposition accused Talabani of adopting an exaggeratedly pro-U.S. policy and clinging too closely to the United States. This criticism resulted, to some degree, from disappointment from the Americans' attitudes toward Kurdish national aims and what many Kurds perceived as central issues, such as oil, the local referendum about the fate of Kirkuk, and pressure on Turkey to show flexibility in its policy toward Kurdish autonomy in Iraq and the Iraqi Kurds. It may also, however, have reflected the tendency toward anti-U.S. ideological criticism among the Kurdish left. Nevertheless, the domestic Kurdish politics, the issues of democratization and transparency in the PUK and the KRG, and separation of party politics from state and regional administrations became the central demands of the opposition.

Following his resignation, Nawshirwan Mustafa established in March 2008 an independent media group, *Wusha* (Wisha) Corporation (Wisha Company for Media). He founded in 2008 the daily newspaper *Rozhname*, a website, an international satellite TV channel, and the *Wusha* research center. It seems that Talabani hoped to neutralize Nawshirwan by diverting him to media and intellectual fields. However, Nawshirwan used *Wusha* as a tool for promoting his ideas regarding the radical reforms in the PUK, in political parties in Kurdistan, and in the conduct of the KRG. *Wusha* became a center for the PUK intellectuals and activists who demanded reforms in the party and in the KRG. Nawshirwan wanted to strengthen his popular prestige as an uncorrupted leader with a social and national vision who combats the stagnant and corrupted bureaucracy, and in the future, he will be a worthy successor to Talabani. In September 2008, Nawshirwan presented his very detailed program for the reforms and basic changes in Kurdish politics, Kurdish political parties, and in the conduct and domestic, economic social policies of the KRG in three long articles published in

the daily *Rozhname*. In his article, "After All These Criticism What Can be Done?" Nawshirwan described the domestic situation in Kurdistan and sharply criticized both parties:[21]

> The two powers: the two parties PUK and KDP have usurped all the government bodies and institutions, wealth and finances of the country, the salaries and wages of hundreds of thousands of officials, employees, and pensioners. They control the fuel, property and food of the people. They can take them away and leave a family homeless and hungry on the street. The two powers have their own security force, police, Peshmerga and secret services. They have control over the courts and prisons.

The strong independent position and the radical criticism of Nawshirwan Mustafa irritated his rivals in the PUK. Since April 2008, a bitter dispute has raged between Mustafa, Mala Bakhtiyar, and Arsalan Bayiz. Mala Bakhtiyar accused Nawshirwan of using the money that he had received from the PUK to set up a scientific studies center for political purposes and against the party. Nawshirwan admitted that *Wusha* initially received financial support and a building from the Nokan Company, owned by the Talabani family.[22]

Whereas Talabani tried to maneuver vis-à-vis Nawshirwan, to appease him and to bring him back to the party, the chiefs of the PUK apparatus regarded Nawshirwan's popularity and his demand for radical changes as dangerous. During 2008, Talabani and Nawshirwan Mustafa held several meetings to try to heal the breach. But whereas Nawshirwan's intention was to introduce and to lead far-reaching reforms, first in the PUK rather than the KRG, Talabani wanted to preserve the unity of the party and the continuation of its grasp of the economy and politics.

On November 19, the PUK politburo established seven committees to discuss the party's problems and to propose solutions. Talabani himself proposed on December 18 to separate the party and government. After the failure to appease Nawshirwan and to reach some compromise, Talabani convened the politburo and published his own reform proposals on December 19.[23]

In October, four London-based PUK activists founded the Movement for Democratic Change (RAG). In its detailed program, RAG called for a democratic multiparty system, the building of civil society, and a ban on party militias.[24] The founders of RAG called on the party's "old guard" to resign. Apparently, the 2008–2009 internal struggle in the PUK was among three loose factions. The first includes Talabani's closest supporters, embedded in the PUK's apparatus and establishment, including Mala Bakhtiyar, Arsalan Bayiz, and Imad Ahmad. Whereas Talabani has tried to

preserve his leadership and the strength and unity of PUK by maneuvering and playing the role of the moderator, the—"older national leader"—some supporters of this trend sharply criticized Nawshirwan and demanded that he and his supporters be expelled from the PUK. The second group is the reform faction of Omar Said Ali, Jala Jawhar, Othman Haji Mahmud, and Mustafa Said Qadir, who demanded political reforms, eradication of corruption, and separation of the KRG's state, economy, security, and education from party politics and interference. Members of this faction had tried to return Nawshirwan to the party and opposed his expulsion from the PUK. The third faction is that of Kosrat Rasul, who demanded reforms but criticized Nawshirwan while reaching understandings with Talabani. Kosrat Rasul (born in 1952, deputy secretary general of the PUK and vice president of the Kurdisth region since 2006) enjoys support mostly in Irbil and in Kirkuk. (In 1977, Rasul founded the Kurdistan Students Union in Kirkuk.) Although Rasul served as prime minister in the PUK regional government in Sulaymaniyya in 1996, he is regarded by many activists there as an outsider.

The PUK establishment activists tried to use the meeting of the party politburo to expel Nawshirwan and RAG's supporters from the party. This was foiled by those who were worried by the domination of the anti-Nawshirwan faction and still hoped to bring Nawhirwan Mustafa back to the party.[25]

During winter 2009, Nawshirwan was joined by frustrated activists of the PUK who had understood the need for reform but had lost hope in seeing them implemented in the existing party framework. The escalating domestic struggle pushed a balking Nawshirwan to decide to run independently of the united PUK-KDP list in the Kurdistan region's parliamentary elections, which were postponed until July 25, 2009.

The new list, "Movement for Change" (*Goran*), was headed by Nawshirwan Mustafa and Jawhar Namiq, former speaker of the Iraqi Kurdistan parliament and former secretary of the KDP politburo. Nawshirwan Mustafa's decision to run independently in the elections in July 2009 created a new situation in Iraqi Kurdistan: the traditional bipolarity was shaken and maybe broken as a result of a split in PUK.

The Tightly-knit KDP and its Cracks

Whereas the PUK was always characterized by internal disputes, some personal, some ideological, and some both—a heritage of its intellectual, leftist leadership—the KDP was more consolidated around Mula Mustafa until 1975 and, since the end of 1970s, around Mas'ud Barzani's

leadership. Members of Barzani's clan hold the three key positions in KDP and in KRG:[26] Mas'ud Barzani, president of the party and of Kurdistan; Nechirwan Barzani, son of Mas'ud's late brother, Idris, and grandson of Mula Mustafa Barzani, was the prime minister of KRG until October 2009; and Masrur Barzani, Mas'ud's son, is in charge of the intelligence and security agency. Nechirwan and Masrur, both characterized by leadership abilities and administrative skills, hold not only considerable political power, but economic power as well. The fact that they hold key positions within the party certainly has not prevented them from accumulating economic power through private communications, contracting, and infrastructure companies.

Masrur, in September 2008, and Mas'ud, in March 2009, denied the rumours about tension and competition between Masrur and Nechirwan Barzani.[27]

The strongest and the most prominently independent non-Barzani leader in KDP was Sami 'Abd al-Rahman, who was assassinated in 2004 by Sunni insurgents. The conspicuous hegemony of the Barzani clan in the KDP and the Kurdish Regional Government mainly draws criticism by Kurdish intellectuals in Europe, the United States, and Australia.

In April 2009, a new political movement and separate list, the Kurdish Reform Movement (KRM), was initiated by veteran critic and opposition member Dr. Abdulmusawir Barzani, a lecturer of social sciences in the University of Sulaymaniyya. His program opposed the existing financial and administrative corruption and demanded adoption of a transparent policy vis-à-vis the regional budget and the eradication of nepotism. Abdulmusawir had, since the early 1990s, criticized the conduct of the KDP and the Barzani leadership; he also opposed the Kurdish civil war. That a scion of the Barzani family would run on a separate list has embarrassed Mas'ud and Nechirwan Barzani, even if the list doesn't enjoy wide public support. According to the opposition, Abdulmusawir Barzani and his supporters have been threatened by the KDP establishment and by the *Asayish*.

Nawshirwan Mustafa's decision to run independently in the elections of July 2009 created a new situation in Iraqi Kurdistan: the traditional bipolarity was shaken as a result of a split inside the PUK. Although the opposition had grown in the PUK and its criticism was focused mainly on the PUK and Talabani, it was also directed against the conduct of the KDP and the Barzanis' domination.

In February 2009, four parties—two of them Islamic (the Kurdistan Islamic Union [KIU] and the Kurdish Islamic Group [KIG]) and the other two secular-leftist (the Social Democratic Party of Kurdistan and the Kurdistan Toilers Party])—joined ranks and decided to run as the "List of

four parties for Reform and Services."[28] The head of this list became the leader of the KIU, Salah al-Din Baha al-Din. The list of four parties became the third major force competing in the July 2009 polls.

Faced with demands for reforms, the old guard leadership of both parties joined ranks. Yesterday's rivals, who had become the establishment of KRG, became strategic partners in face of the common social and political challenge. Mas'ud Barzani promised, after meeting with Jalal Talabani, that the KDP would not exploit the problems of the PUK: "We will be a true and faithful ally in their crisis under all circumstances." He said, "The unity [between the KDP and the PUK] is strong and strategic, and there is no way to forfeit it."[29] Nonetheless, the internal balance of power in the Kurdish Coalition was shaken and the PUK's position weakened.

Dr. Nuri Shawes, a member of KDP politburo proposed unification of PUK and KDP: "I think the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan will become one party."

In the elections of July 25, the Kurdistani List—the coalition of the KDP and the PUK—won 57.34 percent (59 seats of 111 in the Kurdish parliament), the "Change List" *Goran* won 24 percent (25 seats), while the Service and Reform List won 11 seats. A small militant group, the Islamic Movement of Kurdistan, based in Halabja, won 1.45 percent. In the presidential vote, Mas'ud Barzani won 69.7 percent. His main rival, London-based intellectual Dr. Kamal Mirawdelli, garnered 25.32 percent of the ballots.

Although the PUK-KDP coalition suffered a heavy blow, it managed to preserve its majority. The KDP leadership decided to stick with its strategic alliance with the PUK, weakened by the success of *Goran*, especially in Sulaymaniyya. According to the agreement, Burham Salih from PUK became the new prime minister.

This was the first time the ruling coalition had to confront, struggle, and cooperate with elected and legitimate opposition. The elections of 2009 may have launched a new phase in Kurdish history. The results were a product not only of a changed political environment, but reflect the transformation of the Kurdish society.

Conclusions

Thanks to their success in forming and maintaining a unified front of the KDP and the PUK, the Kurds have achieved critical success in the Iraqi political arena since 2003. Yet, while the national struggle remains unfinished, the sociopolitical developments in Kurdistan have created a need for democratization and for a change in political patterns. The effective political arrangement between the KDP and the PUK empowered the Kurds to

attain their very important achievements within Iraq, while creating the conditions for the first stages of unification and the building of an autonomous Kurdish region. However, the same arrangement has fostered a conservative political status quo and an obstacle in the way of the democratizing Kurdish politics, and to altering social and ideological conditions in Kurdistan.

The successful building of a strong civil democratic society in Kurdistan is a very important condition for the survival of Kurdish autonomy and for Kurdish nation building in the twenty-first century. The ability of the Kurds in Iraq to resolve the contradictions in preserving a unified front in the Iraqi and Middle Eastern arenas, while at the same time constructing a pluralistic, tolerant, democratic, and nonviolent style of politics, will be essential for the future of the Kurdish region in Iraq and the Kurdish national project.

The social transformations among the Kurds, especially the constant expansion of the educated middle stratum, the socioeconomic situation, the distress of the poor majority in the overcrowded cities, and the political ferment, have created a situation that required the leadership of both parties to carry out far-reaching reforms. Adjusting to the needs of a growing modern middle class—the creation of stable socioeconomic conditions and a vision of society that will be attractive for young educated Kurds to build their future—plus a continuous effort to narrow the socioeconomic gaps, are the basic conditions for successful Kurdish nation building. They are all essential for the Kurdish region's chances to maintain and fortify its wide autonomy.

The new social conditions in Kurdistan, the demands for democratization and transparency, the change of values with the growth of civil society and a capitalist-oriented economy, and the expansion of the urban middle class, plus the widening of socioeconomic gaps amidst social conflicts are all changing the social environment of the Kurdistani politics and the operational environment of the Kurdish leadership.

Yet the unfinished national struggle, constant threats and dangers stemming from the unstable situation in Iraq, and the regional threats and domination of the KDP and the PUK leadership through the economic, security, and party institutions all have created conditions that perpetuate the present political patterns and leadership. However, the democratization of politics is indispensable for the future of the Kurdish national project, as seen with the transformation of Kurdish society and the effect of changes in the dominant global discourse, since the end of the cold war, on the growing educated middle class.

The ability of the Kurdish leadership and the Kurdish parties to adopt themselves to democratic, pluralistic domestic politics, and their ability to

cope with the complex challenges of building a civil society and a dynamic economy, while presenting a vision of Kurdish society attractive to the young (especially the educated middle class), are and will be most essential for the future development of a safe, sustainable, and autonomous Kurdistan in Iraq, as well as for the future Kurdish national movement in general. The growth of the opposition, the List for Change under Nawshirwan Mustafa, are seeds of transformation in Iraqi Kurdistan and in the Kurdish leadership. Understandings regarding the political game rules, and patterns of cooperation regarding the basic Kurdish demands between the PUK and *Goran*, will be essential in order to avoid weakening of the Kurdish position in Iraq. Only the future will show how the Kurdish leadership—mainly the KDP, the PUK, and *Goran*—will adjust itself to the democratic and nonviolent politics and accept the political rules of parliamentary democracy, and what will be the impact of the changes in the domestic Kurdish political arena on the ability of the Kurdish forces and Kurdish leadership to coordinate their policy, vis-à-vis other Iraqi and regional forces, and to continue to preserve and fortify their regional autonomy and political achievements.

Notes

1. For example, see his speech in Baku in the former Soviet Union in 1948 in a book by his son, Mas'ud Barzani (with an introduction by Ahmed Ferhadi), *Mustafa Barzani and the Kurdish National Movement* (New York, 2003), 251–61, (Document no. 18).
2. Gareth R. V. Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan: Political Development and Emergent Democracy* (London and New York, RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 66.
3. Michael Gunter, *The Kurdish Predicament in Iraq* (New York, St. Martin Press, 1999), 67–109 and also Idem. "The KDP-PUK Conflict in Northern Iraq" *Middle Eastern Journal* Vol. 50 (Spring 1996), 225–441.
4. For example, see interview with Masu'd Barzani in *Peyamner Daily News,* August 5, 2005, www.peyamner.com/arabic al-*Sharq al-awsat,* November 18, 2005. Interview with Jalal Talabani, *Neue Zurucher Zeitung*, August 6, 2004: for English version, see www.kurdishmedia.com/mbr. See also an interview with Mas'ud Barzani*, al-Sharq al-awsat*, March 16, 2009.
5. *Peyamner Daily News* July 20, 2006, www. Peyamner.com; *The Washington Post*, July 29, 2009; *AP* from Irbil, January 5, 2007.
6. Mohammad Amin Abdulqadir, "Kurds still without government," Irbil, May 26, 2005, www.KurdistanObserver.com, May 28, 2006.
7. "Barzani and Talabani meet in Salah al Din: End of Deadlock" *Hewler Globe* (Irbil) no. 68, May 29, 2006.
8. "Iraq Kurds complete unification of ministries," *AFP* February 26, 2009, KurdishMedia.com, www.kurdmedia.com/article.aspx?id=15504

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11. *Peyamner News Agency*, December 27, 2009, www.peyamner.com/default.aspx?l=4 *Kurdistan Region Agency*, www.krp.org/eng/articles/display.aspx?gid=1&d=22312
12. Masrur Barzani interviewed in *al-Sharq al-awsat,* September 19, 2008. See also Amnesty International Publications, *Hope and Fear Human Rights in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq* (London, 2009), p.10, www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE14/006/2009
13. Muhammad Fatih, "Risks Facing the Agricultural Sector of Kurdistan" *The Kurdish Globe* no. 86, November 27, 2006.
14. "Demonstrators Arrested in Sulaimaniya," *The Kurdish Globe* no. 70, August 15, 2006. Michael Eppel, "State Building and Social Ferment in Kurdistan," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 31 (2008), 70–76.
15. *Kurdistan Region Presidency,* "President Mas'ud Barzani addresses Iraqi Kurdistani Parliament, sets election date for July 2009," Speech delivered by President Mas'ud Barzani at Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament, May 25, 2009, www.krp.org/eng/articles/display.aspx?gid=1&id=1641
16. Simko Azad, "Bloodline instead of merits: the Talabanis," www.Kurdishmedia.com, January 7, 2006.
17. The daughter of Mala Bakhtiyar's daughter is married to Jalal Talabani's son, Pavel.
18. Chama Chawshur, "Nawshirwan Mustafa: the hope that did not last," www.Kurdishmedia.com, December 5, 2006.
19. "Have your say: What is your reaction to the resignation of Nawshirwan Mustafa?", www.Kurdishmedia.com, December 6, 2006.
20. Nawshirwan Mustafa, "We and Them—What are the reasons for disagreements?" translated by Dr. Kamal Mirawdeli, www.Kurdishaspect.com, February 6, 2009, mhtml:file://F:\kurdebate2.mht.
21. Nawshirwan Mustafa, "After all these criticisms, what can be done?" www.Kurdishaspect.com, February 6, 2009, mhtml:file://F:\kurdebate 1.mht
22. PUK General Secretary Jalal Talabani's reform project, December 27, 2008, www.Kurdishaspect.com, 6 February 2009.
23. The four activists were Shorish Haji, Mala Khidr Mamend, Haval Kustani and Hoshiyar Abid "Movement for Democratic Change reforms the PUK," October 9, 2008, www.kurdmedia.com/article.aspx/id=15128. "Democratic Change Trend's Reform Project," February 6, 2008, www.Kurdishaspect.com.
24. An interview with Omar Said Ali, former politburo member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), April 21, 2009, www.KurdishMedia.com, or www.kurdmedia.com/article.aspx?id=15645.
25. For the personal composition of the Kurdish leadership, see the important article by Michael M. Gunter, "The Changing Dynamics in the Kurdistan Regional

Government (KRG) of Iraq," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 30, no. 1, Fall 2006.

26. Masrur Barzani to *al-Sharq al-awsat,* September 19, 2008.
27. "Report of four Kurdistani parties to Kurdistani public opinion," January 10, 2009, www.kurdisaspect.com, February 5, 2009.
28. The KIU, the third largest partner in the Kurdish Coalition, announced already in October 2005 that it was withdrawing from the coalition to run independently in the December 2005 elections for the Iraqi parliament. It won five seats out of 275. See Michael Eppel, "State Building and Social Ferment in Kurdistan," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 31 no 4, (2008), pp. 70–76. For the Kurdish debate over whether the "KIU is a successful model for Islamic liberals" or is an Islamist movement with a liberal façade that enjoys the wishful thinking of the United States, see Dana Newzer Ali, "Kurdistan Islamic Union, a Succes Model of Islamic Liberals," *Kurdish Aspect,* February 15, 2009, www.kurdishaspect.com/doc021509DN.html. See also Mufid Abdulla, "To KIU: Model of the Islamic Liberals cannot be successful," *Kurdish Aspect,* February 22, 2009, www.kurdishaspect.com/doc022209MA.html
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PART II

Aspects of Iraqi History under the Monarchy

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CHAPTER 5

Iraqi Democracy and the Democratic Vision of ʻAbd al-Fattah Ibrahim

Orit Bashkin

Nowadays, when the conversation on democratizing Iraq has faded in the shadow of the Iraqi civil war, many a neocon has turned self-reflective and postulated how the mission of democratizing Iraqi society turned into the current chaos. One prominent explanation was that Iraq was simply beyond redemption, or that its culture was so fathomlessly undemocratic that even the most sincere of efforts could offer no solution. The neoconservative universe, and especially its bloggers, quickly embraced this narrative. Within this context, Hugh Fitzgerald reminded his readers that Iraq was a land in which "the underlying ideology of Islam is opposed, in every fiber, to the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."[1]

The lack of democracy in Iraq had served as one of the main justifications for the war. Iraq was categorized as a nation whose tyrannical regime threatened the United States' democratic strength and needed to be removed in order to protect U.S. interests in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world.[2] Yet, what is troubling about the recent conversation concerning the failure to democratize Iraq is not only what it says about the present, but also the ways in which it reflects upon Iraq's past. Differently put: in their search for new scapegoats to be blamed for the present situation, Orientalist narratives about "Islam" and its effects on Iraqi political culture are utilized as a political ploy to explicate the situation in Iraq. It seems to me that our role as historians is to do what we (at least attempt to) do best: namely, to say

something of importance about the past, in order to rectify the ways the past is being used and abused in the present. Below, I examine democratic and pluralistic voices that typified the Iraqi public sphere during the 1920s and 1930s. I then look at a book of an important (though presently little-known) social democratic theorist who lived in Iraq and published during the 1930s. Finally, I make a brief leap to the present in order to link some of his reflections to current realities.

Democratic Iraq

The antidemocratic and authoritarian voices active in interwar Iraq have been well explored and studied. The important works of Reeva Simon, Mohammad Tarbush, and, most recently, Peter Wien documented the activities of the politicians, writers, and army officers who were utterly skeptical regarding the desirability and applicability of the democratic political system in Iraq. These works analyzed the militaristic movements in Iraq and examined the pro-German activity in the country during the 1930s.[3] Iraq's history in the interwar period is indeed colored by traumatic, violent events, orchestrated by, and conducted against, the state. The three provinces that made up the Iraqi state were occupied by Britain during World War I. The British occupation, however, faced a tremendous challenge in the form of an armed anti-British rebellion in 1920. Although initially a tribal revolt, it amassed enough momentum to become a moment in which Shi'i and Sunni elites collaborated against the British. After the revolt was crushed, an alternative to direct British rule was offered in the guise of a Hashemite monarchy, headed by King Faysal ibn al-Husayn (reigned 1921–1933), one of the leaders of the Arab Revolt. During the 1920s, Iraq was under the rule of a British Mandate. In 1931, following a treaty signed with Britain the previous year, Iraq was granted official independence, although the treaty allowed Britain to preserve its vital economic and geostrategic interests in the country. The state was ruled by elites affiliated with the Sunni Hashemite dynasty, such as former Ottoman Sunni officers who served in the Arab Revolt (the Sherifian), Sunni urban notables, and tribal shaykhs (mostly Shi'i and Kurdish) who supported the state in return for land ownership rights. The 1930s witnessed the radicalization of young elites who adopted radical, pan-Arab and anticolonial forms of nationalism. The army also became increasingly involved in politics and produced two military coups: one in 1936, inspired mostly by Kemalist models; and another in 1941, led by Rashid 'Ali al-Kaylani. The latter was extremely perilous to the British, because of its pro-German inclinations, and led to Iraq's reoccupation by Britain and the installment of a pro-British government. In addition

to the coups, tribal and ethnic tensions typified the sociopolitical realities of the state; Shi'i and Kurdish tribal revolts, the massacre of groups of Iraqi Assyrians by the army (1933), and the anti-Jewish riots that broke out in the aftermath of the Kaylani revolt (1941) had done much to increase the importance of militaristic voices in Iraq.[4]

In recent years, more attention began to be placed on the democratic and nonhegemonic voices in interwar Iraq. First, the nature of the Iraqi intellectual field was far more complex than previously imagined. In his thoughtful monograph, Eric Davis chronicled the activities of intellectuals who promoted a more democratic vision of the Iraqi state, noting in particular the actions of, as well as texts written by, Iraqi social democrats, reform-minded politicians, poets, activists, journalists, and Communists.[5] Second, historians, political scientists, and literary critics turned their attention to poets, religious scholars, journalists, and historians who, although quite influential, had not been sufficiently studied by scholars of Iraqi history.[6] In recent years, a few studies, especially Noga Efrati's works, examined the important achievements of female activists, feminist writers (both male and female), and women's organizations.[7]

Interwar Iraq, despite its veneer of democratic constitutional monarchy, was never a democratic state in the fullest sense of the word. Yet, in spite of rulership under nondemocratic powers, important voices demanded democracy and discussed its meanings. During the 1920s, the budding Iraqi press conducted serious debates about the significance of democracy, primarily because of the effects of the Wilsonian ideology and the democratic discourses about curbing the powers of sovereigns, which were discussed in the Arab press of the nineteenth century. The installment of Faysal as king by Britain and the construction of state institutions further advanced deliberations concerning the roles of parliaments, courts, and governments, and generated criticisms of writers, journalists, and poets who argued that British intervention prevented such institutions from fulfilling their democratic duties.[8]

During the 1930s, the ultranationalist activity in nationalist clubs and the spread of German propaganda in the country were challenged by democratic voices like Egyptian intellectuals residing in Iraq, religious scholars, the leaders of the nascent illegal Iraqi Communist Party, and Jewish intellectuals.[9] A social democratic association called *al-Ahali* group (*Jama'at al-Ahali*) presented a new democratic agenda. The group had not always pursued the most democratic of venues; it initially cooperated with the 1936 coup, defended the acts of the army in the Assyrian affair, and supported the 1941 coup. Nonetheless, it is vital to note that this was one of the few political groups that survived, albeit with forced intermissions, in the Iraqi public

sphere from 1932 until 1958. Starting from the 1930s, *al-Ahali* members published countless essays and editorials about the virtues of democracy, and organized campaigns and public activities to popularize the democratic principle. They emphasized the significance of human rights, the granting of basic freedoms, such as the freedom of thought, opinion, and speech, and bemoaned the absence of a truly free electoral system in Iraq.[10] The activities of all these groups in the 1930s thus indicate that the ultranationalist and antidemocratic movements in Iraq met with resistance by a nascent, yet influential, Iraqi opposition, comprised mostly of left-leaning and liberal intellectuals.

A Text and its Context: 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim's Introduction to Sociology

To exemplify my arguments about the importance of democratic voices in Iraq, I now wish to turn to the writings of one of Iraq's most original thinkers, 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim. Born in 1906 to a Sunni family, Ibrahim was schooled in Baghdad, where he graduated from high school in 1923. He later attended the American University in Beirut, and received his BA degree in history and political science (1924–1927). Ibrahim continued his graduate studies at Columbia University, working on his thesis under the supervision of Thomas Parker Moon (the thesis itself was never completed). It was Moon's influential work on colonialism that affected Ibrahim's views concerning the roles that global capitalism played in molding the politics of Great Britain in the Gulf during the nineteenth century. In Iraq, he worked as a high school teacher and as a writer and journalist. Ibrahim was central in the establishment of *al-Ahali*, whose manifestos he helped formulate. Ibrahim edited the group's newspaper, *al-Ahali,* and was a leading power behind two important ventures of the group, the Baghdad Club and The Society for Combating Illiteracy, which aimed at providing free education and increasing the rates of literacy among the country's peasantry. Ibrahim also wrote *al-Ahali*'s social democratic program, titled "People-ism" (*sha'biyya*). However, Ibrahim left *al-Ahali* because of his objections to its role in the 1936 coup. After World War II, he established a political party that sought to propagate his social democratic ideas, and was also involved in a reading society and a bookstore that gathered important writers and thinkers.[11]

Ibrahim's inspirational work, *Introduction to Sociology* (1939) (*Muqadimma fi al-l Ijtima'*), was an intellectual tour de force that covered the works of theoreticians and social scientists. The main thesis in Ibrahim's text was that social democracy was the most preferable form of political organization

in the modern world. Ibrahim contended that the individual's participation in the political process, and his or her ability to influence the nature of the community, were the essential signifiers that marked one's belonging to a national entity.

Ibrahim attempted, in a way, to ask, and answer, Ernest Renan's important question, "What is a nation?" He claimed that social links between groups began in primitive societies and were based on tribalism. Political structures became more complicated with the transition from hunting to grazing, and more profoundly, with the introduction of capital. Ibrahim then noted the development of the city-state (*polis*) as a sociopolitical and sociocultural unit, documenting their growth in Sumer, Akkad, and ancient Greece. This development was also linked to the rise of specific religions, as every such city-state had its own god. Monotheism emerged alongside, and in opposition to, the appearance of empires in the Middle East that incorporated many peoples and traditions and whose might relied on capital and slavery. The multiethnic nature of such empires and the critique of slavery led to the belief in one, universal God. In the medieval world, in which multiethnic empires continued to exist, this very same ideology spawned and constructed differences among peoples based on religious and dogmatic distinctions, instead of ethnic and tribal affiliations. The enemy, then, was the believer of the other religious creed, and was thus deemed the heretic and the unbeliever.

Nationalism was the product of social developments that began in early modern Europe and continued until the twentieth century. Changes in the nature of the global economy—mostly the transformation into capitalist markets and the rise of the middle classes, the invention of print, the development of national languages and their literatures, and geographic discoveries that led to economic competition and colonization—had minimized the powers of European kings, destroyed the feudal system, and curtailed papal control.

Nationalism was a philosophy and a form of social consciousness that offered new social bonds between individuals in society. Although nationalism was affected by cultural and social practices, it designated the links between the same people who enjoyed, and shaped, the same social and political structures of a sovereign political entity within recognizable borders. The objectives of the national entity were to secure the rights and freedoms of the individual. To Ibrahim, nationalism could be both constructive and destructive. A destructive form of nationalism was one which was based on exploitation, be it by privileging one class over another, by constructing the nation's might on colonialism, or by supporting tyranny, either within the boundaries of the nation-state or outside of it in colonized territories.

Ibrahim felt that at present, the gravest danger to democracy was posed by fascism, which represented a new type of regime at whose core was a leadership that was positioned above the law.

Positive nationalism, however, was epitomized by a regime that was constructed on democracy, a political system that allowed elected political parties to resolve conflicts within the state. Ibrahim emphasized that pluralism was essential to society in general and to a nation-state in particular. A nation in its positive sense secured social justice and labor rights, protected basic freedoms like the freedom of thought, opinion, and speech, and allowed the public's participation in decision making. As a socialist, he believed that the state ought to have a major role in the economy and support cultural projects, yet he underlined that these could happen without granting full democratic freedoms to citizens or fostering the system of multiple, elected political parties. Ibrahim postulated that democratic nations, despite racial or linguistic differences within them, were successful in molding a collective civic consciousness, since their citizens felt that they had a stake in the nation's present and future. On the other hand, Ibrahim felt that authoritarian states like czarist Russia, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, or the Ottoman Empire could not succeed in creating a distinct consciousness among their subjects because they were not based on democratic consensus and participation.

Like nationalism, democracy was a modern phenomenon that owed its existence to the French and Industrial revolutions and to mass education. While the Greeks, the Romans, and the Arabs were all preoccupied with the notion of politics (*siyasa*), which meant the management of the affairs of the state, modern social science provided different definitions of the state, which reflected the changes that occurred in the modern world. These changes facilitated the appearance of nationalism and of democratic theory in the widest sense of the term democratic theory. Communication and literacy, which were achieved through mass education, linked different parts of the nation and increased the involvement of the individual in the community. The democratic regimes that followed the Industrial Revolution, however, were not completely democratic, as they were structured upon a denial of labor rights and the production of capital via the colonial enterprise. Ibrahim, nonetheless, was careful to note that the struggle for rights carried out by labor organizations had not endangered the national principle, predominately because most of the labor organizations had, in effect, striven to have the modes of production come under the control of the nation-state.

Citizens become strongly linked to their nation through their political participation, their social consciousness and their voluntary desire to be included in the nation-state. However, Ibrahim considered ethnicity,

language, and culture as less essential to the formation of the nation. Ethnic identity was unimportant because a variety of ethnicities could develop a loyalty to the same territory, as had happened in the United States. Ibrahim's critique of ethnic nationalism was integrated into a more general criticism of theories of racial supremacy in Nazi Germany and the United States (referring to theories of American eugenicists and racial supremacists). Cultural elements were likewise put under scrutiny as cultures change with time. For example, Ibrahim showed that although the Germans currently took much pride in their cultural and ethnic superiority, the Romans many centuries ago had viewed them as barbarians, in the same way that contemporary Germans viewed the Blacks. The variety of cultures in this world should thus be attributed to people's needs and to means of production in a given society, and not to ethnic, cultural, racial, or linguistic features, which somehow remain resilient to sociopolitical change and determine the nature of the nation.[12]

This brief outline of some of Ibrahim's arguments does not do justice to the complexity of his work and the range of theorists and historical case studies he invoked. His views, moreover, might initially seem surprising since they contradict many features attributed to the Iraqi intellectual field. The 1930s are usually characterized, with much justification, as years in which the majority of intellectuals espoused pan-Arab beliefs. Such intellectuals emphasized the involuntary connections between members of a nation that are based upon language and a shared history, as lucidly articulated in the writings of the thinker Sati al-Husri (1880–1968). Ethnicity, namely the celebration of the unique virtues of the Arab peoples as a nation, was likewise esteemed by Iraqi nationalists as a category that defined the subject's national affiliation.[13] A cynical reading of Ibrahim's theories might, in fact, question their importance and wonder whether Ibrahim was merely a lone democratic voice lost in the antidemocratic cacophony surrounding him. Furthermore, he was not as influential as intellectuals who held leading positions in the state's bureaucracy, especially in its Ministry of Education, and his name is not even mentioned in the important works on Arab intellectual history published in English, which privileged other Iraqi writers.

The absence of Ibrahim from books on Arab intellectual history could be explicated by the fact that he had written primarily to an Iraqi audience, and published mostly in the Iraqi print market. Unlike Husri, for example, Ibrahim was relatively unknown outside of Iraq. Second, although he was not affiliated with the state's bureaucracy, Ibrahim did play an instrumental role in the formation of one of the most eminent political groups during the monarchic regime, *al-Ahali*. The group's positions represented a new theory of democracy, culled from a variety of sources and presented to the reading

public by its press. Ibrahim himself keenly sought to actualize his ideas via teaching, activities in the public sphere as a writer and journalist, and the establishment of parties and social organizations. Third, his views were far more complex and sophisticated, theoretically and methodologically, than those of most other Iraqi intellectuals during the 1930s. Lastly, his writings, not only about democracy, but also about colonialism and education, received attention from generations of readers in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. His works were quoted by the prominent nationalist 'Abd al-Rahman al-Bazzaz and the historian 'Abd al-Razzak al-Hasani, and were also mentioned in memoirs of Iraqi intellectuals. The readers and students he gathered around him were affected by his writings and appropriated them in their own works.[14]

Briefly then, Ibrahim's weight among thinkers affiliated with opposition circles, as well as the complexity and insightfulness of his ideas certainly, grant him a key role in Iraqi, and Arab, intellectual history that might change the ways in which we look at democratic discourses during the interwar period.

Conclusions

The 1940s and 1950s marked the rise of the left among the ranks of the Iraqi intelligentsia. This process increased the significance of the social democrats. Nevertheless, small groups of thinkers had been already active in the 1930s, in particular the *al-Ahali* group. After 1941, when the British expelled many radical nationalists, the left was ready to fill the gap created in the national and cultural arenas. Ibrahim was a product of U.S. culture. It was his U.S. academic experience that introduced him to new theories and disciplines, as well as the self-criticism espoused by American intellectuals of U.S. capitalism and their critique of U.S. and European foreign policies. Yet, we cannot reduce his democratic thinking to a mere reflection of his studies in the United States. First, he expressed some of his ideas already while in Iraq. Second, other Iraqi intellectuals who studied in the United States around the same time as Ibrahim returned with entirely different political positions. For example, educators Fadhil al-Jamali and Matta 'Akrawi (born in 1901), who both received their Ph.D.s in education at Columbia University, espoused pan-Arab nationalism, adopted certain fascist ideas, and sought to popularize them via their work in the Iraqi Ministry of Education. Two other Iraqis who studied engineering in MIT during the 1930s returned from Boston as avowed Communists and played a key role in the formation of the illegal Iraqi Communist Party. The Jewish thinker Ahmad Nissim Susa, who studied agriculture in Texas and Colorado and then wrote a Ph.D.

thesis on economic history in John Hopkins University, returned from the United States as a loyal Arab nationalist, married an American woman, and converted to Islam. In short: the U.S. experience had very different effects on different Iraqi intellectuals.

Ibrahim's career of the past is of importance to the Iraqi present. I pointed to his activity to underline the arrogance and ignorance embodied in the argument that Iraqis never desired a democracy, that Iraqi culture was historically hostile to the idea of democracy, and more broadly, to the anachronistic attempt to link what is going on in Iraq today only to its past. As historians, we should focus on contextualizing Iraq's present circumstances within its more recent history, and in particular Ba'thi dictatorship, sociopolitical processes that occurred in the 1980s and l990s, and the impoverishment of the state and its desecularization and neotribalization during the years of the sanctions.[15] Similarly, we need to consider what occupation had wrought to Iraq, rather than construct a narrative in which the occupation simply brought to the surface problems that existed in Iraqi society from time immemorial and were somehow kept dormant until very recently.

Notes

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2. A useful summary of this position is found in Michael Ledeen "Terror and Democracy in the Middle East," [posted on May 20th, 2004, and cited in the conservative *Middle Eastern Forum*: http://www.meforum.org/article/611].
3. Mohammad A. Tarbush, *The Role of the Military in Politics: A Case Study of Iraq to 1941*, London: Boston, Kegan Paul International, 1982; Reeva Simon, *Iraq between Two World Wars: the Creation and Implementation of a Nationalist Ideology*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1986; Peter Wien, *Iraqi Arab Nationalism: Authoritarian, Totalitarian And Pro-fascist Inclinations, 1932–1941*, New York: Routledge, 2006; on the role of patronage in Iraqi history, see: Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq,* Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
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5. Eric Davis, *Memories of the State: Politics, History and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005; see also: Orit Bashkin, *The Other Iraq,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009.
6. Muhsin J. al-Musawi, *Reading Iraq*, London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006; Dina Rizk Khoury, "Looking for the Modern: A Biography of an Iraqi Modernist," Mary Ann Fay (ed.), *Auto/biography and the Construction of Identity and Community in the Middle East*, New York: Palgrave, 2001; Hala Fattah, "Wahhabi Influences, Salafi Responses: Shaikh Mahmud Shukri and The Iraqi Salafi Movement, 1745–1930," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 14:2 (2003), 127–148.
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8. Bashkin, *The Other Iraq,* 19–52.
9. Bashkin, *The Other Iraq,* 52–61.
10. On the group and its activities, see: Bashkin, *The Other Iraq,* 62–73; Fu'ad Husayn al-Wakil, *Jam'ayat al-ahali fi al-'Iraq 1932–1937*, Baghdad: al-Jumhuriyya al-'Iraqiyya,Wizarat al-Thaqafa wa al-I`lam, 1980 [second edition]; Muzaffar 'Abd Allah al-Amin, *Jama'at al-Ahali: nushu'ha, 'aqidatuha, wa-dawruha fi al-siyasa al-'Iraqiyya, 1932–1946*, Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabiyya lil-dirasat wa al-nashr; Amman: Dar al-faris, 2001; For Memories and analysis written by former members see: Husayn Jamil, *Al-Hayat al-niyabiyya fi a-l'Iraq, 1925–1946: mawaqif jama'at al-Ahali minha*, Baghdad: Maktabat al-Muthana, 1983; Kamil al-Jadirji, *Mudhakkirat Kamil al-Jadirji wa-ta'rikh al-hizb al-watani al-dimuqrati*, Beirut: Dar al-tali'a, 1970.
11. Bashkin, *The Other Iraq*, 65–67, 132–133; Amin, 66–68; 172–177; Wakil, 172–189; The important work of Ibrahim's adviser was: Parker Thomas Moon, *Imperialism and World Politics*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932. Ibrahim never completed his thesis, but rather published it in Arabic: 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim, *'Ala Tariq al-Hind*, Baghdad: matba'at al-Ahali (*rasa'il al-Ahali*), 1935.

12. Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim, *Muqaddima fi al- ijtima'*, Baghdad: Matba'at *al-Ahali*, 1939.
13. On the positions of Husri and other pan-Arab Iraqi intellectuals, see: Bashkin, *The Other Iraq,* 137–156; Cleveland, *An Arab Nationalist;* Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, London: New York: Oxford University Press, 1962, 311–315; Haim, 42–44; Khadduri, 199–205; Bassam Tibi, *Arab Nationalism—Between Islam and the Nation-State,* Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997, 138–199; Yasir Suleiman, *The Arabic Language and National Identity,* Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2003, 126–146; Simon, 69–107; Ernest C, Dawn, "The Formation of Pan-Arab Ideology in the Inter-war Years," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 20:1 (1988), 67–91; Phebe Marr, "The Development of a Nationalist Ideology in Iraq, 1920–1941," *The Muslim World* 75 (April 1985): 85–101.
14. Works that reference his work include: 'Abd al-Rahman al-Bazzaz, *Muhadarat 'an al-'Iraq min al-ihtilal hatta al-istiqlal*, Cairo: Ma'had al-Buhuth wal-Dirasat al-'Arabiyya, 1954; 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Hasani, *al-'Iraq fi Zill al-Mu'ahadat*, Sayda: Matba'at al-'Ifran, 1947; `Abd al-Razzaq al-Hasani, *Ta'rikh al-'Iraq al-Siyasai al-Hadith*, Sayda: Matba'at al-'Ifran, 1957; on his important intellectual activity in the 1940s and 1950s, see: Nissim Rejwan, *The Last Jew in Baghdad: Remembering a Lost Homeland*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004, 147.
15. On these processes, see: Amatzia Baram, "Neo-tribalism in Iraq: Saddam Hussein's Tribal Policies 1991–96," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 29: (1997), 1–31; Faleh Jabar, "Sheikhs and Ideologues: Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Tribes under Patrimonial Totatlitarianism in Iraq, 1968–1998," in Faleh Abdul-Jabar and Hosham Dawod, *Tribes and Power: Nationalism and Ethnicity in the Middle East*, London: Saqi Books, 2003, 69–109; Keiko Sakai, "Tribalization as a Tool of State Control in Iraq: Observations on the Army, the Cabinets and the National Assembly," ibid, 136–161; Hosham Dawood, "The 'Stateization of the Tribe and the Tribalization of the State: The Case of Iraq," ibid, 110–135.

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CHAPTER 6

Women under the Monarchy: A Backdrop for Post-Saddam Events

Noga Efrati

The U.S.-led coalition occupation of Iraq and its attempt to build a liberal state has invited comparisons with the British endeavor in the wake of World War I. Scholars, however, in revisiting the period of the British Mandate (1920–1932) or the British-backed monarchy (1921–1958), have almost totally ignored gender issues. This, despite the fact that women's rights have been a high profile issue. The Bush administration proclaimed women's rights to be an integral part of its vision of a free and democratic Iraq, while the media has rung with fears expressed by Iraqi women's activists and supporters that under the U.S.-led coalition, women would be dragged back to the days of the monarchy.[1] In this article, I attempt to place the post-Saddam conflict over Iraq's Personal Status Law on the historical backdrop of the monarchy period, and offer insights that a gender perspective may yield. Its aim will be to deepen our understanding of the conflict and the position held by the three sides involved: women's activists, Shi'i clerics and U.S. officials.

In December 2003, the U.S.-appointed Interim Governing Council (IGC) headed by 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Hakim, the Shi'i cleric who also led the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), passed Resolution 137 to abolish Iraq's Personal Status Law. In force since 1959, Iraq's Personal Status Law had restricted child marriages and forced marriages, as well as polygamy. It had curtailed men's prerogatives in divorce and expanded women's options. It had also extended maternal child

custody and improved women's inheritance rights. The law was derived from various schools of Islamic jurisprudence, and it applied uniformly to all Muslim Iraqis through a state-controlled court system. In its place, the *Shari'a* (Islamic law) was to be applied in matters concerning marriage, divorce, custody of children, and inheritance, thus placing family affairs in the hands of religious authorities. Spearheaded by Iraqi women's activists, an intense struggle against Resolution 137 ensued. Activists feared not only the loss of rights contained in the law, but also that family matters would be extracted entirely from the realm of state legislation—the very channel which had made women's advancements possible. They also warned that Resolution 137 would lead to sectarianism and division in Iraqi society. Since 1959, explained retired judge Zakiyya Isma'il Haqqi, Iraqi family law has evolved under a series of secular governments, giving women a "half-share in society" and an opportunity to develop as individuals. "This new law will send Iraqi families back to the Middle Ages. It will allow men to have four or five or six wives. It will take children away from their mothers. It will allow anyone who calls himself a cleric to open an Islamic court in his house and decide about who can marry and divorce and have rights. We have to stop it."[2] Activists representing 80 women's organizations demonstrated at al-Firdaws Square in Baghdad, carrying placards that read: "No to Discrimination Between Women and Men in Our New Iraq" and "We Reject Decision 137 Which Sanctifies Sectarianism and Division in Iraqi Society and Family." Outside Baghdad (for example, in Kirkuk), women representing several Kurdish women's organizations demonstrated, and thousands of Kurdish women took to the streets at Sulaymaniyya.[3]

The outcry against Resolution 137 soon led to its repeal. Yet, later moves to undermine the Personal Status Law followed within the committee that was formed to draft the permanent constitution. The original deadline for completing the constitution was August 15 2005, but as late as mid-August, conflict continued between those advocating preservation of the existing law (the Kurds, liberal politicians, and women's rights activists), and those advocating its abolition (Shi'i clerics and religious politicians).[4] Eventually a clause was adopted—article 41 in the official text of the constitution. It stated that "Iraqis are free in their commitment to their personal status according to their religions, sects, beliefs or choices, and this shall be regulated by law."[5] However, while some interpreted this clause to mean that each individual would be free to choose between civil or religious family law, others claimed that the clause cleared the way for clerical domination over personal status disputes, which would lead to interpretations of Islamic law unfavorable to women. The language of the article clearly secured the

religious option, but did not mention the existing Personal Status Law nor clearly guarantee a secular option.

Kurds and Sunni politicians negotiating the constitution blamed U.S. diplomats for facilitating this outcome. Indeed, in July 2005, the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, had expressed his opposition to proposals turning over family matters to religious authorities. He said that a society cannot achieve its potential if it prevents half of its population from making their fullest contribution. At the end of August, however, as time pressed to complete Iraq's new constitution and Shi'i religious politicians were steadfast in their demands concerning the adjudication of family matters, Khalilzad backed language that gave clerics authority in settling personal status disputes.[6] It was obvious that women's rights, as enunciated in Iraq's existing laws, would be threatened as a result of the phrasing of article 41, yet Khalilzad described the final draft of the constitution as "one of the most progressive governing documents in the Muslim world." Iraqi women's activists were outraged. They called article 41 a return to pre-1959 conditions and a giant step backward.[7]

There was, in fact, good reason for activists to frame their protest against article 41 in terms of returning to the days of the monarchy. During the Hashemite period, Iraq had no civil law governing family matters, and the field of personal status, to a large extent, remained in the hands of the *'ulama (Islamic theologians)*. The Iraqi legal system at that time was a legacy of British occupation and Mandate. In 1917, the British occupation of Baghdad brought with it the collapse of the Ottoman legal system. The British, however, soon established religious courts to deal with cases of personal status among Muslims. Shi'i *qadis* (judges), excluded under the Ottomans from state courts, were gradually introduced into the legal system. The benefits of reestablishing religious courts and using the *'ulama* were clear to British officials. Edgar Bonham-Carter, who served as Senior Judicial Officer, explained that maintaining Islamic courts in Iraq allowed for giving a share in the administration of the country to an important and respected class of *'ulama*, from which the *qadis* were drawn, thus securing its loyalty and support. Legislation during the Mandate period carefully tied the *'ulama* to the legal system, but did not require personal status matters to be adjudicated in state courts, nor did it provide guidelines for court decisions. For women, this meant being left outside state protection from unfavorable rulings by *qadis*, for example, in custody disputes in which young children were taken away from their mothers. It also meant being unprotected from men's abuse of the Islamic law, for example, in divorcing hastily or arbitrarily.[8] During the 1920s, many among the urban intelligentsia in Iraq believed that the *Shari'a* courts were outdated; they advocated transferring

personal status cases to civil courts, and called for the legislation of a civil code regulating family matters in line with "the spirit of the period." British officials, however, dismissed such calls as unrepresentative, pointing to the respect the Shi'is in the southern districts still held for the decisions made by *qadis* of the *Shari'a* courts.[9] In 1925, the Organic Law (embodying the constitution of Iraq), "a gift from the West," as a British judge in Iraq had called it,[10] institutionalized the religious adjudication of personal status disputes. It prescribed that the *Shari'a* courts alone deal with actions relating to the personal status of Muslims, in accordance with those provisions of the *Shari'a* peculiar to each of the Islamic sects. Nigel Davidson, who, as Legal Secretary to the High Commissioner, participated in drafting the constitution, supported this provision. He said that as Islamic law is sacred and agreeable to "the nomad and agricultural Arabs of today," it was inevitable that it should find a place in the constitution.[11]

Actually, for the nomads and the rural population, the British had designed a separate legal system. The Tribal Criminal and Civil Disputes Regulation (TCCDR) gave British-recognized shaykhs the authority to dispense justice among those considered "their tribesmen" in accordance with customary law.[12] Introduced during World War I, the regulation was a cheap means to impose order over vast rural areas and secure the loyalty of those whom the British perceived as the appropriate leaders for the rural population. At the insistence of Mandate authorities, provision for a separate tribal jurisdiction was later included in the constitution and, in 1924, the TCCDR became state law.[13] The Tribal Criminal and Civil Disputes Regulation, despite its name, affected not only civil and criminal issues, but also personal status matters. Customary law in many places permitted, for example, forced marriages, such as the *fasal* marriage, in which women were given in marriage as part of a dispute settlement. It also gave the male paternal cousin first right to marry his cousin and the right to forbid her marriage to another (*al-nahwa*), even if he had no intention of marrying her himself. It allowed confiscation of a woman's *mahr (dowry)* by her father and the deprivation of women's inheritance rights, not to mention murder on the pretext of "honor." British officers pointed to the harsh consequences of these customs for women, but the official British position was that intervention might cause unrest, disrupt "tribal order," and could undermine a very effective tool for controlling the rural areas.[14]

Clearly, women's well-being was being sacrificed. When Bonham-Carter backed reestablishing religious courts for both Sunnis and Shi'is, in an effort to integrate '*ulama* in the administration of the country and to secure their support, he was aware of the price that women might pay as a result of unfavorable decisions. He knew that the rulings of the Hanafi and Ja'fari[15] legal

schools (the former is dominant among Iraq's Sunni Arabs, the latter among the country's Shi'i Arabs), especially those concerning divorce and child custody, often slighted women, but he emphasized that a Muslim petitioner whose case was settled according to Islamic law could bear no feeling of rancor against British officials or the government.[16] When Davidson backed *Shari'a* courts alone as being competent to deal with actions relating to the personal status of Muslims according to Sunni or Shi'i laws, he blamed Islamic law "for the deplorable status of women," but said that it was sacred and agreeable to the rural and nomad population.[17] A similar stand can be found regarding customs detrimental to women in the countryside. When British political officers, for example, were reluctant to facilitate handing over women in dispute settlements, and instead encouraged alternative monetary settlements, Gertrude Bell, the Oriental Secretary to the Civil Commissioner, advised against interference. Such interference, she believed, was incompatible with the valued "local justice," which promoted good conduct and order.[18] Placing matters of personal status in the hands of leaders of the different factions in Iraq—Sunni, Shi'i, urban, and rural—was a means for imposing order and securing loyalty to the new state, not to mention averting any feelings of resentment against the British for intervening with "local justice." But it left women citizens outside state protection from harsh customary laws and unfavorable interpretations of Islamic law.

Activists and scholars today are discussing article 41 and U.S. Ambassador Khalilzad's intervention in similar terms. Nadje al-Ali and Nicola Pratt noted that the new constitution of Iraq did not designate personal status law as among the areas to be decided by the central government. Therefore, it allows Kurd, Shi'i, and Sunni leaders to have separate laws, while still being tied to one state. By devolving personal matters from the state to religion, sect, and region, the loyalty of communal leaders was encouraged. But as the gates were opened to accommodate social and religious differences, they were also opened for undermining women's rights. Family law, according to Ali and Pratt, thus became "part of a 'social contract' trading communal autonomy for women's rights."[19] Ali and Pratt's awareness of the Lebanese example had led them to this conclusion, but Iraq's past is no less fertile soil for such insight. Pressed to secure order, the Americans, as the British before them, turned to communal leaders, leaving women outside state supervision, unprotected from unfavorable interpretations of Islamic and customary laws in the domestic realm. Now, as then, women's well-being is being sacrificed.

We will acquire a better understanding of today's conflict over the Personal Status Law the further we delve into the nature of the struggle. Shi'i clerics endeavoring to abolish Iraq's Personal Status Law have been

presented recently by activists and their Western supporters as fundamentalist misogynists. In an important and otherwise good report on women in Iraq since 2003, for example, it was claimed that for Iraq's Islamists, "the subordination of women is a priority of the first magnitude—because it is both a microcosm and a precondition of the social order they wish to establish. For this reason, the very first civil law drafted by the IGC was Resolution 137, addressing women's rights within the family. Similarly, the first battle in the drafting of Iraq's constitution was over these same family or personal status laws."[20] Clerics' opposition to state attempts to introduce a personal status law, however, can be traced back to the days of the monarchy, and they were motivated by more crucial concerns than the subordination of women. Their struggle becomes visible when, after the end of the British Mandate, serious efforts to introduce legislation governing family matters had begun. Toward the end of 1931, the Iraqi government resolved that the Ministry of Justice should form a committee to collect and reedit "*Shari'a* doctrines" concerning personal status, and to select and codify the provisions that "should be adopted and which suit the demands of the present time."[21] By 1933, a draft law was indeed prepared. The proposal, however, faced much resentment and opposition from religious circles, which prevented the proposal from moving forward. Nonetheless, the project was not abandoned. In the second half of the 1930s the Ministry of Justice continued working on a draft with the intent of submitting it to parliament.[22] In January 1945, another committee was formed to prepare a personal status law proposal, and by May of that year, it forwarded its draft to the Ministry of Justice. The new proposal was presented to the Chamber of Deputies in 1946. A memorandum in its regard was read just before the fall of the government in May 1946.[23] In 1947, the Committee for Judicial Affairs of the Chamber of Deputies urged that the draft should be enacted by parliament and be promulgated as a law. However, due to a change of government, the election of a new parliament, and clerics' opposition, the draft was shelved,[24] but was again discussed in 1952. After introducing several amendments into the proposal, the Committee for Judicial Affairs of the Chamber of Deputies recommended that parliament accept it. At the start of May 1952, the proposal was brought to parliament for debate, but again met fierce opposition by both Sunni and Shi'i clerics. Consequently, the law proposal was reshelved,[25] and between 1952 and 1958, there seemed to have been no effort on the part of the government to pass this or any such proposal. It is noteworthy that one conspicuous opponent of state legislation in the realm of personal status was Muhsin al-Hakim, the prominent Shi'i authority and father of 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Hakim, who facilitated the passing of Resolution 137.[26]

The reason for the '*ulama's* fierce opposition during the monarchy period, as noted by contemporary Western observers and expressed by Shi'i leaders, was their fear that transferring family matters to state courts and the codification of personal status provisions of the *Shari'a* would make them obsolete, as such measures would permit any civil judge to administer the personal status code without taking recourse to expert opinion. This, in turn, would adversely affect their prestige and income. Shi'i opposition was stronger, as they saw the code as an encroachment on the realm of their *mujtahid*s (scholars of law).[27] On December, 1959, a year and a half after the 1958 coup that overthrew the monarchy, the Republican regime of 'Abd al-Karim Qasim promulgated a Personal Status Law, realizing clerics' worst fears. A clear text eliminating differential treatment of Sunnis and Shi'is now allowed any judge trained and appointed by the state to rule on all personal status matters. Recourse to expert religious opinion was no longer necessary, and the realm of personal status was no longer controlled by the '*ulama*. Clerics' opposition continued.[28] True, during their struggle against state legislation, both before and after 1959, clerics put articles that improved women's position in the forefront. Proposed articles restricting men's rights and expanding women's options in divorce were targeted before 1958, and those giving women equal rights in inheritance were the focus for opposition after 1959. But these articles, in deviating from Shi'i Ja'fari and Sunni Hanafi laws or Islamic jurisprudence altogether, most obviously undermined the clerics' position as sole interpreters of the sacred law in general, and Ja'fari and Hanafi rules in particular. Clerics have been branded misogynists endeavoring to subordinate women, yet it is important to be aware that their main objective was to reclaim control over the realm of personal status, which they lost in 1959—to regain the power, influence, and income they possessed under the British-backed monarchy.

With clerics labeled as misogynists, there has also been, in turn, an effort to label Iraqi women's rights activists as anti-Islamic and unrepresentative of Iraqi society. Activists were often portrayed as detached from Iraq's realities, trying to impose secularism and foreign values. Thus, female Shi'i members of the ruling United Iraqi Alliance argued that Iraqi society is tribal, Islamic, and conservative, and rejects the secular Personal Status Law. They claimed that forcing secularism on Iraqi society is a form of dictatorship.[29] The activists' struggle, however, just as that of the clerics, can also be traced back to the early days of the monarchy. Already in the 1920s, members of the Women's Awakening Club, the first women's organization in Iraq, expressed their opposition to polygamy. Members of the government-supported Iraqi Women's Union (established in 1945) demanded a law that limited divorce and gave children to the parent who was best suited to raise them after

divorce. Members of the union, as well as activists associated with the Iraqi Communist Party and with the League for the Defense of Women's Rights (established in 1952), were greatly concerned with practices affecting women in the countryside. They protested against child marriage, forced marriage, and the confiscation of *mahr*s, which made women objects of sale. They objected that men wo hastily divorced their wives could leave women destitute and deprive of their children. They were appalled by practices such as the *fasal* marriage and the *nahwa*. Activists not only endeavored to affect legislation through protest, but also to take a decisive part in the legislative process. In 1959, the League for the Defense of Women's Rights, now called "The Iraqi Women's League," presented a draft law of personal status to the Ministry of Interior. The draft, prepared by a special committee studying personal status matters, was discussed and approved by the League's executive committee, and then submitted to the government. True, some activists believed in secularization of the law as a means to make men and women more equal. One of the most far-reaching reforms included in the law, which gave men and women equal shares in inheritance, was the result of the efforts of the League for the Defense of Women's Rights. However, many activists, among them Communists, were more concerned with misinterpretation of Islamic laws and with the harsh treatment of women by customary law in the countryside than with enforcing secularization.[30]

Activists' efforts to improve women's position in personal status matters through state legislation has a long history in Iraq—as long as that of clerics' opposition. Their credentials are no less authentic. For activists, the Personal Status Law was a venue to secure women's position in the state. It empowered their efforts to protect women from misinterpretations and unfavorable interpretation of Islamic law, as well as from harsh practices allowed by customary law. Many activists still see the Islam-based Personal Status Law as the best law for all Iraqi Muslim women, and today still demand that it at least be added as a clear option in article 41.[31]

Analysts have been quick to recognize the particular relevance of the royal period pertaining to current events in Iraq, but have almost totally ignored gender in their analysis. As we have seen, however, insights offered by a gender perspective place post-Saddam conflict over Iraq's Personal Status Law in a new light. Both activists and Shi'i clerics sought control over personal status matters in order to secure their position in the state. The Personal Status Law empowered activists, and was a main venue to improving women's position. Clerics' power depended, however, on maintaining absolute control over the interpretation of Islamic law in this realm. When the U.S. ambassador stepped in to resolve the conflict, he backed language that secured clerical authority in settling personal status disputes,

and opened the way to eliminating Iraq's Personal Status Law. Whether this was deemed necessary to maintain stability, or followed a plan to gain control by empowering communal leaders, for Arab Iraqi women, the outcome was the same. Again, they were left outside state supervision, vulnerable to unfavorable interpretations of Islamic and customary laws. In contrast to their British predecessors, however, the Americans had proclaimed themselves champions of women's rights, raising the expectations of those whom they would eventually fail the most.

Notes

1. See for example: "Nashitat: al-mukallifun bi-kitabat al-dustur mutalabun bi-al-i' timad 'ala al-qawanin al-dawliyya, *al-Zaman*, August 4, 2005; Dahr Jamil, "IGC Turns the Clock Back on Women's Rights," The NewStandard, May 2, 2004.
2. Pamela Constable, "Iraqi Women Decry Move To Cut Rights," *Washington Post Foreign Service*, January 16, 2004, p. A12.
3. See reports and photographs in: *al-Zaman*, January 14, 2004, p. 1; *al-Zaman*, January 17–18, 2004, p. 14; *al-Zaman*, January 19, 2004, p. 14; *al-Zaman*, January 21, 2004; *al-Zaman*, January 22, 2004; *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, January 28, 2004. For the full text of the decision see: *al-Ilaf*, January 15, 2004; *Mawsu'at al-Naharayn: Qawanin*, in http://www.nahrain.com/.
4. "Al-dustur al-'Iraqi: al-nuqat al-'aliqa," *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, August 8, 2005; "al-qadaya al-mutabaqqiya fi al-dustur," *Wikalat Karbala' lil-Anba'*, August 16, 2005.
5. See the official text of the Iraqi constitution at: *Mawsu'at al-Naharayn, al-Dustur* or in: http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects/constitution/constitutionindex.htm.
6. Dexter Filkins and James Glanz, "New U.S. Envoy Will Press Iraqis on Their Charter," *The New York Times*, July 26, 2005; Ellen Knickmeyer, "Kurds Fault U.S. on Iraqi Charter," *Washington Post Foreign Service,* August 21, 2005; Dexter Filkins, "Iraqi Talks Move Ahead on Some Issues," *The New York Times*, August 21, 2005; Dexter Filkins, "Secular Iraqis Say New Charter May Curb Rights," *The New York Times*, August 24, 2005.
7. "U.S. Ambassador Congratulates Iraqi Leaders on Draft Constitution, August 28, 2005," in http://iraq.usembassy.gov/iraq/20050828_khalilzad_statement.html; An interview with Maysun al-Damlujion al-Sharqiyya TV, downloaded on September 12, 2005, from: www.alsharqiyatv.com/display.asp?fname=aboutus\074.txt&storytitle.
8. Baghdad Wilayet Judicial Department, Report on the Administration of Civil Justice from the occupation of Baghdad to December 31st, 1917, pp. 183–184; "The Shara' Courts Law" see in: *Iraq Government Gazette*, 13 (July 15, 1923).
9. Khayri al-'Umari, *Hikayat siyasiyya min ta'rikh al-'Iraq al-hadith* (Baghdad: Dar al-Qadisiyya, 1980), p. 122; *Special Report on the Progress of Iraq During the Period 1920–1931*, pp. 78–79.

10. C.A. Hooper, *The Constitutional Law of Iraq*, (Baghdad: Mackenzie and Mackenzie, 1928), p. 15.
11. Nigel G. Davidson, "The Constitution of Iraq," *Journal of Comparative Legislation and International Law*, VII (February, 1925), pp. 49–50; Hooper, *The Constitutional Law of Iraq*, pp. 132–133 (article 76–77).
12. *Tribal Criminal and Civil Disputes Regulations* (Bombay: The Times Press, 1916), India Office (London) L/P&S/10/617; Tribal Criminal and Civil Disputes Regulation (Revised), in *Iraq Administration Reports*, vol. 8, pp. 144–156.
13. Hooper, *The Constitutional Law*, p.145, article 88(2); The Tribal and Civil Disputes Regulations Amendment Law of 1924, in Government of Iraq, Ministry of Justice, *Compilation of Laws and Regulations Issued Between 1st January 1924 and 31st December 1925* (Baghdad: Government Press, 1926), p. 63; Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq 1914–1932* (London: Ithaca Press, 1976), p. 241.
14. See James Saumarez Mann, *An Administrator in the Making: James Saumarez Mann, 1893–1920*, edited by his father (London: Longmans, Green, 1921), pp. 220–222; Administrative Report for the Qurnah Area for the Year 1919, in *Iraq Administration Reports*, vol. 4, pp. 269, and cf. Review of the Civil Administration of the Occupied Territories of Al 'Iraq, 1914–1918 in *Iraq Administration Reports*, vol. 1, p. 57; Review of the Civil Administration of Mesopotamia for 1920, pp. 17–18.
15. The word *Ja'fari* is in reference to followers of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, who, among the twelve recognized Imams of the Shi'i tradition, is considered the most competent in legal matters.
16. Baghdad Wilayet Judicial Department, is Report on the Administration of Civil Justice from the occupation of Baghdad to December 31st, 1917, pp. 183–184.
17. Davidson, "The Constitution of Iraq," pp. 49–50; Ireland, *'Iraq*, pp. 370–390; Hooper, *The Constitutional Law of Iraq*, pp. 132–133 (article 76–77).
18. Mann, *An Administrator in the Making*, pp. 220–222; Administrative Report for the Qurnah Area for the Year 1919, in *Iraq Administration Reports*, vol. 4, pp. 269, and cf. Review of the Civil Administration of the Occupied Territories of Al 'Iraq, 1914–1918, in *Iraq Administration Reports*, vol. 1, p. 57; Review of the Civil Administration of Mesopotamia for 1920, pp. 17–18.
19. Nadje al-Ali and Nicola Pratt, "Women in Iraq: Beyond the Rhetoric," *Middle East Research and Information Project*, summer 2006.
20. MADRE, *Promising Democracy, Imposing Theocracy: Gender-Based Violence and the US War on Iraq*, March 6, 2007. In: http://www.madre.org/articles/me/iraqreport.html#contents
21. Extract from Council Agenda, December 13, 1931, The National Archives of India, Baghdad High Commission File, Shara Courts Laws and Regulations, 8/117, Vol. 2.
22. Iraq Police Abstract of Intelligence, No. 16, April 19, 1933, and No. 17, April 27, 1933, PRO, Air 23/589, Vol. XV; *al-Istiqlal*, August 21, 1936, p. 2; *al-Istiqlal*,

March 8, 1938, p. 2; 'Ala' al-Din Kharufa, *Sharh qanun al-ahwal al-shakhsiyya* (Baghdad: Matba'at al-'Ani, 1962), vol. 1, p. 23.

23. *al-Qadha'*, 1 (May 1945), p.117; *al-Zaman*, 21 May 1946, p. 2; *al-Zaman*, May 29, 1946, p. 2.
24. J.N.D. Anderson, "A Draft Code of Personal Law for 'Iraq," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 15 (1953), p. 43.
25. *Sada al-Ahali*, April 29, 1952, p. 2; *Liwa' al-Istiqlal*, May 7, 1952, p. 2; *Liwa' al-Istiqlal*, May 8, 1952, p. 2; *Liwa' al-Istiqlal*, May 15, 1952, p. 2.
26. Muhammad Bahr al-'Ulum, *Adwa 'ala qanun al-ahwal al-shakhsiyya*, (Najaf, 1963), p. 10. Although no date was mentioned al-Hakim's comment that his opposition subverted government efforts to introduce such a law until 'Abd al-Karim Qasim's times indicates that he was referring to the developments in May 1952, as no real effort to introduce a new law of personal status was done from this date until 1959.
27. Anderson, "A Draft Code," p. 43; See also Chibli Mallat, "Shi'ism and Sunnism in Iraq: Revisiting the Codes," in Chibli Mallat and Jane Connors, eds. *Islamic Family Law* (London: Graham and Trotman, 1990), pp. 71–91.
28. Hani al-Fukayki, *Awkar al-Hazima: Tajribati fi Hizb al-Ba'th al-'Iraqi*, (London, 1993), pp. 274–275; Mallat, "Shi'ism and Sunnism in Iraq," pp. 71–91.
29. Farnaz Fassihi, "Iraqi Women Push Islamic Law on Gender Roles," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 9, 2005; Catherine Philp, "Iraq's Women of Power Who Tolerate Wife-Beating and Promote Polygamy," *Times Online*, March 31, 2005. See testimonies by Iraqi exiles in: Nadje Sadig al-Ali, *Iraqi Women: Untold Stories from 1948 to the Present* (London: Zed Books, 2007), pp. 253–259.
30. Ruth Frances Woodsmall, *Moslem Women Enter a New World* (New York: Round Table Press, 1936), p.115; 'A. Sh., "*al-Nahda al-niswiyya fi al-'Iraq*" *al-Mu'allim al-Jadid* 18 (1955), p. 80; Naziha al-Dulaimi, *al-Mar'a al-'Iraqiyya*, (Baghdad: al-Rabita, n.d.), pp. 8–9, 34–37, 41–42; Sabiha al-Shaykh Da'ud, *Awwal al-tariq ila al-nahda al-niswiyya fi al-'Iraq*, (Baghdad: al-Rabita, 1958), pp. 176, 224, 228.
31. See for example an interview with Azhar al-Shaikhli in *al-Ilaf*, February 26, 2007.

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PART III

The Ba'th Era and Beyond

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CHAPTER 7

Revisiting the Republic of Fear: Lessons for Research on Contemporary Iraq

Achim Rohde

Now that Saddam Husayn's rule over Iraq has ended, there is time to revisit the dominant scholarly paradigms for interpreting this particular period within the broader history of Iraq in the twentieth century. How do we make sense of the Ba'thist era? Was this calamity the result of structural deficiencies at the root of the Iraqi nation-building project, or were state and society merely highjacked by a gang of ruthless criminals driven by a totalitarian ideology? What made the regime last so long, and how did it function? Coming to terms with the history of a dictatorship also entails a comparative look at similar regimes and at the ways in which these have been conceptualized by scholars. To a degree, this serves to deprovincialize research on Iraq, and insert it into a wider comparative framework of research on authoritarian or dictatorial systems in the Middle East and elsewhere. Doing so is more than a historiographic enterprise, because the effects of 35 years of Ba'thist rule on state and society cannot be overcome by simply removing the regime itself. In the course of the years, authoritarianism has been deeply inscribed in the Iraqi political culture, and is unlikely to give way to a more democratic governmentality in post-Saddam Iraq anytime soon.[1] Furthermore, different lines of interpreting the Ba'thist era imply different sets of alternatives regarding the country's future. Understanding Ba'thist Iraq, therefore, is a necessary precondition for being

able to tackle the multiple challenges that Iraqis are facing in rebuilding the country today.

Ba'thist Iraq has long been considered by many scholars as an exceptional case unlike any other in the Middle East. Kanan Makiya, then publishing under the pseudonym Samir al-Khalil, has epitomized the tyranny that Iraqis endured during the three and a half decades of Ba'thist rule in his seminal study *Republic of Fear*, which has become the single most influential work written on Iraq under the rule of Saddam Husayn. The gist of Makiya's argument is that Ba'thist Iraq should not be considered an ordinary authoritarian system like many others in the contemporary Middle East, but rather be taken as a full-fledged totalitarian system akin to twentieth century dictatorships like Stalinist Russia, fascist Italy, or Nazi Germany.[2] In a similar vein, Reeva Simon reiterates the case for Iraqi exceptionalism in the Middle East, based on its history of anti-British militancy inspired and partly supported by Germany, and presents Saddam Husayn as the necessary climax of this development.[3]

This argument cannot be easily discarded, but it contains some significant flaws. At first glance, it seems compelling. While historical cooperation between Iraqi pan-Arabists and Nazi Germany remained limited, largely situated in the context of World War II and the Axis powers' halfhearted attempts to stir the British colonial hinterland into rebellion,[4] a brief survey of established definitions of fascism suggests that Ba'thist Iraq indeed shared a variety of characteristics with Nazi Germany, fascist Italy, and the (proto-)fascist regimes of central and eastern Europe during the first half of the twentieth century: the Leader syndrome, the celebration of mass politics, a cult of masculinity and youthfulness,[5] a pseudoreligious ideological trait,[6] and the ruthless resort to extreme violence as a means to achieve political stability were common to all those systems. Although not based on pseudoscientific racist theories, political practice in Ba'thist Iraq contained a racist dimension based on an ethnicized hypernationalism[7], showed anti-Marxist as well as anticapitalist leanings, and was as modern in its political practice as its worldview remained antimodernist, in the sense that it strove to achieve a cultural national renaissance of the Iraqi nation by "reconnecting" it to an "authentic" mythological past, which was to overcome the social fragmentation, cultural diversity, and political divisions of Iraqi society.[8] The Ba'th's nationalist utopia is embedded in a revolutionary avant-gardism that values belief in its message, adherence to party discipline, and submission to the will of a strong leader who acts as the embodiment of the nation. The modernism that, during the 1970s and 1980s, characterized the Ba'th's political discourse and the regime's

development policies was embedded in a reactionary project built on the idea of a homogenous Arab people, (understood here as a nation based on common ethnic origins) rooted in ancient tradition and headed by an infallible leader. This is a kind of reactionary modernism that has long been noted as characteristic of Nazi ideology as well.[9] The specificity of the Ba'th regarding this last point is that they identified the perceived negative effects of modernity with Western imperialism's domination of the Arab peninsula, adding an anticolonial flavor to its ideology.

Against this background, conceptualizing Ba'thist Iraq in the context of comparative research on fascism seems a promising endeavor.[10] Up until now, however, the argument is based more on circumstantial evidence than sound analysis, and it exclusively relates to the analytically more narrow paradigm of totalitarianism. Numerous members of the former (exiled) Iraqi opposition have addressed Ba'thist Iraq as an example of late twentieth century totalitarianism, and have linked Ba'thism and Nazism in terms of both their respective ideologies and their political practices. But such comparisons boil down to some occasional remarks pointing to the state terror and the Leader syndrome as common denominators of both systems.[11] If so many scholars agree on addressing Ba'thist rule in Iraq in the context of twentieth century totalitarianism, the lack of comparative historiography in this regard is striking. Even Makiya's work, by far the most serious move in this direction, is inspired mainly by Hanna Arendt's groundbreaking work on totalitarianism and pays no attention to more recent debates regarding the totalitarianism paradigm, or to the well-researched history of Nazi Germany to which he so insistently alludes in his characterization of Iraq under the rule of Saddam Husayn.[12] The same appears to be true for those who so strongly dismiss such comparisons as mere ideological smoke shells used by proponents of the strategy of regime change in order to legitimize the occupation of Iraq, but do not bother to seriously engage with the actual arguments that supported such reasoning. It becomes regrettably evident here that linking Ba'thism and Nazism, as well as rejecting such comparisons, forms part of a moral rather than an analytical discourse that easily lends itself to value-guided political arguments. In fact, even the Ba'th themselves have denounced political opponents by linking them to Nazism.[13] This author will add no further chapter to such controversies. I will merely point to a number of specific trends in scholarly debates concerning the history of Nazi Germany that might inform a critical perspective on the history of Ba'thist Iraq, with an eye towards the analytical potential of the totalitarianism paradigm for understanding the functioning of both dictatorships, which has been a bone of contention among scholars.[14]

Facing Dictatorships

To reiterate the historical uniqueness of Nazi Germany and the unprecedented dimensions of its crimes—first and foremost the attempted complete physical destruction of European Jewry—is to state an obvious difference between the two systems. Nothing that the regime of Saddam Husayn ever devised came close to reaching the dimensions of the Holocaust, not merely because it lacked the resources, but simply because it never thought of it. Yet, historiography of Ba'thist Iraq cannot ignore what appears to be a genocide committed against Kurds, carried out during and eclipsed by the First Gulf War (Iran-Iraq War) in 1987–1988.[15] To compare does not mean to equate. Rather, it serves to identify similarities and differences between different cases of mass killings, in order to learn how to prevent such deeds in the future. In this vein, Yehuda Bauer laid out a comparative framework for genocide research based on understanding the Holocaust, which he describes as a combination of ideological motives put into practice by a powerful modern state machine in an unprecedented (i.e., neither inexplicable nor unrepeatable) way, thus turning the Holocaust into a seismograph for exploring humanity's destructive capabilities in general.[16] Despite important differences between competing schools of Holocaust historiography, scholars have come a long way towards bridging the gaps between their respective interpretations of how and why the Holocaust happened. The important impact of structural factors (the composition of the German bureaucracy, the war, and economic, social, and political crises, etc.) that pushed the Nazi system towards the physical destruction of European Jewry is commonly acknowledged. But no one seriously disputes the central role of ideology in motivating and justifying the Holocaust, namely the impact of what was termed "redemptive anti-Semitism."[17] In contrast to the mainly ideological mechanisms underlying the Holocaust, Bauer identifies pragmatic motives (territorial expansionism, political control, etc.) at the root of most other historical cases of genocide, be it the murder of Native Americans at the hands of European settlers in the formative period of the United States, or twentieth century cases, like the massacres of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, the slaughter of Hutus in Rwanda, etc.[18] To this author's understanding, this distinction that Bauer makes seems somehow static; pragmatic and ideological motives were intertwined in most cases of genocide. Conceptualizing the Iraqi Anfal campaign against the country's Kurdish minority in 1987–1988 in the context of comparative genocide research might help to understand the character and the composite structure of the Ba'thist state and society at that stage, as compared to other twentieth century dictatorships.

Which ideological and/or pragmatic motives fueled such atrocities? To what extent were ordinary Iraqis involved in the perpetration of the Anfal massacres? How were the regime's crimes perceived in Iraqi society? Makiya's sweeping condemnation of Iraqi intellectuals and artists leaves no doubt as to his conviction that under the Ba'th regime, not only had civil society been destroyed by a totalitarian state that imposed itself on preexisting societal structures, but that the regime also succeeded in penetrating the hearts and minds of the people with terror and fear, a process by which it destroyed any trace of independent rational thinking in Iraqi society and which gained it the acquiescence or active consent of even the most educated and critical minds.[19] To the extent that the Ba'th managed to capture the state and to penetrate all parts of society, Iraqis were mobilized and absorbed into the expanding totalitarian state machine. The ascension of Saddam Husayn to the Iraqi presidency and his successful installation of a highly personalized dictatorship, along this line of thought, sealed the depoliticization of Iraq by marginalizing even the Ba'th party as the last formal collective political structure with any significance that remained operative in the country. Eventual cracks and fissures in the mask of national unity, and in the tyrant's total control over state and society, are dismissed here as ephemeral phenomena that lack any wider significance. No political realm could possibly evolve inside the totalitarian system, due to the silencing of political dissent and public debate under the Ba'th regime. Resistance could then only come from outside the system, from clandestine opposition groups engaging in armed struggle against the regime, or, ultimately, from a foreign power that liberates the country from the yoke of the dictator. This argument rests within the parameters of liberal political theory, according to which state and civil society are clearly separated entities, wherein the realm of politics is constituted in the arena of public debate and bargaining between various social actors on the one hand, and the state on the other hand.[20] Makiya's exclusive focus on the regime and its repressive apparatus falls in line with much of what political science literature has to offer regarding the comparative study of authoritarian systems. The impact of (neo)institutionalist frames of reference, and the marginalization of Marxist or Foucauldian approaches in this context, are evident.[21] This focus comes at a price: questions pertaining to the functionality and the normative power of specific regime policies under changing circumstances are rarely addressed, and the perception of the dictator and his inner circle as the "sole players" in Ba'thist Iraq is taken for granted, while the agency of any other actor within the state and society is deliberately denied.[22] Thus, the longevity of Saddam Husayn's rule in Iraq is taken as a sign for the stability of his

totalitarian regime over the years, despite multiple signs that pointed to the erosion and fragmentation of the Iraqi governing system for more than a decade prior to its fall.

One crucial question that should be asked in order to transcend this analytical lacuna is: How powerful are dictators? Could it not be that by accepting the notion of their absolute power, one falls into the trap of accepting, without further scrutiny, the projection of such power conveyed through the personality cult around them? Among the authors who indeed pose this kind of question concerning Iraq under the rule of Saddam Husayn is David Baran, a French social scientist who was among the very few scholars able to conduct field research inside Iraq before and after the fall of Saddam Husayn's regime. His work portrays various sectors of the governing system, challenging its perceived homogeneity and purely repressive character. Baran argues that the exclusive focus on the dictator and his repressive apparatus amounts to a mystification of totalitarian systems that serves to condemn such regimes on moral grounds, but is only partly capable of analyzing the range of governmental techniques applied by them and the degree of their success or failure.[23] His view of Ba'thist Iraq echoes historical research on other systems commonly perceived as totalitarian dictatorships: similar to the Iraqi case, a number of early works on the history of Nazi Germany had emphasised the autonomy of Adolf Hitler within the system and his absolutely central role in shaping the course of events. But since the 1970s, historians challenged the Hitlerism argument by focusing their research on the performance of the Nazi system in various interdependent sectors. As argued by David Baran regarding Ba'thist Iraq, historians of Nazi Germany, too, have held that the exclusive focus on the tyrant and his quasi-hypnotic powers tends to render inexplicable the mechanisms at work within the system and their impact on society. The exclusive focus on Hitler and his ideological goals risks obscuring numerous important factors like the state, the economic and war context, the (more or less) active consent by a majority of Germans, but also the (passive or active) resistance of a minority among them regarding the regime's policies, etc. Proponents of this line of interpretation portrayed Nazi Germany as a quasi-anarchic polycratic system characterised by a diffusion of power among the state, the party, and other institutions, as well as informal networks of corruption and patronage. In their search for the mechanisms that made the Nazi system work as it did, such "structuralist" works at times came close to drawing the picture of a weak dictatorship torn apart by crises and internal contradictions.

This line of thought, however useful it proved in developing a more detailed and complex view of German history under Nazi rule, ultimately

fails to explain the existence of a state machine that was intent on unleashing World War II and on organizing and perpetrating crimes of hitherto unimaginable dimensions. It is against this background that the so-called "intentionalist" view demonstrates its merits: it sees the rise of Nazism mainly as a revolution against constitutional democracy based on authoritarian ideology and an expanding modern state machine, and it conceptualizes the Nazi policies of war and genocide as the consciously planned implementation of the regime's declared ideological goals. Yet, its proclivity to the theory of totalitarianism renders the "intentionalist" line of interpretation prone to charges of being unhistorical and unable to explain the actual functioning of the system. An influential early work by Carl Joachim Friedrich and Zbigniev Brzezinski sets up an elaborate list of criteria defining "totalitarian dictatorships" that includes: (1) an ideology aimed against enemy classes or racialized groups; (2) a terror system targeted against enemy classes or racialised groups; (3) a state-led command economy; (4) a monolithic one-party system with an almighty leader at its helm; (5) state-controlled media; and (6) a monopoly on armed power.[24] Historians have since demonstrated the limited analytical value of such a static and idealized concept of totalitarianism by testing its validity on various empirical examples, including Nazi Germany itself. The disruptive effects that authoritarian pressures have on the efficiency of a state machine are often underestimated when looking at this kind of polity. The thorough penetration of state structures by the Nazi Party and its tendency to act as a parallel power structure that controlled and often bypassed formal state structures, generated a degree of friction within the system that compromises the perceived absolute control that Hitler's and similar other regimes were able to exert on the system as a whole. Yet, if internal friction and the diffusion of power among various actors in Nazi Germany compromised its perceived totalitarian character, the central role of the dictator himself as an integrative figure who managed to control this "authoritarian anarchy" often remains unaccounted for.[25]

When it comes to understanding the history of Ba'thist Iraq (or, for that matter, developments in the country since 2003), scholarly debates between "structuralists," who point to the tensions built into the modern Iraqi nation-state from its inception, and "intentionalists," who rather emphasize the dictator's (or the U.S. administration's) actions as having caused an intensification of intercommunal strife in Iraqi society, are reminiscent of debates among historians of Nazi Germany.[26] Many scholars of Iraq have held that repression, the destruction of civil society institutions, and the regime's skillfully employed "divide and rule" tactics intensified vertical and horizontal fault lines in Iraqi society, leading to

a renaissance of ethnic, communal, and religious group loyalties, most notably since the 1990s.[27] But the fragmented character of Iraqi society has often been emphasized with regard to the history of Iraq as a modern nation-state in general. Such works refer to the rifts that divide the three main ethnic/religious groups (Sunni Kurds, Sunni Arabs, Shi'i Arabs) and the rural-urban divides as the main structural problems that have historically impeded the emergence of a viable Iraqi polity. Many scholars highlight the traditional dominance of the Sunni Arab minority in Iraqi politics, initiated by the Ottomans and transformed by the British. True, Saddam Husayn's system of rule was built not only on thorough control of the state's repressive apparatus, but also increasingly on informal networks of patronage, held together by kinship and material interest. This process became most visible in the years after 1991, when the dictator openly aligned himself with various tribal groups at the expense of formal party and state structures.[28] Yet, this focus on vertical fault lines runs the risk of overestimating the power of communal identities like ethnic, religious, or tribal affiliation in Iraqi society over the years. At times, this perspective tends to paste over the historical mutability and heterogeneity of the three groups mentioned, and to ignore the active manipulation of such identities by the Iraqi Ba'th regime, whose long-term impact on society in general remains unclear.[29] Although it was convincingly argued that in Iraq "the significance on a day-to-day level of an individual's regional background, family, clan, and tribal affiliation continues to be more pronounced than in the long-established, settled urban and rural societies in some of the neighboring states,"[30] a degree of skepticism remains concerning the normative power of communal loyalties in Ba'thist Iraq, as compared to the influence of Iraqi nationalism. Such identities are no fixed formulas, but are being "constantly redefined and reconstituted, politically and socially."[31]

In sum, neither the intentionalist nor the functionalist line of interpretation in and of themselves seem to offer a sufficiently complex model to adequately capture the functioning of a dictatorship. One way of *empirically* evaluating the power of a dictator in such systems is to analyze specific sectors of the governmental system regarding the degree of the dictator's involvement, the level of coercion applied to sustain its functioning, and the degree to which such policies were successful. Following such a route, David Baran selects various sectors of the former Iraqi system, e.g., the military industrial complex, the security apparatus, the Ba'th Party, etc., and then points out areas of friction and disorder and a range of governmental techniques applied therein by the regime that are far more flexible than the somehow static mechanisms of

central governance based on pure repression, particularly during the last decade of Saddam Husayn's rule. By the same token, he is able to demonstrate the high degree of flexibility by which the regime weighed its actions and pragmatically adjusted them to changing circumstances and to dominant moods within Iraqi society. Baran argues that a growing degree of fluidity is the key to understanding the regime's longevity.[32] A similar picture emerges from the account of Pierre Darle, a French social scientist who spent 18 months doing field research in Iraq between 1998 and 2001. Darle was able to interview Baghdadi middle-class professionals, like teachers, architects, engineers, artists, etc., concerning their attitudes towards the regime and the character of their relationship with the government. He focuses on the rising communalism observed in Iraq during the 1990s and portrays the regime's governing techniques and state-society relations in late Ba'thist Iraq as marked by a growing distance between the ruler and the ruled, and an increasing ambiguity in its policies towards different constituencies that eventually allowed for the (re)emergence of "islands of civility," i.e., autonomous social spaces where the regime had little or no power.[33] These works correspond with Lisa Wedeen's inspiring study on the "ambiguities of domination" in Ba'thist Syria.[34] Without denying the unique features of Saddam Husayn's rule in terms of belligerence and the degree of violence directed against the country's own population, there seems to be more convergence between Ba'thist Iraq and other authoritarian systems of the Middle East than often thought.

Conclusions

While the value of this paper is mainly in posing a range of questions to be scrutinized by future research, it is suggested here that neither the "structuralist" paradigm with its proclivity to economic and administrative, ethnic, or communal factors, nor the "intentionalist" paradigm with its emphasis on elite politics, ideology, and a seemingly all-pervasive state leviathan, offers a sufficiently complex analysis of the kind of polities under scrutiny here. The relative autonomy and central role of the dictator within such systems, the character and the limitations of his power, remain a conceptual challenge for both approaches. Some recent French scholarship on Iraq, most notably by Baran and Darle, follows lines of investigation and interpretation of Saddam Husayn's dictatorship that have also been sucessfully tested by historians of other dictatorships, like Nazi Germany. Their empirically rich, if somehow unsystematic, works contribute to an understanding of Ba'thist Iraq that transcends the conceptual limitations of both approaches outlined

above.[35] Given the propensity of many scholars to read developments in post-Saddam Iraq as a vindication of the structuralist view of Iraqi history, the discussion outlined in this chapter serves as a cautioning remark against bending complex empirical realities to fit predetermined views and particular analytical paradigms.

Notes

1. Nicola Pratt, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Arab World* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2007).
2. Samir al-Khalil, *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq* (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989).
3. Reeva Simon, *Iraq Between the two World Wars: The Militarist Origins of Tyranny,* updated edition (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2004), 169.
4. Gerhard Höpp, Peter Wien und René Wildangel eds., *Blind für die Geschichte? Arabische Begegnungen mit dem Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2004); Renate Dietrich, "Germany's Relations with Iraq and Transjordan from the Weimar Republic to the End of the Second World War," *Middle East Studies* 41, 4 (2005): 463–479; Peter Wien, *Iraqi Arab Nationalism: Authoritarian, Totalitarian and Pro-Fascist Inclinations, 1932–1941* (London/New York: Routledge, 2006); Wolfgang G. Schwanitz (ed.), *Germany and the Middle East, 1871–1945* (Princeton: Marcus Wiener, 2006).
5. Hazim Saghieh, "'That's how I am, World!': Saddam, Manhood and the Monolithic Image," in *Imagined Masculinities: Male Identity and Culture in the Modern Middle East,* eds. Mai Ghoussoub and Emma Sinclair-Webb (London: Saqi, 2000), 236–248; Achim Rohde, "Opportunities for Masculinity and Love: Cultural Production in Iraq during the 1980s," in *Islamic Masculinities*, ed. Lahoucine Ouzgane (London: Zed Books, 2006), 184–201.
6. Hans Maier and Michael Schäfer eds., *"Totalitarismus" und "Politische Religionen": Konzepte des Diktaturvergleichs*, 3 vol. (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1996–2003). The religious undertones of Ba'thist pan-Arabism have been aptly discussed by al-Khalil, *Republic of Fear*, 189–91.
7. In Iraq the racist content of Ba'thist Arab nationalism was most visible in the regime's dealings with Iraqis of Persian origin during the 1980s and with regard to the Arabization policies applied in the Kurdish north of the country.
8. For a concise overview, see Wolfgang Wippermann, *Faschismustheorien: Die Entwicklung der Diskussion von den Anfängen bis heute* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997), 107–122.
9. Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
10. Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (London: Penguin Books, 2004).
11. In this vein, with or without explicit reference to Makiya, see Isam al-Khafaji, "War as a Vehicle for the Rise and Demise of a State-Controlled Society,"

in *War, Institutions, and Social Change in the Middle East*, ed. Stephen Heydemann (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2000), 287, fn 25; Rakiah al-Kayssi, "Sanctions in the Service of Tyranny and Dictatorship," *Al-Huquqi* 1, 1 (London, 2000): 31–39; Tariq Ali al-Saleh, "Baghdad's Regime and the Legislative Process," *Al-Huquqi* 1, 4 (2001): 5–49; Faleh A. Jabar, "State and Society in Iraq: A Totalitarian State in the Twilight of Totalitarianism," *Al-Huquqi* 1, 6 (2001): 14–31; Tareq Ismael, *Middle East Politics Today. Government and Civil Society* (Gainesville a.o.: Univ. of Florida Press, 2001), 80 and 209; Salam 'Aboud, *Thaqafa al-'Unf fi al-'Iraq* (Köln: Al-Kamel, 2002), 58–74.

12. For an interview with Makiya in which he defended the invasion of Iraq in 2003 as a just war against fascism, see *Der Spiegel* 16/2003, April 14, 2003. In a later interview, he described Iraq under Saddam Husayn as "one big concentration camp." See *Die Welt*, December 6, 2005.
13. Ofra Bengio, *Saddam's Word: Political Discourse in Iraq* (New York and Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998), 61 and 170.
14. For a survey of the main lines of research and interpretative paradigms regarding the history of Nazi Germany, see Klaus Hildebrand, *Das Dritte Reich*, 6th ed. (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2003), 141–325.
15. The most comprehensive study yet published on the Anfal campign is Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide. The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (New Haven/London: Yale Univ. Press, 1995). See also Khaled Salih, "Anfal: The Kurdish Genocide in Iraq," *Digest of Middle East Studies* 4, 2 (Spring 1995), 24–39; Martin Bruinessen, "Genocide in Kurdistan? The Supression of the Dersim Rebellion in Turkey (1937–38) and the Chemical War against the Iraqi Kurds (1988)," in *Genocide*, ed. George Andreopoulos (Philadelphia: Univ. of Philadelphia Press, 1994), 141–170. For a Kurdish account of the Anfal, see Ziyad 'Abd ar-Rahman, *Tûn-î Merg. Hêrišekan-î Enfal* (Suleymaniyya 1995). The title designates the Anfal as "burnt offering," in allusion to the term Holocaust. Among the first writings that signalled the scale of the Anfal, based largely on eyewitness accounts and official documents seized by Kurdish Pershmerga in 1991, is Kanan Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence: War, Tyranny, Uprising, and the Arab World* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1993), Ch. 4 and 5.
16. Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2001). For more on this debate, see Moishe Postone and Eric Santner eds., *Catastrophe and Meaning: The Holocaust and the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2003); Robert Gellately and Ben Kiernan eds., *The Spectre of Genocide: Mass Murder in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003); Eric D. Weitz, *A Century of Genocide: Utopias of Race and Nation* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2003); Adam Jones, *Genocide. A Comprehensive Introduction* (London/New York: Routledge, 2006).
17. Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. Vol.1: The Years of Prosecution, 1933–1939* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), 101. This term delineates a

pseudomessianic ideology of national salvation, which saw in the Jews a corruptive parasitic force bound to rule the world, whose elimination would give rise to a racially pure and supreme Arian race, which would then legitimately rule the world.

18. Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, 45.
19. Samir al-Khalil, *The Monument. Art, Vulgarity and Responsibility in Iraq* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1991), 117, 128/129. Terri de Young, *Placing the Poet: Badr Shakir al-Sayyab and Postcolonial Iraq* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1998), 10–12, has noted Makiya's slide into apocalyptic discourse and the dehumanizing and totalizing effects thereof on the way he presents events inside Iraq.
20. Al-Khalil, *Republic of Fear*, 125–128.
21. André Bank, "Die Rennaissance des Autoritarismus. Erkenntnisse und Grenzen neuerer Beiträge der Comparative Politics und Nahostforschung," *hamburg review of social sciences* 4,1 (2009): 10–41.
22. For more on this debate, see Marsha Pripstein Posusney and Michele Penner Angrist eds., *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistances* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 2005).
23. David Baran, *Vivre la Tyrannie et lui Survivre. L'Irak en Transition* (Paris: Mille et une Nuits, 2004).
24. Carl Joachim Friedrich and Zbigniev Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1965).
25. Ian Kershaw, "Hitler and the Uniqueness of Nazism," *Journal of Contemporary History* 39, 2 (2004): 239–254.
26. Stephen Blackwell, "Review Article: Between Tradition and Transition: State Building, Society and Security in the Old and New Iraq," *Middle East Studies* 41, 3 (2005): 445–452.
27. For a poignant discussion, see Sami Zubaida, "Community, Class and Minorities in Iraqi Politics," in *The Iraqi Revolution of 1958. The Old Social Classes Revisited*, eds. Robert A. Fernea and Wm. Roger Louis (London/New York: Tauris, 1991), 197–210.
28. Amatzia Baram, "Neo-Tribalism in Iraq: Saddam Hussein's Tribal Policies 1991–96," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29 (1997): 1–31.
29. For examples of this line of thought, see Ofra Bengio, "Nation Building in Multiethnic States: The Case of Iraq," in *Minorities and the State in the Arab World*, eds. Ofra Bengio and Gabriel Ben-Dor (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1999), 149–167; Reeva S. Simon, "The Imposition of Nationalism on a Non-Nation-State: The Case of Iraq During the Interwar Period, 1921–1941," in *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East*, eds. James Jankowski and Israel Gershoni (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1997), 87–104; Liora Lukitz, *Iraq. The Search for National Identity* (London: Frank Cass, 1995).
30. Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, "The Historiography of Iraq," *American Historical Review* 96 (December 1991): 1408–1421, quote 1411.

31. Eric Davis, *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Memory in Modern Iraq* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2005), 24.
32. Baran, *Vivre la Tyrannie*, 18/19.
33. Pierre Darle, *Saddam Hussein Maître des Mots. Du Langage de la Tyrannie à la Tyrannie du Langage* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003).
34. Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetorics, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1999).
35. For a broader discussion, see Achim Rohde, *State-Society-Relations in Ba'thist Iraq*: *Facing Dictatorship* (London/New York: Routledge, 2010).

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CHAPTER 8

Sadr the Father, Sadr the Son, the "Revolution in Shi'ism," and the Struggle for Power in the *Hawzah* of Najaf

Amatzia Baram

Introduction

Just when the bitter rivalry between Muhammad Muhammad Sadiq (M. M. S.) al-Sadr, Muqtada's father, and the senior religious establishment of Najaf started is not clear—nor are the deep roots for that rivalry fully known. However, possibly starting in 1992 and until it subsided in 2008, this was the worst family and faction feud that rocked the religious University of Najaf, and by 2010 it was not yet over. Possibly this rivalry is an extension of the dispute between the Najaf establishment and M. M. S. Sadr's paternal first cousin, Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, during the early 1960s, when they forced Muhammad Baqir to abandon Hizb al-Dawa al-Islamiyya, the Shii Islamist political party he had just established. As the senior clerics saw it, founding a secret political party was a dangerous departure from tradition. A senior cleric, they argued (Muhammad Baqir was by then already Hujjat al-Islam), should not be connected with a narrow political party. Rather, he should be equally available to the whole community of believers. Grand Ayat Allah Muhsin al-Hakim, father of the late Muhammad Baqir, the deceased head of the Supreme Council (or Assembly) of the Islamic Revolution in

Iraq (SCIRI), who himself had joined the Da'wa, and 'Abd al-'Aziz, the next head of SCIRI-turned-ISCI (the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq), somewhat reluctantly demanded that Sadr would announce that he severed his ties with the party. Sadr relented bitterly. He was eventually executed by Saddam in April 1980, but his followers never forgave the senior *mujtahids* of Najaf and their heavy-handed treatment of the party and its leader.[1] This may have started the interfamily rivalry between the Sadrs and the Hakims.

More likely, however, the rivalry was not the result of an "old" family feud (even though a family feud certainly resulted from it), but rather of M. M. S. Sadr's close collaboration with the Ba'th regime during most of the 1990s. Even though most senior Shi'i clerics who stayed in Iraq under Saddam kept a low political profile and made an effort to avoid clashes with the regime, it would seem that M. M. S. Sadr was particularly close to the regime and leader. So much so that Saddam allowed him in late 1997 to reintroduce mass Friday prayers at his Friday Mosque (*jami'*) in Kufa. Saddam even contemplated making him the [state-sponsored] *marja taqlid* (Supreme [Shi'i] Source of Authority or Emulation). Each of those regime favors was enough to arouse the ire of Sadr's colleagues. He won vitriolic criticism both in Najaf and in Qomm-Iran, from Ayat Allah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim who had found refuge there from Saddam's persecution. Friction was also evident between Sadr and his Najaf neighbor Grand Ayat Allah 'Ali al-Husayni al-Sistani, the true *marja' taqlid* of the Iraqi Shi'a (and of many outside of Iraq). The other three Grand Ayat Allahs of Najaf sided with Sistani. Sadr thus became fairly isolated at the top, yet he managed to recruit many of his ex-students, younger and more junior clerics, while directing his energies at winning grassroot support among the Shi'i believers, including much work among the tribes. Even though he had some success, and people initially flocked to his Friday prayers, by late 1998 it became clear that the image of a collaborator with the regime damaged him as less and less people were showing up for his Kufa mosque. Only small audiences came to the mosque to listen to him. Apparently this was the moment when he decided to confront the regime in his Friday sermons.[2] This eventually cost him his life. After he was assassinated, his supporters explained that he had always intended to come out against the Ba'th regime, but that he needed first to establish himself. Whatever the true intent behind Sadr's collaboration, his death exposed his critics to intense condemnation. Now the tables were turned: Sadr was a *shahid* (martyr), and his critics were accused of being spineless in their attitude to Saddam and his regime. As will be shown below, this challenge to their leadership

of the community, though, emerged to the media light mainly after the demise of the Ba'th regime.

What happened after Sadiq al-Sadr's death is seen by his followers as yet another reason for animosity. Muqtada's father, along with Muqtada's two older brothers, were assassinated in their car on the outskirts of Najaf in February 1999. This is widely believed to have been the work of Saddam's *mukhabarat,* the dreaded internal security apparatus. The assassination created a revolution atmosphere in the Shi'i areas, and violent demonstrations erupted mainly in Basra, Najaf, Karbala, Amara, and Baghdad's Saddam (later Sadr) City, the Shi'i two-million part of east Baghdad. In a few cases, there were actually armed confrontations between revolutionaries and regime forces.[3] The revolutionaries believed that they were promised support from the Hakim brothers-controlled Badr Brigade, acting under the umbrella of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). Badr had military camps near the border inside Iran, but no meaningful support came. The revolt was nipped in the bud. In Karbala a simmering uprising was eliminated without a shot being fired when Saddam ordered troops wearing gas masks and special white uniforms, designed to protect them against chemical weapons to surround the city. "The appearance of soldiers equipped against chemical warfare has caused terror in Najaf where there are well-founded fears that the government is prepared to use poison gas against them . . . A traveler who left Najaf recently said: 'everybody was so frightened when they saw the chemical warfare suits that they locked themselves in their houses. The streets were empty.' "[4] Following the quick suppression of the revolt, many who followed Sadr fled for Iran, and the movement suffered a major setback.[5] As emerged from interviews, Badr's inaction, too, was a reason for animosity between Muqtada and the Hakim brothers. A more general cause for resentment against SCIRI is not specific to Muqtada and his hard core of supporters, but is widespread among those young men who joined the movement and its Mahdi Army after the coalition occupation of Baghdad. Many of them had a grudge against Badr and SCIRI for having fled to Iran and having left them to confront Saddam and his oppressive system. Those old enough to have participated in the Iran-Iraq War still remembered that they had to fight Badr on the battlefield. Arab-Persian suspicions, too, played a role: Badr and SCIRI were seen as "Persianized," having spent many years in Iran, and were suspected of subservience to Persian interests. Finally, Muqtada also accepted into the Mahdi Army a number of ex-Ba'thi Shi'is, some even members of Fida'iyyi Saddam, 'Udayy Saddam Husayn's notorious militia. These

people had a good reason to fear the Badr Brigade that initiated a campaign of murder against ex-Ba'this.

The Betrayal of the Marja'iyya

In May 2003, Muqtada al-Sadr established his weekly magazine named, not surprisingly, *al-Hawza al-natiqa al-sharifa* (the Sublime Outspoken Hawza), thus implying that Sistani's Najaf-based *Hawza* (Circle of Religious Learning, or University) was neither sublime nor brave or outspoken. But rather than leaving it to the reader to conclude, Muqtada's magazine explicitly nicknamed Sistani's "the Mute" (or Silent, *al-samita*) *Hawza*. From its inception until it was shut down by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in March 2004, Muqtada's magazine incessantly criticized the senior clerics of Najaf for their cooperation with the U.S. occupation, and this criticism was not gentle. It presented Muqtada as the only popular leader among the Shi'a who persisted in defending Iraq against a foreign occupation. For example, in December 2003, the author of a leader in the magazine wrote that in Najaf there were "*marji' taqlid*, most of whom: The Persian [read: Sistani], the Afghan, the Pakistani [read: Ishaq al-Fayyadh and 'Ali Bashir al-Najafi respectively], alongside the Iraqi [read: Muhammad Sa'id al-Tabatabata'i al-Hakim, the uncle of Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, an Arab, born in Iraq] who chose [under Saddam] to stay isolated far from society and not to mention the suffering of the Iraqi people at the hands of the terrorist Ba'th regime." In other words, the magazine accused the most senior clerics of Iraq of surrendering to Saddam all the way, even before they surrendered to the Americans, and betraying their community. The senior clerics were accused of being against the "welding of politics and religion," and using this guise to legitimize staying aloof. They did not extend a hand to pat the head of an orphan or "to wipe a sorrow tear from the eye of a mother who lost her son or husband or brother." The same senior clerics claimed to lead the Shi'i world, but, at the same time, they were absent from the Iraqi scene. The people were left to face Saddam the tyrant on their own, without their leaders. The magazine argued that the very concept of the separation of state and religion, championed by the senior clerics, had no basis in Islam. Under the prophet and the first caliphs, and certainly under Imam 'Ali, religion and state were one and the same. And yet, those *maraji'* (sources of emulation) who were in charge of Najaf since 1972 (read: Grand Ayat Allah Abu al-Qasim al-Khu'i, *marja' taqlid* 1970–1992, Sistani, and their colleagues) stubbornly adhered to this false principle, even in the face of executions and torture of students of religion, '*ulama* and "even babies." Not even one protest was heard from the *maraji'*.

When M. Baqir al-Sadr and his sister, and many scholars from the Hakim family and the Bahr al-'Ulum family, were executed, the *marja'iyya* (a collective title for the most senior Shi`i clerics) remained silent. "The silence of these *maraji*' over the continuation of Saddam's operations was a message of support for continuing this oppression." Had the clerics protested, they would have swept with them their *muqallidun* (followers) and would have been able to stop those crimes. Worse still: the *marja'iyya* accumulated incredible wealth and transferred it abroad, rather than use it to help their community. They disappointed the people who expected them to rise and present the true Islam in the face of the oppressors. Even the senior *marja'* today (read: Sistani) was absent from all that happened under Saddam. He did nothing to weaken the Ba'th regime and stop the crimes. Even the murder of Grand Ayat Allahs al-Gharawi and Burujerdi and M. M. S. Sadr did not elicit from him any protest. M. M. S. Sadr asked the senior clerics in his Friday sermons to present a united position against the regime but they did not respond. It was as if Sadr "was preaching to dead people." They left him to fight the Ba'th regime alone. However, after Saddam was toppled, all of a sudden these senior clerics "found their tongues," but not for the good of the people. Muqtada's magazine accused that even now, "for fear of losing their huge treasures, they are silent over the suffering of the people. . . . Every one who follows those [people] and defends them is defending idols (*asnam*)," no less! Finally, the magazine used the ultimate propaganda weapon: these most senior clerics are not at all Iraqis. They are foreigners, and the magazine insisted that they should not get involved in Iraqi affairs. It suggested to them to shut up in the same way that they did under Saddam, or to return to their home countries that need them today.[6]

Following the assassination of M. M. S. Sadr, the Sadrist Movement lacked a widely recognized senior cleric inside of Iraq. Indeed, even its relations with its senior *muqallad* abroad, Ayat Allah Kazim al-Ha'iri in Qomm were somewhat ambivalent. The movement tried to alleviate this problem by relying on middle level, though respectable, clerics based in Iraq whose political connection to Muqtada was tenuous, but whose political positions were similar to his. One of those was a middle-level cleric and an ex-student of Muqtada's father, al-Sayyid Ahmad al-Baghdadi. Thus, for example, in an interview with the movement's magazine, Baghdadi came out against the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), the first governing body established by the United States in Iraq, and all other "collaborators" in a way that even eclipsed Muqtada's rhetoric. This government, Baghdadi asserted, was "the most false . . . cover" for unacceptable cooperation with the United States. "I reject the American occupation and Saddam's dictatorship in equal measures," he declared, and therefore, "I am not a hypocrite (*munafiq)* nor am

I a false messiah (or a trickster, *dajjal*)." There may be little doubt whom Baghdadi considered to be indeed both a hypocrite and a trickster: Grand Ayat Allah Sistani, though no names were mentioned. Seen from an Islamic point of view, he contended, it is forbidden that infidels would rule over believers; that is what the Qur'an tells us. Baghdadi did not reject altogether the concept of *taqiyya* (precautionary dissimulation). However, as he saw it, its purpose was to keep the unity of the Islamic nation (read: the Sunni-Shi'i community), not surrender to occupation. It is possible, he explained, that a "trickster or an agent leader" would tell the people that this is the time to practice *taqiyya,* meaning to collaborate with the Americans in the same way that we collaborated with the tyrant, Saddam. Quoting Sistani's supporters, Baghdadi warned that there are people who say that if U.S. forces leave Iraq, a civil war will immediately erupt. Those who say so are "liars and tricksters." Indeed, there are "a few" very senior clerics whose positions "are serving world Zionism," as well as the occupier and their own egotistical interests. These positions go contrary to the people's needs. "Every one who adds [this way] to the suffering of the people and harms religion is an agent and a traitor." Baghdadi even goes so far as to absolve Saddam from fomenting civil war and chaos, and laying the blame for divisions within the Iraqi community on those who fought against Muqtada's father and who denounced him for reintroducing the Friday prayer. However, the masses of Madinat Sadr today are the best proof that Muqtada's father was right. They are joining the "million men Friday prayer" and the whole of Iraq is flocking to Muqtada's banner, "the banner of the Expected Imam Mahdi." Baghdadi warned the people: "Do not be misled by this or the other from among the traitors and the tricksters who accuse you and defame you because each one of you is a commander and a hero."[7]

Who deserves to be Wali Amr al-Muslimin?

The supporters of Muqtada's father are not making a secret out of M. M. S. Sadr's strategy to oust all of the senior clerics from their positions as spiritual and political leaders of the community and take their place. What he tried to do, according to Muqtada's magazine's historians, was to confine the Grand Ayat Allahs, whose claim to communal leadership was based on their expertise in Islamic Jurisprudence (*al-fiqh*), to strictly teaching at the *Hawza*, the Circle of Learning of Najaf, while the political communal leadership, apparently also involving the huge financial resources coming from all of the Shi'i world, would be channeled to M. M. S. Sadr. In other words, what Muqtada's father was trying to do was to separate between, on the one hand, legal expertise, over which he was challenged and, on the other,

the charismatic, spiritual-political leadership. The latter he considered to be the true *marja'iyya*, namely: the supreme political and, also, economic power, and the chief emotional focus for every traditional Iraqi Shi'i. This was defined as M. M. S. Sadr's "revolution in Shi'ism." In the words of his historian, Sadr's goal was "to isolate the teaching of jurisprudence" in a narrow professional enclave detached from the masses. The idea was to lock the most senior jurists in the ivory tower of the religious universities of Najaf and Karbala and transfer their resources and community leadership to Sadr, who was maybe a mediocre jurist but a popular leader of giant proportions.

> The control of the professors of fiqh of the . . . *marja'iyya* led to the disintegration of that *marja'iyya* . . . and denied it the quality of leading society. Therefore, Sadr's religious revolution came in order to achieve a great goal, namely: the separation of the teaching jurists from the . . . *marja'iyya*. . . . [M]any did not understand the reasons for the [rhetorical] violence with which the martyred Sayyid treated the other jurists. This violence was probably the only means [by which it was possible] to remove the jurists from the position of *marja'iyya* . . . [As Sadr saw it] if you are a professor with ingenious [knowledge of] fiqh, this does not mean that you are a leader of the [Islamic] nation. It only means that you are a professor in a religious university, nothing more . . . [Sadr's work came] to cancel the *taqlid* (following in all spiritual and political affairs) of the professors of religious studies, and limit the *taqlid* to the [political] *marja* who would dedicate himself to the role of leading the nation. This, in order that the *taqlid* would evolve from a frozen traditional legal action into a total jihadi, reformist action.[8]

In a way, this line of action was following in the footpath of Ayat Allah Khomeini: he, too, was not considered to be the most learned cleric of his time, but he was the one most politically active. Indeed, with Khomeini dead, sometime in the late 1990s Muqtada's father claimed the status of *Wali al-Amr*, or *al-Wilaya al-'Amma*. This definitely meant the combination of political and spiritual leadership of all the Iraqi Shi'is. By doing so, he challenged the authority of more senior '*ulama*, in the first place that of Grand Ayat Allah Ali al-Sistani. However, by claiming the title, he also challenged the authority of Grand Ayat Allah 'Ali Khamene'i, the political and spiritual leader (*Rahbar*) of the Islamic Republic of Iran. At the same time, he also coined the expression "*al-Hawza al-natiqa al-mujahida*" (the Outspoken Jihad-Fighting Hawza).[9]

According to one of M. M. S. Sadr's disciples, his teacher even had far greater ambitions, at least in Iraq. As he describes it, Sadr the father toyed

with the idea of leading the Sunnis of Iraq as well as the Shi'is. At least, he "established the phenomenon of Shi'i Muslims led in prayer by Sunni imams and turned the Friday prayer into a duty [among the Shi'a] and considered . . . many steps of getting [Sunnis and Shi'is] closer."[10] This political goal had in fact been aspired to by his first paternal cousin, Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr who, a few months before Saddam executed him, turned to the Shi'is ("Sons of 'Ali") and Sunnis ("Sons of 'Umar") of Iraq to work together to topple the Ba'th regime in the name of true Islam.[11] Indeed, there is nothing that could fit Muqtada's political ambitions better than this vision of his father's political leadership of the Iraqi Shi'i (and, possibly, also Sunni) community. Having no stature at all as a jurist, as long as the traditional order was in place, Muqtada did not have the remotest chance of becoming the political and spiritual leader of the Iraqi Shi'a. But if his father's "revolution in Shi'sm" could be realized, Sistani and his colleagues would be relegated to the status of mere university professors, entirely irrelevant to political life. Muqtada's chances in such a case would be far better. Indeed, this was the main task that Muqtada's magazine took upon itself. The same Baghdadi who defamed the senior clerics was explicit over that issue too. He complained that even some who were working with the young Sadr still considered him too young for real leadership.

Baghdadi, however, considered Muqtada as one "who has a great truth and a great role and a great mind and his dedication is tremendous, and he who is young [not someone like Muqtada but rather] is the one who retreats and leaves the people without guidance." Muqtada is "a devoted patriotic leader (or "commander," *qa'id*)," a title regularly used to describe Saddam and, even though his enemies are many, his is "a brave patriotic Islamic position." Baghdadi explained that his support for Muqtada stems from the latter's brave jihadi stance. There are two kinds of jihad, he explained: the existentialist one that will start only with the return of the Mahdi, and the defensive one in which there is no need to receive legal opinion from the *maraji'*. The defensive jihad is natural and automatic. If one is being attacked by an enemy who wants to kill or to rob one, then this requires the kind of "automatic" jihad that Muqtada is waging.[12] This was a strange compliment, because this way Baghdadi admitted that Muqtada was not authorized to issue *fatawa* (plural of *fatwa*), namely: that he was a very junior mullah.

"The Revolution in Shi'ism"

Attacking the senior *maraji'* became a preferred pastime for Muqtada's magazine, and it complemented well the unbound praise for the martyred

M. M. S. Sadr and the support for his message of a total revolution in and metamorphosis of the Shi'a. Either explicitly or by implication, the same praise was also bestowed upon the young Sadr. In some cases, attacks on the Iraq-based *marja'iyya* turned into broadside attacks on all contemporary Shi'i leaderships of the world, including the one in Iran. In a March 2004 issue, just before the magazine was closed down by the CPA, an anonymous author discussed M. M. S. Sadr's "revolution in Shi'ism" (*al-Thawra fi al-tashayyu'*).

The author reported that the martyred Sadr said: "no to cowardly *taqiyya,*" forbidding turning *taqiyya* into "legitimization of surrender." Those who adopted *taqiyya* in fact adopted the twin vices of "fear and lie." Sadr set his eyes on transforming the *Hawza* "from officialdom to message." Under him, the "silent, ceremonial *Hawza* of the legal experts" was all of a sudden faced with an alternative: "the Monotheistic Outspoken *Hawza* of Saints (*Hawzat al-awliyaa al-tawhidiyya al-natiqa*)." The first *Hawza* "represented the morality of the slaves among the youth and the simple Shi'ites": they emphasized the kissing of hands, fear of independent thought, and subservience, and as a result, the young people turned to secularism. Sadr changed all that by demonstrating his readiness to die, but not to be a slave. In the case of the traditional senior jurists (read: Kho'i, Sistani, and their colleagues), the study of *fiqh* turned into a quest for personal benefit and bureaucracy. This was the case in Najaf in the first place, but also in revolutionary Iran, where bureaucratic rule took the place of mission, and in Lebanon, where the Shi'a saw religious decline. In Najaf, issuing *fatwas* became a means "to acquire honor, money, and many wives." Sadr's renaissance exposed the fact that "cowardice, fear, silence, and refraining from speaking the truth are not *taqiyya*, and it demonstrated that conspiracies, lies and betrayal are not *taqiyya*." As a result of Sadr's revolution, a chasm was opened between the two kinds of *Hawza*. When people came to the old *Hawza*, it was like presenting themselves before Kisra, the Persian pre-Islamic Zoroastrian ruler: you kiss his hand, you flatter him, and you surrender your honor and personality. When people came to Sadr's *Hawza,* it was the equivalent of approaching the Prophet: you feel the presence of God and you are ready for sacrifice.[13] As reported by one of his disciples, before he died, Sadr established the principle of "the objective *marja'iyya* namely: the one that exists in the real world and is supported by the masses . . . [This] under the slogan of 'the *mujtahid* with the extended hand' (*al-mujtahid mabsut al-yad*) . . . [which means that] the *ijtihad* is . . . a phenomenon [close] to democratic elections." As a

mujtahid with "an extended hand" is also considered a senior cleric who is active politically and does not settle for serving merely as a jurist. But this is not all: Sadr the father "attack[ed] the *marja'iyya* and its role in order to catapult it from a limited framework based in southern Iraq . . . to a farther and wider field that encompasses . . . the whole of Iraq and possibly a range farther than that,"[14] apparently, the Islamic world at large.

Finally, Muqtada's magazine also exposed another side of Sadr's "revolution in Shi'ism": Sadr created a connection between his ostensible and open reform and his deep mystical reform (*al-Islah al-batini*). He connected the objective, practical jihad with the "jihad of the soul," and he connected his political and legal *marja'iyya* with the deep mystical knowledge (*al-'irfan*).[15] This probably related to Sadr's study of the mystical sources dealing with the Return of the Imam Mahdi, the 12th Shi'i imam who is believed to have disappeared in 874 AD and has been expected to return one day to redeem the world. Indeed, he dedicated a massive volume of almost 550 pages to the Great Occultation (*al-ghayba al-kubra*), the period that started in 329 H (941 AD) during which there has been no contact with the Hidden Imam and, at the end of which, He will reappear. The book dwells at length on the conditions of the Mahdi's Appearance (*al-zuhur*).[16]

Muqtada himself is obsessed by the vision of the Return (*al-raj'ah*, or the Appearance, *al-zuhur*) of the Hidden Imam. In a conversation with a Western journalist in 2003, soon after the downfall of Saddam's regime, one of his senior lieutenants explained that the United States conquered Iraq in 2003 because it knew that the Imam Mahdi was about to reappear in Iraq (where he vanished), and thus it decided to be there when he arrives and, the Mahdi being mortal, kill him before he could perform his mission.[17] It took Muqtada more than three years to come out with this theory in a public announcement, which he made in his Friday Mosque sermon. In September 2006, he told his audience that the Pentagon has "a complete and massive file on the Expected Imam Mahdi." He added: "It is said that it [the file] is only missing his [the Mahdi's] picture . . . The US has been preparing the forces of rapid deployment for the rapid intervention against the Expected Imam Mahdi and invented the Gulf War [of 1991] in order to fill the region with battleships for this purpose."[18] This amazing disclosure has never been denied by the Sadrist Movement. Indeed, Muqtada's obsession with the Mahdi became public for the first time in the spring of 2003, when he named his militia Jaysh al-Mahdi. Their duty was defined as paving the road for the Arrival of the Mahdi. In 2007, he announced that he decided to change it into a social engagement body, which he named, again, *al-Mumahhidun*, or "Those who are Clearing the Way" for the Mahdi. Also, in his sermon of January 9, 2004, in the Great Mosque of Kufa, Muqtada called

upon "those who follow Satan" to repent (*al-tawbah*). He did not elaborate whom he meant, but by putting together his and his father's terminology, his audience understood well that he was referring both to ex-Ba'this and to those Shi'is who tolerated or even collaborated with the Anglo-American forces. He warned that it was an act against the Imam Mahdi to oppose his movement. The fact that he identified his camp with that of the Mahdi and himself with the Mahdi is significant. Two groups whose repentance he demanded explicitly were the representatives of the various neighborhoods of Baghdad who had been appointed by the Americans, or elected under U.S. sponsorship, and tribal shaykhs who supported the Americans. He promised each of them a document, issued by his office as representative of the Mahdi, attesting to the fact that they had repented. During the Occultation of the Mahdi, Muqtada insisted, "the gate of repentance is limited to the *shar'i* ruler who is an extension [of the Mahdi]." In other words, as Muqtada saw it, repentance was valid only when done through the supreme religious leader, the sole representative of the Imam Mahdi, and he clearly offered himself for that position.[19]

While this was simply an attempt at establishing his movement's control over the municipality of Baghdad and its neighboerhoods, the fact that he used the Mahdi's name was another indication of his Mahdist obsession. This obsession was not lost on his opponents. In a fatwa that his enemies claimed was issued by him, he was quoted as having authorized the use of hashish by his militiamen. He supported this decision by claiming that the Imam Mahdi—with whom he was meeting regularly—approved of it.[20] This "fatwa" meant that Muqtada's Mahdism exposed him to ridicule.

Can Muqtada perform the revolution in Shi'ism? Can he be *Wali Amr al-Muslimin*? Muqtada's rivalry with Sistani and the *Hawza* in general did not remain in the realm of a media campaign. In October 2003, the rivalry turned into an armed confrontation between the two sides when Sadr's supporters attempted to take over the shrines of Karbala, an incident in which tens of people were killed and many more injured.[21] In January 2004, Muqtada's militia also attempted to take over the Najaf shrine of 'Ali bin Abi-Talib, leading to bloody clashes between the Mahdi Army and the Badr Brigade, the armed militia of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), who were in support of Sistani and the recognized *Hawza*. The Iraqi Governing Council sent a special delegation to resolve the conflict between the two sides.[22]

After clashing with the U.S. Marines in April 2004, mainly in Sadr (formerly Saddam) City in northeastern Baghdad, and losing many militiamen, in August 2004 Muqtada's Mahdi Army actually managed to occupy the Najaf shrine. It took another bitter battle on the part of the Marines to bleed

the militia white again. With Sistani undergoing medical tests in London, there was a real danger that fighting would spread into the Najaf shrine. Before he left for Britain, Sistani received a promise from the Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad 'Allawi that there would be no attack into the shrine. But the Iraqi government, urged by the prime minister and the representatives of SCIRI, was adamant on destroying Muqtada once and for all. When he heard that the shrine was about to be invaded, Sistani returned immediately through Basra and met with Muqtada. The solution was that the Mahdi Army would leave Najaf but not disarm itself. That much of the controversy was about money, i.e.: the huge contributions made by the millions of pilgrims who frequent the holy cities every year was made clear in an agreement that was signed much later. Just before the elections of December 15, 2005, for the permanent National Assembly, SCIRI and their rivals, the Sadrist Movement, reached an agreement, according to which the Sadrists would receive 50 percent of the revenues of the Najaf shrine and a massive share in the Shi'i coalition list for the elections, at least 30 representatives in the future parliament.

Very likely this agreement was reached as a result of two developments. In the first place, Sistani apparently urged SCIRI to make concessions to Muqtada, for fear of a split in the ranks of the Shi'a and an electoral victory for Muqtada if he ran independently. Secondly, in a series of armed confrontations in Sadr City between the Mahdi Army and SCIRI's Badr Brigade, the latter thought that it was losing. All the same, this agreement represented a fatal strategic mistake on the part of SCIRI. It strengthened the Sadrists beyond their wildest dreams, and turned Muqtada into kingmaker; only thanks to his support did the Da'wa manage to get the premiership in the new government, and for a long time they remained beholden to him. As mentioned above, the rivalry with SCIRI dates back at least to the late 1990s, when the Qomm-based Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, SCIRI's leader, criticized Muqtada's father for restarting the Friday public prayers in the Shi'i community of Iraq. Although the Hakim brothers, Muhammad Baqir and 'Abd al-'Aziz, were sworn political "activists" who supported the principle of militancy (*al-khuruj*), as well as ardent supporters of Khomeini's principle of the Rule of the Jurist, while Sistani has rejected both principles, all the same a traditional family alliance with al-Khu'i and with Sistani through al-Khu'i, and the Hakims' political rivalry with M. M. A. Sadr, were sufficient to bridge over ideological differences. Muqtada's political and armed resistance to the coalition forces on the one hand, and SCIRI's and Sistani's decision to work with the Americans on the other, further cemented the Hakim-Sistani alliance. And because Sistani had no militia of his own (even though, when absolutely necessary, he could always call

on the tribes around Najaf for protection), the Badr Brigade came very handy. Indeed, since April 2003, they provided him with bodyguards.[23] And badly did he need them. Muqtada was charged by an Iraqi judge with masterminding the murder of 'Abd al-Majid al-Khu'i, the elder son of the late *marja',* as soon as the Ba'th forces withdrew from Najaf, and for many months in 2003–2004, Muqtada's fighters held positions close to and overlooking Sistani's home. Sistani was definitely in danger. Had Muqtada had more success in his attempt to control the Najaf shrine, even with Sistani still around, let alone if he could somehow be made to disappear, despite his young age Muqtada's chances of assuming the all-Shi'i political and military leadership in Iraq would have been greatly enhanced. Due to his clear scholarly inferiority, though, to become *Wali Amr al-Muslimin* he still needed to mimic his father and become a widely recognized jurist. True, the Sadrist Movement had challenged scholarly excellence as a relevant qualification for such leadership. Thus, at least when it comes to his own movement, Muqtada could easily induce it to declare him *Wali al-Amr,* but the rest of the Iraqi Shi'i community did not share this approach.

To somewhat compensate for his lack of authority in jurisprudence, the Sadrist Movement, and even Ayat Allah Kazim al-Ha'iri in Qomm, defined Muqtada as *Hujjat al-Islam,* a senior jurist rank that he does not deserve by any stretch of imagination.[24] However, another trait of *Wali al-Amr* is certainly evident in his personality: he is definitely a popular leader who captures the imagination of many. At least until the early spring of 2008, the Mahdi Army was by far the strongest militia force in Iraq, and many of its soldiers were ready to sacrifice themselves for his cause. Also, Muqtada represents the militant political forces among the Shi'a, befitting the concept of *Wali al-Amr* as coined by his father and his disciples.

There are two short cuts Muqtada has already embarked upon to more closely resemble his father and to fit better into the mold of *Wali al-Amr*. In the first place, he continues his father's Friday prayers tradition in Kufa, serving as the imam and preacher. This endows him with considerable respectability. Secondly, as pointed out above, he continues from where his father left when it comes to Shi'i mysticism. Since the early summer of 2003, he has been confiding to his followers that the vanished Imam Mahdi, the Expected Savior, is about to return very soon and redeem the Shi'a and the world. While it is not at all clear how the Shi'i masses respond to Muqtada's claim to intimate knowledge of the occult, that he aims very high is already clear. Finally, in January 2007, he left Iraq and settled in Qomm, apparently in order to complete his academic studies under a great scholar, Ayatollah Mahmud Hashimi Shahrudi. Even though he ventured very briefly back into Iraq a few times, he stayed in Iran at least until fall 2010.[25] To what

extent could Muqtada al-Sadr be accepted as *Wali Amr al-Muslimin* by the rest of the Shi'i community in Iraq remains to be seen.

Notes

1. See, for example, 'A. Najaf (pseudonym), *al-Shāhid al-shahīd* (The Witness, the Martyr) (Tehran, 1981).
2. For details see Amatzia Baram, *Mosque and State in Iraq 1968–2007* (The U.S. Institute of Peace, Washington, D.C, forthcoming in 2011).
3. See for example, ICG Report, *Middle East Briefing: Iraq's Shi'ites under Occupation* (Baghdad/Brussels, September 9, 2003), p. 16.
4. Patrick Cockburn, "Iraq Villages Brace for Germ Attack," *MENA, Information* (http:/menainfo.listbot.com), April 8, 1999.
5. "Introduction," 'Abd al-Amir al-Rikabi, *Bayna al-haqbatayn: min munahadhat al-istibdad ila muqawamat al-ihtilal, harakat al-shahid al-Sadr al-Thani wa-tajribat al-khiyar al-thalith* (Baghdad, Dar al-Tayar [al-Sadri] Li-l-Dirasat wa-l-Nashr, 2003), p. 11.
6. Karim 'Ali Fayadh, "*al-Marja'iyya al-hadhira wal marja'iyya al-gha'iba fi hayat al-sha'b al-'Iraqi*" ("The Present Marja'iyya and the Absent One in the Life of the Iraqi People") in *Al-Hawza al-Natiqa al-Sharifa*, No. 28, Dec. 4, 2003.
7. `Ali 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Yasiri, an interview with al-Sayyid al-Baghdadi, in *al-Hawza al-natiqa al-sharifa*, No. 28, Dec. 4, 2003.
8. Abu 'Ali al-Mukhtar, "*Thawrat al-Sadr al-diniyya thawra fi al-tashayyu',*" *al-Hawza al-Natiqa al-Sharifa*, No. 41, March 11, 2004.
9. See, for example, Sa'dun Muhsin Dhamad, "*Nahdhat al-Shahid M.S. al-Sadr*" in *al-Huda*, No. 13, Dec. 2003, p. 43.
10. "Introduction," 'Abd al-Amir al-Rikabi, *Bayna al-haqbatayn: min munahadhat al-istibdad ila muqawamat al-ihtilal, harakat al-Shahid al-Sadr al-Thani wa tajribat al-khiyar al-thalith* (Baghdad, Dar al-Tayar [al-Sadri] Li-l-dirasat wa-l Nashr, 2003), p. 28.
11. See for example, 'A. Najaf, *al-Shāhid al-shahīd* (Tehran, no date), pp. 135–138.
12. 'Ali 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Yasiri, an interview with al-Sayyid al-Baghdadi, in *al-Hawza al-natiqa al-sharifa*, No. 28, Dec. 4, 2003.
13. "*Thawrat al-Sadr al-diniyya, thawra fi al-tashayyu'"* in *al-Hawza al-natiqa al-sharifa,* No. 42, March 18, 2004.
14. "Introduction," 'Abd al-Amir al-Rikabi, *Bayna al-haqbatayn: min munahadhat al-istibdad ila muqawamat al-ihtilal, harakat al-shahid al-Sadr al-Thani wa tajribat al-khiyar al-thalith* (Baghdad, Dar al-Tayar [al-Sadri] Lildirasat Wal Nashr, 2003), p. 27.
15. "*Thawrat al-Sadr al-diniyya, thawra fi al-tashayyu'"* in *al-Hawza al-natiqa al-sharifa,* No. 42, March 18, 2004.
16. al-Sayyid Muhammad al-Sadr, *Ta'rikh al-ghayba al-kubra* (al-Najaf, Mu'assasat baqiyat Allah, 2003[?]), pp. 436–541.

17. Nir Rosen, a freelance journalist, personal correspondence, May 22, 2004. Rosen spent almost a year in Iraq following the war and moved extensively between Sunni and Shi'i clerics and mosques.
18. *aliraqnews* Sept. 23, 2006. Al-Iraq News is a reputable website with no obvious political slant. It seems that the belief that there is some connection between the presence of the United States in Iraq and the Return of the Mahdi is fairly widespread. In an e-mail message, an American intellectual who specializes in Arabic-language literature testified that he heard a similar story in February 2004 at the Rashid Theatre in Baghdad from a group of Iraqi Shi'ite actors who were rehearsing to perform Abd al-Rahman al-Sharqawi's previously forbidden play, *al-Husayn Tha'iran wa-shahidan* (Al-Husayn: a Revolutionary and Martyr). They also added that the American plot began when Abraham Lincoln had a dream that "after a hundred years," a Shi'ite from Iraq would become President of the United States (Dr. Raymond Stock from Cairo, June 25, 2009).
19. "*Khutbat al-Jum'a" in al-Hawza al Natiqa al-Sharifa*, No. 34, Jan. 15, 2004.
20. Muqtada Sadr's office 2 Ramadan 1426, including Muqtada's seal and his personal signature. http://jemsbaond.modawanati.com/8141/%E3%E4+%DD%CA%C7%E6%ED+%C7%E1%D5%CF%D1-+%C7%E1%CD%D4%ED%D4%E5.html. Also: http://albdoo.com/vb/showthread.php?t=12751, accessed: 23/5/007.
21. *al-Zaman* (Iraq), October 14, 2003, quoted in Nimrod Rafaeli, "Muqtada al-Sadr" in *MEMRI, Inquiry and Analysis Series No. 161*, Feb. 11, 2004.
22. *al-Ra'y Al-`amm* (Kuwait), January 30, 2004, as quoted in Nimrod Rafaeli, *Muqtada*, ibid.
23. A number of interviews conducted in Fort Leavenworth in 2008 with U.S. Army officers who served in the Najaf area between 2003 and 2005.
24. *Al-Hawza al-natiqa al-sharifa*, No. 27, Nov. 27, 2003.
25. John F. Burns, "Shiite Cleric Ends Absence From Iraq With Fiery Speech," *NYT*, May 26, 2007; *Associated Press*, December 14, 2007; *Washington Post* Foreign Service, May 27, 2008. By October 2010 Sadr still ran his party from Iran.

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CHAPTER 9

On Servility and Survival: The Sunni Opposition to Saddam and the Origins of the Current Sunni Leadership in Iraq

Ronen Zeidel

Since the first suicide attack on an U.S. checkpoint in Iraq in March 2003, much attention has been given to the Sunni Arab (henceforth "Sunni") resistance. There is almost a unanimous agreement that this resistance is the result of the U.S. invasion, implying that this was the formative event for the insurgency.[1] Very little attention is given to the political and social currents among the Sunnis, thus amplifying the role of supporters of the former regime in its ranks. This paper examines whether Sunni resistance to the regime existed under the Ba'th, and how it might be related to the current phenomenon. Such a wider perspective will contribute to a better understanding of Sunni discontent in today's Iraq. Additionally, it will help to assess the historical significance of the U.S.-led invasion.

Excessive focus on the Sunni insurgency has overshadowed two other important processes affecting the Iraqi Sunnis after April 2003: the crystallization of Sunni Arab identity and the emergence of a brand new Sunni leadership. While the former merits a study of its own, the emergence of leadership will be the second focus of this paper. The sudden appearance of leaders who were totally anonymous before the invasion of 2003, both inside and outside Iraq, has puzzled many researchers, including this author. This

paper attempts to trace the whereabouts of these leaders under the Ba'th, and give the first collective profile of today's senior Sunni leadership.

The problem of analyzing, or even defining, Sunni activities in Iraq before the invasion is truly tantalizing for the researcher. What is a Sunni activity if it is not carried out overtly on behalf of the Sunni community? Would the activities of a handful of officers, all of them Sunnis, to topple a Sunni regime be branded "Sunni"? These questions require deeper analysis. In this context, one should be aware of the ambivalence with which Sunnis always considered their sectarian affiliation. On the one hand, since the establishment of the Iraqi state and even under the Ottomans, Sunnis enjoyed dominant status and a numerical majority in all state institutions. On the other hand, they were a minority and they knew it. Therefore, engaging in sectarian discourse was considered risky, and a danger for their political dominance. They had to adopt and impose an antisectarian alternative discourse that penetrated, through their control of the Ministry of Education, deep into the core of Iraqi nationalism. Sunnism also implies a certain religiosity. Thus, secular or traditionalist Sunnis, in government or out of it, were less inclined to give formal expression of their sectarianism than a religious Sunni party, such as the Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*), and even they used to couch their sectarian message in camouflaged terms. For the purposes of this article, a "Sunni regime" would be a regime made up almost entirely of Sunnis, and a "Sunni opposition" or resistance would be a group made up entirely of Sunnis. One should not expect these groups to express themselves overtly in sectarian terms. In the context of Sunnis replacing another Sunni regime, their sectarianism, in the sense of a preservation of Sunni dominance, would have been self-evident. This further highlights the change that occurred after the U.S. invasion, when the Sunnis (leaders, laymen) started to overtly refer to themselves as a sectarian community. This study shows that the roots of this development date back to the 1990s.

Sunni Politics Under the Ba'th Regime

The Ba'th Party has always had rivals within the Sunni community. Already in the 1950s, the newly founded party had to struggle against two main ideological currents popular in the Sunni areas: Nasserism and Islamic fundamentalism, as represented by the Muslim Brothers. It should be noted that the Ba'th Party became more Sunni only during the 1960s, whereas its two competitors mentioned above have always been entirely Sunni. To a lesser degree, in some Sunni-dominated areas, Communism posed a challenge, too.

It is well known that over a period of three years after the Ba'th's accession to power in 1968, the new government executed many real or potential political rivals. However, the fact that they were mainly Sunnis is only rarely mentioned in this context. The Ba'th ousted a Sunni regime with the help of Sunni military officers. Consequently, most of their rivals were Sunnis. Not even regional bonds withstood political rivalry: among those pillars of the former regime were Tikritis like Rashid Muslih (executed in January 1970) and Tahir Yahya (arrested and severely tortured, spending some years in jail). At the same time, the new regime also executed an ideological Sunni adversary, Shaykh 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Badri, leader of the *Hizb al-Islami al-'Iraqi* (Iraqi Islamic Party), and some other leaders of that Sunni fundamentalist party.[2] Executions and political killings of Sunni rivals continued throughout the 1970s. Some of the assassinated (like Hardan al-Tikriti, Murtada al-Hadithi, to name but a few) were killed as part of power struggles within the party, while others were former accomplices to the Ba'th. Toward the mid 1970s, it became clear that the Ba'th had gained complete control of the political scene by means of their superior organization and an effective use of the security services. The government also made use of the huge income from the nationalization of oil to expand its ranks, luring many by offering employment. It particularly encouraged Sunnis to join the expanding security apparatus. Due to the liquidation of political alternatives, many Sunni supporters of other parties began to cooperate with the regime. At least until the 1990s, individual or organized Sunni opposition to the Ba'th was the exception rather than the rule.

However, isolated pockets of resistance did exist. They were mainly concentrated in the officer ranks of the army. As an institution, the Iraqi Army, whose officer corps was almost entirely Sunni, posed a permanent threat to the party. Despite several waves of Ba'thification, the army had successfully withstood submission to the party, and a large number of its commanders refused to join it. During the 1970s, their opposition to the Ba'th was on personal and political grounds. Some officers resented the Ba'th for the way it dealt with its former military accomplices. Underground cells of Nasserists and Islamists were apparently active in military camps, and some senior officers were said to be among their supporters. Motivated by its constant fear of a coup d'état against its rule, the regime occasionally took harsh measures against them. As a result, Nasserist officers were mostly ready to align with the Ba'th. The Islamists were generally not considered a serious threat, and the regime tended to tolerate their presence.[3] As relations between military officers and civilians were limited and rare, oppositional currents within the army had only a limited political impact and could be contained.

During the 1980s, the Iran-Iraq War strained the relations between the army and the civilian regime. Wartime necessities enhanced the prestige of the army. Disobedient officers of all ranks were arrested and even executed for failures to carry out orders, but some also demonstrated through their dissidence that the regime was either incapable or unwilling to act against them, such as the Sunni Brigadier General Mahir 'Abd al-Rashid al Tikriti.[4] Thus, all through the 1970s and the 1980s (including the interwar years 1988–1990), Sunni opposition to the regime was mainly confined to army ranks. All forms of civilian opposition among the Sunnis were annihilated or driven into exile. Dissident officers could belong to one of the aforementioned currents, or to a regional group united by a common regional origin (Mossuli, Samara'i, etc.) and by opposition to the regime. Since a military coup was considered the only possible way to topple the regime, there was no incentive to cooperate with civilians. Furthermore, the interwar years discontented the army, while the civilian population was quite satisfied that the war had ended.

The 1990s heralded a real change in Sunni opposition to the regime. It broke out of the confines of the army and officer corps to embrace other groups as well. Now it was tainted with other colors other than political and personal. Though the Ba'th regime survived it, this opposition posed a real threat to its stability. Due to a variety of factors, a deepening cleavage developed between ever-widening circles among the Sunni population and the predominantly Sunni Ba'th regime. The Gulf War of 1991 and the Shi'i Intifada in its aftermath considerably weakened the regime. Having lost control over vast areas in the north and south due to the No-Fly Zones, the regime seemed far less frightening than during the previous decades. The president, once boastfully self-confident, refrained from touring the countryside, fearing for his safety.

Furthermore, the social base of this Sunni regime became increasingly narrow, and power was more and more concentrated in the hands of people from one town (Tikrit), then from one village (*al-'Uja*), and finally from one clan and even one family.[5] The president himself seemed to be detached from daily affairs, preferring the seclusion of his newly built palaces, and his romantic affairs. Parochialism, nepotism, and tribalism, accompanied by decadence, corruption, oligarchy, and constant infighting in the leadership ranks, had driven a wedge between many ordinary Sunnis and the leadership.

One should also add the enormous impact of the economic sanctions, which had a disastrous effect on the middle class. Many were impoverished, and barely survived by selling their properties or driving a taxi. The wealthier among them often decided to leave the country. Though no estimates

exist, Sunnis formed a significant part of the middle class. Their anger at the regime, equally directed against the West, was purely on economic grounds. Thus, economic hardships helped expand the Sunni opposition to include civilians as well.

Equally important, though more exclusive, was the impact of the U.S. policy toward the regime. The George Bush and Clinton administrations were eagerly looking for a Sunni replacement to Saddam Husayn. The purpose was to find someone from one of the innermost circles of Saddam, preferably a Tikriti, Nasiri officer of one of the security apparatuses who would organize a coup with U.S. assistance. Though these efforts eventually failed, the financial reward, personal ambition, and the possibility of deposing Saddam, and thus ending the country's misfortune, appealed to more than a few. Most paid with their lives upon the exposure of these efforts.[6]

Sunni restlessness in the 1990s was further increased by what was termed "the faith campaign" (*al-Hamla al-Imaniyya*): a government policy aimed at propagating Islamic values in society, partly as an attempt to encourage steadfastness facing the embargo, and partly to be in line with the growing religiosity in Iraqi society. Thus, the state sponsored the building of many mosques, and more religion classes were given at school. However, like many other policies in Iraq during the 1990s, the faith campaign was implemented in a rather patchy way, as no elaborate guidelines or educational program were devised. Therefore, teachers have had to teach the basics of Islam in a very rudimentary way. At the same time, the faith campaign enhanced the legitimacy of mosques, which attracted growing numbers of people who were driven to despair by the sanctions. Their growing popularity not least of all stemmed from the fact that inside their walls, people could feel free. This was a fertile ground for radical fundamentalism, which began proliferating in towns like Falluja and Samara' during this period. Thus, already in the 1990s, it became obvious that the regime, through its faith campaign, eventually strengthened fundamentalist opposition to its rule. Interestingly, its decadence and corruption were now criticized by religious Sunnis, who would later, after the invasion, join the insurgency.[7]

Whereas religiosity affected Sunni and Shi'a alike, the 1990s saw a deepening of the sectarian divide. It started with the March 1991 Intifada, which turned into confessional strife. This event so terrified the Sunnis that many Sunni officers, bitter enemies of the president, returned voluntarily to service in order to take part in its repression.[8] The extremely cruel crackdown was accompanied by virulent anti-Shi'a tones. Shi'i resentment did not die away with the repression of the Intifada. During the 1990s, Grand Ayat Allah Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr embarked on a new path toward constructing a sectarian awareness, capitalizing on the weakness of the regime.[9] This trend

caused similar reactions among the Sunnis. Though Sunnis and Shi'is never actually clashed after the Intifada, they were beginning to align along confessional lines before the U.S. invasion. Fear of the Shi'ites seems to have been a factor behind the unwillingness of many Sunnis to witness the fall of Saddam.

Sunni restlessness in the 1990s had various facets. As a popular outburst, it reached its peak with the riots in Ramadi in June 1995. When the mutilated body of the officer Muhammad Madlum al-Dulaymi was returned to his kin in a sealed coffin, his tribe, the Al Bu-Nimr, one of the major constituents of the Dulaym confederation, was enraged. It took two days of repression by the elite "Amn al-Khass," and the Special Republican Guard to stifle the riots. Other regional riots on a much smaller scale reportedly broke out in Samara' and in Sunni tribal areas. Events in Ramadi were unprecedented in Sunni areas, but they also showed the limits of Sunni restlessness in that decade: being the by-product of a failed coup attempt, they were limited to one town and to one tribe within the Dulaym confederation. Even the weakened regime of the 1990s had no problems suppressing such a rebellion.

Another form of Sunni restlessness was the growing number of coup attempts, real or imaginary. Conspirators were either of the same regional origin or members of the same movement. There was a revival of activities by former Nasserists, such as Brigadier General Raji 'Abbas al-Tikriti, a retired former commander of the medical corps and a known physician. Nevertheless, like all previous coup attempts, these too failed and the officers behind them were arrested and executed. Despite their increase, the existing data suggest that there was no significant coordination among the various dissident groups in the army, let alone among groups within the military and civilians.

Others expressed their discontent by "voting with their feet." The 1990s were a period of massive emigration from Iraq. Among those who defected were senior members of the security services (Hussein Kamil, Saddam Kamil, General Wafiq al-Samara'i), senior military officers such as Nizar al-Khazraji, as well as some ambassadors, etc. Special attention should be given to Sunni writers who fled Iraq, many of whom had made a career praising the regime and its wars. One of them is 'Abd al-Sattar Nasir al-Zawba'i, who slipped out of Iraq after his brother's body was returned in a sealed coffin; since then, he has poured out his ire on the regime from exile.[10]

More cautious were Sunnis who stayed in Iraq. Their dissidence could take various subtle forms. Military officers could refrain from joining the party, phrase their critical views cautiously, resign, or—as happened more often—be pensioned off. If they stayed away from involvement in the organization of coups and were beyond suspicion of being disloyal to the regime,

they were generally immune from capital punishment, though not from short terms of detention. Shi'ites could hardly expect such a privileged treatment. Academics could refuse to join the party, depriving themselves of some benefits in the university. Intellectuals could refuse to pay tribute to the regime, and in rare cases, especially after 2000, could outwit censorship by using subtle allegory in their works. Such was the case of the (Shi'i?) novelist Taha Hamid al Shabib, whose novel "Holding a Loaf of Bread" (*Khasirat al-raghif*) is a severe criticism of Iraq in the 1990s hidden behind a set of sophisticated symbols.[11]

During the 1990s and until the fall of the regime, Sunni restlessness and discontent were kept within the Sunni community, with mainly Sunni officers conspiring to topple a Sunni regime in favor of a better, also Sunni, alternative. Others may have preferred the Saddam regime as a "lesser Sunni evil" to what they perceived of as the peril of a Shi'i regime hanging over the U.S. programs. Manifestations of Sunni rage mostly remained sporadic and uncoordinated, as they were fueled by local or personal, rather than sectarian or national, motives. Thus, Amatzia Baram tells the story of 'Umar Muhammad Hadid, later to become a leader of the insurgents in Falluja, who was sentenced to death in absentia by Saddam's government for killing a senior official of the Ba'th in that town.[12]

In the absence of democracy, there was a feeling that the officer who would manage to depose Saddam would "win it all." This kind of atmosphere does not encourage the emergence of a leadership cadre. Very few officers involved in the coups survived the execution backlash. Unlike the Shi'is and Kurds, the Sunnis were underrepresented in the opposition in exile. In his book about the Iraqi opposition, Shamran al-'Ajli lists only three Sunni parties, and only one of them, the Iraqi Islamic Party, a transformation of the *Ikhwan*, had some significance.[13] Sunnis could be found in several other parties, mainly in secular ones catering to Ba'thi dissidents, but they were few and outnumbered by Shi'is. Unlike the Shi'i religious establishment, which preserved its autonomy, Sunni *'ulama* (clerics and scholars) and religious institutions were dependent on the state. Yet, grassroot religious leaders started emerging from among the imams of the new mosques or junior scholars in the "Saddam Hussein University of Shari'a Studies" in Baghdad.

At bottom, Sunni identity in Ba'thist Iraq did not exist in the sense of a normative communal identity, leadership, structures, and institutions. Through long years of political dominance, the regime had blurred any sign of Sunni identity and curbed sectarian outcries whenever they arose. As long as power was controlled by Sunnis, this policy served them well. Once they lost their hold after the U.S. invasion and Iraqi politics turned sectarian,

there was a need for a Sunni identity. Eventually, in a very short time, a Sunni Arab identity was created. This is certainly one of the most outstanding developments engendered by the invasion. Since then, the Sunnis have had to confront the new reality of a Shi'i government unwilling to share power, and were downgraded to a marginal minority. The U.S. presence, coupled with governmental repression, gave them something very precious: a cause. Around this cause, Sunni sectarian identity was shaped. The Sunnis are starting to behave as a sect (*ta'ifa*), coordinating, albeit hesitantly, their demands and moves. All this has required the emergence of a Sunni leadership. While more research is needed to fully understand these developments, the evidence available to this author allows for a number of preliminary conclusions to be drawn.

The Emergence of a New Sunni Leadership in Post-Saddam Iraq

Due to the reasons mentioned above, a Sunni leadership did not appear in the direct aftermath of the invasion. The few independent Sunni politicians who returned to Iraq and volunteered to represent the sect played some roles in the interim government, but totally lacked a base of local support. Their inability to lead was shown in January 2005, when 'Adnan al-Pachachi, the elderly former ambassador to the UN, submitted to pressures and announced a Sunni boycott of the elections. Soon after the elections, a new Sunni leadership replaced the old one. The new leadership, which does have a social base in the Sunni areas, is certainly more capable than its predecessor. In the brief time of its existence, it has managed to attain some political achievements: participation in the drafting committee of the constitution, Sunni participation in the plebiscite over the constitution, Sunni participation in the December 2005 elections, and finally, despite meager results in the elections, a presence in the cabinet. Regardless of its anti-U.S. rhetoric, it also has managed to build a reasonable working relationship with the Americans, who often have aided Sunni politicians.

But who makes up this new leadership? And what were its members doing under the Ba'th? In order to answer these questions I have looked at the biographies of a representative sample of the most prominent Sunni politicians in Iraq today: 'Adnan al-Dulaymi (head of the Sunni block in parliament), Shaykh Harith al-Dari (head of the Association of Muslim Scholars, or AMS, now in exile), Salam al-Zawba'i (deputy prime minister 2006–2008), Mahmud al-Mashhadani (speaker of parliament from 2006 to late 2008), Iyad al-Samaraai (speaker of parliament since April 2009), 'Abd al-Qadir Muhammad Jassim al-'Ubaydi (minister of defense since 2006),

Tariq al-Hashimi (deputy president and former head of the Iraqi Islamic Party), Rafi' al-'Issawi (deputy prime minister since July 2008), Ahmad Abu Risha (a tribal shaykh and co-founder of the "awakening" groups in Anbar), and Salih al-Mutlak (head of a smaller Sunni party in parliament now in Ayad 'Allawi's "The Iraqi List").[14] Most of these are associated with the political process. Although comparison with leaders of Sunni militias could be interesting, I chose not to include them, both for lack of data and since militia leaders are yet to make themselves visible. The leaders I studied claim to represent the whole community and were elected by the community in late 2005.

The most senior of the six are the first two, 'Adnan al-Dulaymi and Dari, and the youngest is al-'Issawi, born in 1966. 'Adnan al-Dulaymi and Dari are also the older politicians, being in their 60s and 70s, in 2009. These three and, in fact, six out of the ten persons portrayed in this chapter stem from western Iraq, a region that is considered the "cradle" of the Sunni insurgency. The two senior politicians are religious: Dari is both a religious and tribal shaykh, and Dulaymi was the head of the Sunni section of the Ministry of Religious Endowments (*Awqaf*) and a scholar in Islamic studies. Six out of the ten are Islamists. Three of the ten (Dari, Zawba'i and Mutlak) belong to the Zawba' tribe, which lives between Falluja and Baghdad (al-'Issawi is also from Falluja). Dari is from a prominent family of shaykhs: his father and grandfather were famous national heroes. Other tribes with significant representation are the Dulaim (Abu Risha and Dulaymi) and the Mushahada (Mashhadani, al-Hashimi). Abu Risha and Dari are also leading members of their tribes. Interestingly, all these Sunni politicians, and some others not included in the sample, are highly educated: Dulaymi, Zawba'i, Mashhadani, al-'Issawi and Mutlak each have Ph.D.s, while Dari has worked as a lecturer in some universities.

On the way up, these politicians have had to pass through the de-Ba'thification committees. These committees were given the authority to blacklist every member of the Ba'th Party and, in fact, every functionary in Ba'thist Iraq, with the sole exception of the army. This is a new obstacle for the emergence of Sunni leadership, and a source of troubles for the Sunnis at large. Therefore, the more anonymous the new Sunni leaders were under the Ba'th, the better their chances in the "new Iraq." As a consequence, finding out what these leaders did under the Ba'th remains a difficult task. Access to reliable information was and still is almost impossible. Some of the leaders constantly have to deal with rumors about their cooperation with the former regime, in contradiction to their "official" biographies. My analysis juxtaposes their official biographies with rumors about their past under the Ba'th regime.[15] The fact that they were totally unknown to most

observers during the 35 years of Ba'thist rule undoubtedly indicates that none of them was even a middle ranking member of the administration. There is no way of knowing whether they cooperated with the regime as informers and the like.

The ten leaders portrayed here fall into three groups. The first one (Dari, Samaraai, and Dulaymi) includes those who spent some time out of Iraq. Note that only one of them (Samaraai) lived in exile for a long period, as the Shi'i and Kurdish leaders did. Both left Iraq during the 1990s, preferring to stay in neighboring Arab countries: Dulaymi lived in Jordan and Dari commuted between Iraq and various Arab countries, mainly in the Gulf. The second group (Mashhadani, al-Hashimi, and 'Ubaydi) consists of those who remained in Iraq and claim to have been active against the regime. Mashhadani was a military physician who became active in an Islamist cell in the 1990s and was arrested. 'Ubaydi was a military officer, serving in the army since 1973, who was released from service after the Gulf War of 1991, allegedly for publicly expressing his opposition to the invasion of Kuwait. To the best of this writer's knowledge, he was still in service by 1992. At that time, he reached the peak of his career as vice president of the "al-Bakr" military college. According to his official biography, he was arrested in June 1994 for seven years, and his property was confiscated. He returned to service only after April 2003 to serve as commander of the ground forces.[16] Al-Hashimi claims that in 1975, he left the army to become a leading member of the Iraqi Islamic Party. The third group (Zawba'i, Mutlak) is comprised of those who lived in Iraq during all those years as "independents." Mutlak admits that he was a junior member of the party until 1977 and then resigned, opposing the execution of five Shi'i party members. Since then, he did not rejoin the party. He embarked on an academic career as an agricultural engineer, and later started a commercial career in the same field. According to rumors that are strongly denied by him, he was on very good terms with Saddam and his family, taking care of some farms that belonged to the president's wife, Sajida. He claims that resigning from the Ba'th prevented him from continuing his academic career, and forced him to seek a living in commerce, though this does not stand up to scrutiny. Apparently, among today's Sunni politicians in Iraq, Mutlak has been closest to the Ba'th.[17] Sunni voters recognize this, and his party thus fared poorly in the 2005 elections. Salam al-Zawba'i claims that he never joined the Ba'th Party. An agricultural engineer like Mutlak, he claims that he was not permitted to complete his master's degree for five years because he refused to join the party. This claim may well be true. Yet, in 1988 he received his M.A., and since then, he combined a professional and an academic career in Iraq. Between 1992 and 1997, he was the secretary of the union of agricultural

engineers in the Anbar province, and ran a poultry farm near Lake Tharthar. He could not have attained the first position without being a party member, and the second without having good connections to Saddam and his family. Zawba'i's biography is a good example of a reconstructed narrative in which his Ba'thi past is buried deep.[18] Yet, even the latter two politicians were no more than little-known agronomists under the Ba'th.

Attachment to the Ba'th is no longer an asset among Sunni political leaders—higher education, seniority, respectable tribal lineage, membership in the Iraqi Islamic Party, and origins in western Iraq are. So is having stayed in Iraq under the Ba'th. The latter gives their voice a moral force reminiscent of that of the Sadrists in Shi'i circles. The biographies of these leaders indicate the spectrum of what might be termed "oppositional behavior" under the Ba'th regime, ranging from membership in clandestine cells and imprisonment to leading an "independent" career. One can clearly see the centrality of the 1990s in the life stories of these people. Four out of ten either left Iraq or claim to have challenged the regime during the 1990s. The other two claim to have done so already in the two previous decades, and led a life of non-Ba'thi "independents" later on. In terms of participation, almost all the actors in the post-Saddam Sunni resistance already have been active during the 1990s, as army officers, members of the security forces, religious scholars and fundamentalists, exiles, or "independents." The only addition after 2003, albeit marginal, to this collective profile seems to be former members of the regime and the Ba'th Party. However, after 2003, Sunni leaders no longer represent merely sporadic and isolated organizations, but a coordinated movement speaking on behalf of the Sunni community. For the biggest change brought by the invasion was the creation of a Sunni community, united around a common cause and led by its own leaders who perceive their mission in sectarian terms, even if they often couch this with antisectarian discourse. With the turn of the tide, these leaders replaced their previous tactic of servility for survival with an active struggle for communal rights for Sunnis as Sunnis in the "new Iraq."

Tracing the roots of Sunni agitation to the 1990s has two further implications. Unlike what some observers claim, the resistance is not only the work of Ba'thists and supporters of the former regime, but actually started under the former regime and was directed against it. Furthermore, it was not unleashed by the invasion. The sectarian turn of Iraqi politics engendered by the invasion converted an already existing agitation into an all-out rebellion that comprised all sectors of the Sunni community. Thus, despite ongoing debates and social divisions among the Sunnis, the U.S. invasion played a key role in fusing tribal, professional, and religious groups, each with its own agenda, into a Sunni community.

Yet, the long-term impact of these developments remains far from clear. The political process becomes irrelevant for many Sunnis, as, in 2006–2007, the country descended into a sectarian civil war. While this has since subsided, should it flare up again, the emerging elected leadership may lose ground to warlords. As the insurgency has not produced a real alternative leader so far, and certainly no program, a growing dominance of the warlords might severely harm the newborn and fragile Sunni identity. A political leadership is essential to sustain this identity and integrate it to a new model of Iraqi identity. Such a model should be worked out in future reconciliation talks. To the best of this author's understanding, it would have to acknowledge the influence of sectarianism in Iraq, instead of officially ignoring or denying it, as has been the case so far.

Ultimately, there are signs that the Sunni leadership is both frustrated and tired. In December 2006, the most senior Sunni politician, 'Adnan al-Dulaymi, broke into tears while describing the situation of the Sunnis in Iraq.[19] A year before, the same Dulaymi, almost single-handedly convinced the Sunnis to vote in general elections. On the eve of the 2010 elections, the Sunni camp, faring badly in parliament, apparently lost its cohesion. Leading Sunni politicians change parties often, joining "mixed" parties headed by Shi'is, and declare the end of sectarian politics. The leading ingredient of the Sunni block in parliament, the Iraqi Islamic Party, is falling apart. Yet, leading Sunni politicians still champion the problems that form the nucleus of the Sunni cause: de-Ba'thification, opposition to federalism and decentralization, the Iraqi immigrants, the modification of the constitution, among others. While shedding the sectarian clout may help the Sunnis feel more like partners in a joint venture, it remains to be seen if the coming elections will herald the end of sectarian politics, and, if that happens, how the new nonsectarian government will address Sunni problems.

Notes

1. For an insightful description of the Sunni insurgency see: Patrick Graham, "Beyond Fallujah: A Year with the Iraqi Resistance," *Harper`s Magazine* (June 2004), pp. 37–48. In Arabic: Zaki Shihab, *al- 'Iraq yahtariq; shahadat min qalb al- muqawama*, London: Riyadh al-Rayes, 2006, and 'Adil al-Jawjari, *Asrar wa-khafaya al-muqawama al 'Iraqiya*, Damascus and Cairo: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 2005.
2. Shamran al-'Ajli, *al-Kharita al-siyasiyya li-l-mu'arada al-'Iraqiyya*, London: Dar al-Hikma, 2000. p. 106.
3. Ahmad al-Zaydi, *Al-Bina' al-ma'nawi li-l-Quwat al-musalaha al-'Iraqiyya*, Beyrut; Dar al-Rawda, 1990, pp. 185, 188–189.

4. On Gen. 'Abd al Rashid see; al-Zaydi, pp. 342–345. On his return to military ranks to put down the 1991 Intifada see; *al-Qadisiyya*, 20–10–1991 and Sa'd al- Bazzaz, *al-Jiniralat akhar man ya'lam*, 'Amman:al-Ahliyya, 1996, pp. 140–143.
5. Ronen Zeidel, "Tikrit and the Tikritis: A Provincial Town, Regional Community and State in 20th Century Iraq," Ph.D Thesis, University of Haifa, March 2004, pp. 265–271.
6. An informative book on the subject is by Andrew and Patrick Cockburn, *Out of the Ashes: The Resurrection of Saddam Hussein*, New York: Harper Collins, 1999. Problems with the army are discussed in Amatzia Baram, *Building toward Crisis: Saddam Husayn`s Strategy for Survival*, Washington: The Washington Institute, 1998, pp. 44–52.
7. Amatzia Baram, "Who are the Insurgents? Sunni Arab Rebels in Iraq," *USIP*, Special Report, no.134 (April 2005). David Baran, *Vivre la tyrannie et lui survivre: L`Irak en transition*, Paris: Mille et Une Nuits, 2004. pp. 64–70. Zaki Shihab, p. 36.
8. Sa'd al-Bazzaz, pp. 140–143.
9. 'Abd al Amir al-Rikabi, *Bayna haqbatayn:min munahadat al-istibdad ila muqawamat al-ihtilal,* Baghdad; Dar al-Tayyar, 2003: see Introduction.
10. 'Abd al-Sattar Nasir, *Hayati fi Qisasi,* 'Amman; Al-Mu'asasa al-'Arabiya, 2001. 'Abd al-Sattar Nasir, *Abu al-Rish,* 'Amman: al-Mu'asasa al-'Arabiya, 2002.
11. Taha Hamid al-Shabib, *Khasirat al-raghif,* Baghdad: al-Mansur, 2000. See also an interesting discussion on the role of intellectuals under the Ba'th in Salam 'Abud, *Thaqafat al-'unf fi al-'Iraq*, Cologne: al-Jamal, 2002, pp. 122–131, 238–270 and Eric Davis, *Memories of State: Politics, History and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005, pp. 21–23, 200–227.
12. Baram, "Who are the Insurgents ?", p. 13.
13. Al-'Ajli, pp. 106–108, 183–184, 252.
14. For another analysis of the Sunni leadership see: Phebe Marr, "Iraq`s New Political Map," *USIP*, Special Report, no.179, (January 2007), pp. 14–17.
15. An interview with Salih al-Mutlak, al-'Iraqiyya TV Chanel, 21–5-2006.
16. Haaretz, 23.4.2006, Marr, p. 16, www.iraqigovernment.org/content/biographies
17. al-'Iraqiyya Chanel, 21.5.2006. www.iraqigovernment.org/content/biographies. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tariq_al-Hashimi
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19. Nir Rosen: "Duleimi: Iraq`s Most Sectarian Politician," in: *Iraq Slogger* 7–1-2007. In April 2007, he resigned from the cabinet, complaining of the "marginalization" of his block, al-Sharqiyya TV channel, 7–4-2007.

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CHAPTER 10

The Performance of the Iraqi Armed Forces in Operation Desert Storm and the Impact of Desert Storm on Its Performance in Operation Iraqi Freedom

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Introduction

Any student of the history of the Iraqi armed forces and their performance in battles until the end of the 2003 Operation Iraq Freedom is confronted with a methodological difficulty: the absence of Iraqi military documents open to the public. As useful sources, one may still use interviews with and memoirs of Iraqi military officers. However, these sources must be approached very critically, because officers who were living in Ba'thist Iraq may not have been able to express their full or even true views. They may need to hide embarrassing facts, and to lionize Saddam as an ingenious military strategist and his generals and soldiers as heroic. And yet, more often than not, they provided good information. Information coming from officers who had defected to the West, too, cannot be taken at face value, because these officers may be influenced by the opposition's political needs, and their need to protect their reputation. They may also have been overly critical of the top military echelon, certainly of presidential decisions. Western intelligence reports made public provide some correctives, but these sources, too,

are sometimes mistaken. As long as the original Iraqi military documents are not available, the best way to approach the history of the Iraqi military campaigns is by crossing information from all three sources and applying independent professional judgment. The following article is trying to do just that. However, since the Western sources are fairly well known by now, the analysis below lays a special emphasis on Iraqi sources.

The war in Kuwait in 1991 was the first phase in the military confrontation between Iraq and the United States and its allies. Desert Storm was a turning point in the history and development of the Iraqi armed forces, as well as in the history of the country and the regime. It was the second time, since Saddam Husayn came to power, that he and the Iraqi leadership initiated the use of their armed forces in order to achieve their foreign policy goals. By invading Kuwait and by ignoring the coalition ultimatum, they expressed their sense of power, belief in their rights, and their confidence that their armed forces could cope with any challenge, even a fight against leading superpowers. This decision proved to be a strategic miscalculation of immense proportions, for which the Iraqi armed forces and people paid the full price. Below, I shall try to analyze how the Iraqi side described the performance of its armed forces in that conflict, and how the Iraqi perception of their military performance and the Shi'i and Kurdish revolts in 1991 affected their performance in Operation Iraqi Freedom 12 years later.

The Iraqi Armed Forces on the Eve of the Gulf War

The Iraqi armed forces emerged from their long war against Iran as a formidable war machine. It was, as U.S. intelligence estimated it:

> One of the world's largest armies, equipped with large numbers of tanks, armored personnel carriers and artillery, some of which were state-of-the-art models. It had a sizeable air force with many top line fighters and fighter-bombers and a modern air defense system. This was a battle tested force, that during the last six months of the Iran-Iraq war had demonstrated a capability to conduct multi-axis, multi-corps, combined-arms operations, deep into hostile territory. They could conduct long-range planning, coordination of air and artillery preparations, timing of movements and operations, and coordination of complicated logistics requirements. They had developed excellent operational security and deception.[1]

This description was essentially correct. On the eve of Desert Storm, the Iraqi ground forces included more than 70 divisions, most of them infantry.

Saddam himself mentioned in one of his speeches that at the end of the war against Iran, the Iraqi armed forces had 87 divisions.[2] The overall number of men in uniform was more than one million, most of them serving in the ground forces. According to the U.S. intelligence, their arsenal of weapons included "more than 5,000 main battle tanks, 1,000 of them T-72 type, 5,000 armored infantry vehicles and 3,000 artillery pieces larger than 100 mm."[3] According to Saddam himself, the numbers were even higher.[4] The ground forces were organized into 12 corps (*faylaq-fayaliq*): of those, 11 belonged to what was called the "regular" army and were first-line forces, and one, the Republican Guard (RG), an elite force that had the best equipment, acted as the strategic reserve. The air force had more than 700 combat aircrafts in its inventory, some of them top line types.[5] The army aviation operated about 800 helicopters of all types. The air defense included a network of radars, SAM missiles, mostly from Soviet origin, and anti-aircraft artillery (AAA). The navy was the smallest and least important arm, and had some OSA-type missile boats and Silkworm shore-to-sea missiles, whose half-ton warhead could sink a frigate or damage a battleship.[6] Iraq possessed a strategic arm based on medium-range missiles—the "al-Hussayn" they had modified from the Soviet SCUD missile, about 200 of which they launched on Iranian cities at the beginning of 1988. Iraq also possessed nonconventional weapons—chemical and biological agents of several types, with different launching capabilities, and an advanced nuclear program, but didn't possess any nuclear weapons. Above all, the victory over Iran had built high morale and a spirit of combat among the troops and command, and they became convinced that they were invincible.

Planning and Preparations for the "Mother of all Battles"

From the Iraqi point of view, the war in Kuwait consisted of three different phases: the conquest of the country in August 1990, the interim period of preparations until January 1991, and the campaign against the coalition forces in January and February of 1991. The first phase, Operation "Yawm al-Nida' al-'Azim" (The Day of the Great Call), the quick overrunning of Kuwait, was conducted by the Republican Guard divisions, keeping the army ground forces completely out of the picture. After accomplishing this, the Iraqis immediately started their planning and preparations for a massive confrontation with the United States and its allies. Their basic approach was to direct most of their efforts to the ground battle campaign in the Kuwaiti theater of operations. Accordingly, they started a huge buildup of forces for the coming war by pouring into Kuwait a massive order of regular army units. They called up large numbers of reservists, and reactivated

15 divisions that had been deactivated after the end of the war against Iran, as well as built up 14 new divisions, including two armored and one mechanized; they reactivated the Popular Army (the Ba'th Party militia) as well.[7] They started to prepare the theater of operations in Kuwait in the same way that they fortified their front line in the Iran-Iraq War—building defensive lines along the border with Saudi Arabia, positions for their armor and artillery, minefields and obstacle belts, and a huge logistical support system, including supply storages in rear areas and a large network of roads, in order to support their deployment for a long stay. They also prepared a ditch along their defensive lines (project "Tareq"), planning to fill it with kerosene and set it on fire as an additional obstacle against any attack, but, due to technical difficulties and low effectiveness, the idea was abandoned.[8] The navy fortified the shore defenses by planting a belt of maritime minefields in the northern part of the Persian Gulf and deploying shore-to-sea missiles and artillery units to protect the seaward flank of the ground forces deployment. They made also a great effort to conceal all those activities and camouflage the forces deployed in the area. Massive preparations were also carried out all over Iraq to defend headquarters and vital installations, army, air, and naval bases, military industry facilities, etc. Steps were taken to enable the military to quickly fix damaged bridges, communication centers, and the infrastructure needed to support the campaign in the south, as well as to provide civil defense aid to the population in Iraq.

The forces deployed in the Kuwaiti theater consisted of three echelons, or layers. The first echelon was based on four corps—the 3rd, 4th, 6th, and 7th, which operated until then in southern Iraq, along the Iranian border. Two additional corps consisted of a new corps, the "Gulf Forces" (*Quwat al-Khalij*), and of the 1st corps that was brought south from Kurdistan. Each of the corps was deployed in two doctrinal lines—infantry divisions at the front were meant to absorb the initial full impact of the coalition attack, and behind the infantry were deployed armored and mechanized forces to be used for the counterattacks. The second echelon, a theater reserve, consisted of two corps—the 2nd that was also moved from the Iranian border, and the "Jihad forces," a new corps. In the third echelon were deployed eight divisions of the Republican Guard. Their mission was to defend the Iraqi territory, specifically the Basra area. Another new corps—the "Western Euphrates" command—was deployed to defend the southern Euphrates valley. The General Command activated a forward headquarters in Basra to handle the campaign closely.[9]

The defensive plan was based on the principles and lessons learned by the Iraqi commanders in the war against Iran: blunting the attacking forces by offering stiff fighting by the forward Infantry units. Then counterattacks

would be launched by armored and mechanized reserve units in four doctrinal levels—the divisional reserve, the corps reserve, the reserve of the General Head Quarters, and the Republican Guard divisions, serving as the strategic reserve of the Commander in Chief, Staff Field Marshall Saddam Husayn. The Iraqi Supreme Command was sure that this deployment would be a death trap for the coalition ground forces. Minor preparations were made in order to fight the coalition forces inside Iraq, especially in the southern cities, where the Iraqi side sought to promote a war of attrition against the coalition forces, possibly by also using chemical and biological weapons, turning it into a kind of a second Vietnam. The Special Republican Guard forces assumed responsibility for the defense of the capital, Baghdad.[10]

Altogether, the Iraqis deployed in the Kuwait theater of operation far more infantry units and soldiers than the coalition intelligence identified: ten corps' headquarters and more than 50 divisions of all types.[11] The coalition intelligence detected only five corps' headquarters and 35–36 divisions of all types in the theater of operations. The U.S. intelligence also assessed that the Iraqis concentrated in the arena more than 4,200 tanks, 2,800 armored personnel carriers, more than 3,000 pieces of artillery, and 540,000 men in arms.[12]

Assessing correctly the coalition's air capabilities and knowing their own limits, the Iraqi planners adopted a variety of solutions, like launching kamikaze-style suicide air and naval attacks, and carrying out air attacks against Saudi oilfields.[13] They also prepared their Missile Force to launch attacks against chosen targets in Israel and Saudi Arabia. By the end of the year, the stage was prepared for the big show. The Iraqi media extensively covered the visits that Saddam and other senior officers paid to the forces in Kuwait. They were satisfied, believing that they were well prepared to face the approaching coalition onslaught, and that they would emerge victorious, as they had in the war against Iran.

The "Mother of all Battles"

The Iraqi command faced reality very soon after the coalition forces began their air campaign. They found out that the air attacks were launched not only against targets in Kuwait, but all over Iraq. The attacks focused, in the first place, on their air force infrastructure (bases, air defense systems, headquarters, etc.), paralyzing its operational capabilities. This enabled the coalition to very quickly achieve air supremacy over all of the theater of operations. The performance of this campaign by the coalition was a superb show of quantity, as well as of high technological quality. Most disturbing for the Iraqi command were the growing losses in aircraft, most of them on

the ground. This included the top line types that were hidden in shelters, and thus considered well protected. This prompted Saddam to send some 140 warplanes to Iran in order to save them from destruction.[14] This unexpected situation put the burden of fighting an air campaign against the coalition forces totally on the Iraqi air defenses, which managed to inflict some losses on coalition aircrafts and cruise missiles. As the Iraqi side saw it, this compelled the coalition aircraft to operate in higher altitudes, reducing the effectiveness of their bombings.[15]

In order to protect Iraq's prestige and, especially, that of the Iraqi Air Force, Saddam ordered his air force to shoot down coalition warplanes in "hit and run" air ambushes. The operation, named "Samarra," took place on January 30. According to the Iraqis, a few coalition patrolling aircraft were indeed ambushed successfully by Mig-25 interceptors in a surprise attack.[16] Despite its magnitude, the coalition air offensive failed to block transportation from central Iraq to the south, as well as to disrupt the Iraqi communication network, nor did it manage to locate and destroy the surface-to-surface missile systems. Nevertheless, the aerial campaign had a devastating effect on the Iraqi troops in Kuwait and their capacity to maneuver during the ground campaign.

From the Iraqi point of view, the ground campaign consisted of three battles: an offensive operation designed to conquer al-Khafji, in Saudi territory; the fighting of the regular army forces in Kuwait, trying to stop the coalition ground offensive; and finally, the Republican Guard forces battle against the coalition forces in southern Iraq, if coalition forces get there. The operation to take al-Khafji was launched in order to regain the initiative in the war by drawing the coalition forces into a ground battle before they were fully ready for it, according to the Iraqi timetable. The fact that a couple of weeks into the war, there was still no ground contact between the two armies was unacceptable to the Iraqi command. At this stage, they were not yet concerned about the morale or the general state of their troops as a result of the relentless coalition air attacks. The Iraqi high command wanted to exploit the advantage they thought they had over the coalition forces on the ground, and the sooner the better. They believed that if the ground campaign started early, they would inflict on the U.S. forces a decisive defeat. Despite inferior conditions, the Iraqis successfully concentrated a significant force for the Khafji operation. They managed to conceal their preparations from the eyes of the coalition intelligence, and moved the forces with effective surprise through the Iraqi frontline troops into Saudi territory in several sectors. The operation was conducted at night in the open desert area, under hostile air activity, and with very limited night vision equipment.

The Iraqi forces accomplished their mission without any real resistance, but after the coalition forces grasped the situation, the Iraqi force found itself under heavy attacks from air and ground, suffering heavy losses in combat vehicles and troops. The growing pressure forced them to withdraw through their lines back into their former positions in Kuwait. Tactically, the Iraqis were very successful in this operation; they conquered Khafji and stayed in the area for more than 48 hours. However, they failed to achieve their strategic goal: drawing the coalition prematurely into the ground battle. In this operation, forces from five divisions were assembled. This was a remarkable feat under unfavorable conditions: very complicated coordination among multiple units at night, long-range undetected night movement of large armored formations through the Iraqi lines in Kuwait and then into enemy territory, and, finally, a well-coordinated attack, and all that under total coalition air domination. The Iraqi command rightfully saw it as a great success. The problem was that they saw it as a victory, and were convinced that the coalition forces were afraid of direct engagement. This encouraged them to believe that they were able to fight the ground battle successfully. Saddam himself was involved in the Khafji operation from the beginning, and followed it closely from the Forward General Command Headquarters in Basra.[17]

The second component of the ground campaign started as the coalition forces began their ground offensive on February 24. The attack was launched on the Iraqi defensive lines along the Saudi border. At first, the Iraqi forces showed stiff resistance and tried an organized defensive battle, as they were trained to do, including armored counterattacks. They even had some local successes in holding back the attacking forces, but very soon their first-line defenses started to crumble—units withdrew, and many troops started to surrender to the advancing coalition forces. The artillery—still deeper behind the front line—went through the drill, showering very heavy fire onto the coalition forces, but it was inaccurate and, therefore, not very effective.[18] The Iraqis reported heroic fighting by their formations, but the heavy and continuous coalition air bombardment demoralized their troops, decreasing their willingness to fight. All their efforts to stop the advance of the attacking coalition forces were in vain, and their counterattacks failed. The pressure by coalition forces, both by air and on the ground, on the retreating Iraqi units made it almost impossible for them to conduct an organized retreat.

The Iraqi high command was worried mostly about an outflanking maneuver by the coalition forces on their right flank. The flanking maneuver was aimed to penetrate Iraqi territory, and posed a threat of trapping all the Iraqi forces deployed in the Kuwait theater of operations. This threat

brought the Iraqi high command to issue orders for an organized retreat from Kuwait. The retreating troops were to be deployed hastily along a new defensive line, stretching west of Basra and northward all the way to Nasiriyya and Samawa. On February 26, the Iraqi forces commenced their withdrawal from Kuwait.[19] At this stage, the Iraqis started their third component of the ground battle in this war.

The ground campaign reached its peak as the Republican Guard forces found themselves facing the coalition ground attack. These forces were deployed in a defensive line, stretching west to the main road between Nasiriyya and Basra southward, resting on natural obstacles—sand dunes and swampy areas. Since January 17, these forces were subjected to concentrated coalition air attacks that were intended to erode them as much as possible before the ground battle ensued. On the eve of the U.S. attack, the Tawakalna mechanized division of the Republican Guard was ordered to withdraw to a rearward line in order to close a gap between two other divisions. On February 26, as the division started to move to its new positions, its formations were exposed to a heavy armored attack launched by the 7th U.S. Army corps, and were forced to conduct a difficult battle in bad weather and visibility conditions, due to heavy dust clouds in the area. Despite suffering heavy casualties in two of its brigades, however, the division managed to withdraw after receiving some support from one of the armored Republican Guard divisions.

The Republican Guard forces launched their main counteroffensive against the 7th U.S. Army corps with two armored divisions, al-Madina and Hammurabi, one heading north and the other south. The attack started after a heavy artillery preparation, and the attacking forces maneuvered well to encircle coalition forces, and, according to the Iraqi sources, endangered the 7th U.S. Army corps and succeeded in blocking its advance. At the same time, the attack of the 18th U.S. Army corps toward the Nasiriyya-Basra road also came to a halt due to the stubborn resistance shown by the Iraqi elite Special Forces—commando and infantry troops. From the Iraqi point of view, the battle of the Republican Guard forces was the "crown of the ground campaign." The RG performed well despite its huge inferiority in terms of air support, firepower, armor, and night vision. The Iraqis described it as one of the largest armor battles since World War II. After the war, they claimed that this battle compelled the Americans to ask for a cease-fire. The Iraqis argued that the U.S. commanders were reluctant to clash head-on with the famous Republican Guard forces—the "Men of the Difficult Missions," as Saddam used to call them.[20] This claim was false. Before the cease-fire took place, the Iraqi command prepared for a worst-case scenario, namely, for continuous battles in southern Iraq. It appointed

Saddam's notorious cousin, Ali Hassan al-Majid (Chemical 'Ali), responsible for the defense of the south, together with the minister of defense, the chief of the general staff, and other senior officers. They prepared new plans for the forthcoming battles, but the announcement of the cease-fire postponed this scenario for 12 years, until the launch of Operation Iraqi Freedom.[21]

Beside the main campaigns in the air and on the ground, the Iraqis also handled naval and missile campaigns. The navy's mission was to prevent the coalition forces from launching an amphibious assault from the Gulf. As their vessels were destroyed by the coalition air attacks, the main burden was laid on the naval ground forces—infantry, artillery, and missiles, deployed in Faylaka Island and along the Kuwaiti and Iraqi coastlines. The sea minefields that the Iraqis planted in the northern part of the Persian Gulf were part of this defensive deployment, and had a considerable effect on coalition maritime operations. The shore defenses were described by the U.S. side as more formidable than those encountered by the U.S. Marines during their battles in the Pacific in World War II.[22]

The main offensive weapons used by the Iraqis in the war were the al-Hussayn medium-range missiles that they launched mostly against Israel and Saudi Arabia, chiefly against targets in urban areas. The Iraqis succeeded in launching them despite coalition efforts to detect and destroy them from the air and ground. Altogether they launched 93 missiles, 43 of them on targets in Israel—mostly on Tel Aviv and Haifa areas, and the rest on targets in Saudi Arabia. A few missiles made their way to Bahrain and Qatar. The Iraqis used only conventional warheads, but were prepared to also use chemical and biological ones. The Iraqi leadership additionally saw the attack on Israel as a kind of retaliation and revenge for the Israeli attack on the nuclear reactor near Baghdad in June 1981, and as a symbol of support and solidarity with the first Palestinian Intifada. Apart from these missiles, the Iraqis also launched during the ground battle more than 2,300 tactical rockets—Frog-7 (Soviet) and Astros (Brazilian) types. In the following years, the Iraqi propaganda celebrated the fact that by launching the missiles against Israel, they shattered the Israeli defense doctrine. To some extent, this was correct, as, prior to this war, no missiles had hit Israel's main population centers. The Gulf War thus ushered in a new era.[23]

The Consequences of the War

The consequences of the war for the Iraqi armed forces were near catastrophic. This giant war machine was defeated in 43 days by superior forces and advanced technology. Saddam underestimated the importance of the coalition's dominance of the air when he said that "Air force has never been

the decisive factor in the history of war."[24] This time it was. The coalition air campaign paralyzed the Iraqi Air Force from the beginning of the war, and shocked the troops so hard that many of them lost their willingness to fight, and preferred to surrender and stay alive rather than die for Saddam. The withdrawal from Kuwait was planned as an organized operation, but very soon under growing pressure of continuous air attacks, it became an act of mass flight and chaos. Many units disintegrated and their troops deserted, leaving behind them their weapons and equipment. The main roads leading to Iraq were full of abandoned tanks, vehicles, artillery pieces, etc. Commanders lost control of their units. This was the "road of death" of the Iraqi Army. The Iraqis left behind them in Kuwait not only part of their army, but also destruction and damage to the country.[25]

There are many reasons for the Iraqi defeat in this war. The first was the superiority of the coalition forces in battlefield technology and training, for example: real-time intelligence, command, control and communication systems, electronic warfare, night vision equipment, precision guided munitions, killing superiority of the armor by range and penetration, etc. The second reason was the coalition's air supremacy, and the destructive effect of the air campaign on the ground forces even before the ground battle began. The psychological effect was more devastating then the physical one. The third reason was the failure of the Iraqi military strategy. The Iraqi planners did not understand that the enemy facing them was not Iran, but Western superpowers. Finally, the Iraqi regular army was clearly inferior to the Republican Guards. The fighting spirit of the RG was high, while that of the regular army was relatively low. The war against Iran built the Iraqi armed forces and marked their rise to the peak; the war in Kuwait marked their decline.

During the following years, the Iraqi propaganda machine tried to convince the people that the war was a great triumph for Iraq and its leadership, because they stood successfully against a mighty coalition of 28 armies, including the U.S. armed forces. This propaganda influenced the Iraqi leadership itself, and in 2003, they believed that their armed forces were capable of fighting the coalition forces, slowing their advance, and bleeding them sufficiently until they would decide to stop the war.

The Impact of Operation Desert Storm on the Performance of the Iraqi Armed Forces in Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003

After their defeat in the Gulf War, the Iraqi armed forces had to deal with another dangerous event, the "Intifada"—the armed uprising in the Shi'i

and Kurdish areas. These two major events shocked the armed forces, and had a profound impact on their operational capabilities later on and, especially in Operation Iraqi Freedom. The first step following the suppression of the "Intifada" was the reorganization of the ground forces. Between 1991 and 1995, the armed forces were reduced from over 70 to 23 divisions, 17 of which belonged to the regular army, and six—half the prewar number—to the Republican Guard. They also eliminated some corps headquarters, leaving only six (five in the regular army and one in the Republican Guard). During 1995, however, the status of the RG was upgraded in the sense that it was made a separate army, now commanding two new corps headquarters.

Weapons systems were also reduced. The ground forces remained with about 2,500 tanks, including less than 1,000 T-72 types in the Republican Guard. The number of armored personnel carriers (APCs) and artillery pieces, too, went down precipitously. The Iraqi order of battle on the eve of Operation Iraqi Freedom consisted of six armored (three army and three RG) divisions, four mechanized (three army and one RG) divisions, and 13 infantry (11 army and two RG divisions).

The Iraqi Air Force was beaten severely, losing many aircrafts, including those that were smuggled to Iran. Most of the latter were of the first-line types, and none of them was ever returned to Iraq. The air force's activities were also hampered by the limitations of the No-Fly Zones in the northern and southern parts of the country. All of this made the air force even less effective than it had been in the Gulf War. The main burden of fighting against the coalition airpower remained, as it was in 1991, with the air defense, which, in February 1993, was upgraded and became an independent arm. The navy still had no vessels, but the army aviation (helicopter gunships) remained intact. An important factor influencing the state of readiness and operational capabilities of the Iraqi armed forces was the embargo imposed on Iraq after the conquest of Kuwait. This had a double impact. In the first place, Iraq was unable to purchase any weapon system, and therefore was unable to reconstruct its badly damaged armed forces. Secondly, Iraq was not permitted even to buy spare parts for the available weapons. This meant that weapons' maintenance became nearly impossible. The Iraqi command made huge efforts to overcome the latter problem, but with little effect. Thus, for example, out of 250 tanks that the Iraqi 2nd corps had in the February 2003 war, only 145 were in good shape, characterized as 75 percent to 80 percent operable.[26] Another important factor that affected the Iraqi military capabilities in 2003 was the absence of long-range surface-to-surface missiles, which they had possessed and used in 1991, and of chemical weapons, which they had used in the 1980s.

The military defeat in 1991 and the subsequent "Intifada" triggered a loyalty problem between the regular army troops and the regime. This mistrust caused many morale problems in the regular army that was manned mostly by Shi'i troops, including a growing number of desertions. The regime always saw internal (domestic) security as the most important issue, even more so than the threat from the coalition. As a result, it decided to surround itself with a loyal protective ring. This was the reason behind the organization of the Republican Guards as a separate army, and the creation of new military formations like "Fida'iyyi Saddam." This was also the reason for the operational defense concept that the Iraqi regime adopted before Operation Iraqi Freedom, namely, charging the Republican Guards and the Special Republican Guards with the defense of Baghdad and the inner circle. Professionally speaking, this was not always the best tactical choice. The regular army was made responsible for the defense of the borders in the south and in the north, far away from the capital and the regime's sensitive centers.

The 1991 Gulf War, and the March 1991 Shi'i Intifada and Kurdish revolt that followed, shook the very foundations of the Ba'th regime that, until then, and despite the war with Iran and two years of economic hardships, was quite stable. Despite the heavy casualties it caused (most military casualties were Shi'i) and the extensive damage it wreaked on the Iraqi economy, especially in the Shi'i areas, the war against Iran did not result with a major crisis between the regime and its Shi'i population. They were bitter but not rebellious. The Kurds were fuming after Halabja, but were defeated. By contrast, the occupation of Kuwait and the Gulf War that followed created a national crisis, because the damage was horrendous and the reasons for the war were not clear to the people. Conquering and annexing an Arab state was acceptable to those Iraqis who had seen Kuwait as a part of historical Iraq-Mesopotamia. However, going into a new devastating war for it, this time with the world superpower, was a different matter altogether. Furthermore, Saddam Husayn's military machine absorbed a crushing blow, and the dissatisfied elements in Iraq felt that this was the opportune moment for which they had been waiting to strike at the regime. On another level, the regular army became incensed because Saddam tasked the Republican Guard with conquering Kuwait, but then withdrew them into Iraq and left the regular army in Kuwait to absorb the main blow. Many army officers reached the conclusion that by sending them to fight against a far superior enemy, the regime actually decided to sacrifice them. A major chasm was thus created, not only between the Shi'is and the Kurds on the one hand and the regime on the other, but also between the regime and the regular army.

One of the indications that this was indeed the case was the fact that many senior army officers defected to the West during the 1990s. This explains why, towards 2003, the political leadership put its trust almost entirely in the Republican Guard, in the Special Republican Guard, and in special units that were regarded as loyal. In addition, this crisis of confidence moved Saddam and his party politicians to nominate party luminaries and Saddam's family members, who had no military experience and expertise, to very central military command positions. The low performance of the army during Operation Iraq Freedom was thus the combined result of a crisis of confidence, low morale, inferior weaponry, chronic shortage of spares, and insufficient training. All of these negative developments were, to a large extent, the results of the Gulf War of 1991. As a result, the coalition forces, which included only four divisions, easily defeated a much larger Iraqi military.

There was, however, one more damaging result of the Gulf War. One of the main problems that resulted from the defeat in 1991 was the development of misperceptions at the top of the Iraqi political leadership, and possibly the military command too. While many Iraqi officers, probably most of them, understood well that they were beaten roundly, that all their prewar assumptions that they could stop the coalition forces were based on wishful thinking, if not ignorance, the political leadership described the results of the Gulf War as a great victory for Iraqi arms. For 12 years, the Iraqi media, but also the army commanders who did not dare say anything else, praised the commander in chief as an ingenious war leader. The regime showered brass citations and commendations on the senior military. It was impossible to relate frankly and professionally to the results of the Gulf War. A lengthy and extensive campaign was designed to persuade the Iraqi people that in 1991 their armed forces actually won the war by preventing the coalition forces from advancing farther north into Iraq. The Iraqi media emphasized the fact that it was the Americans, rather than the Iraqis, who asked for a cease-fire. Iraqi top brass, politicians, and journalists argued that the Americans asked for it because they were keen on avoiding an all-out confrontation with the formidable Republican Guard. Iraqi weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), too, were described as a major deterrent. The war was called *Umm al-Ma'arik,* the Mother of All Battles, while it should have been dubbed the Mother of All Debacles. Twelve years of such a campaign seemed to have succeeded again in convincing many Iraqi military planners that next time they could stop the U.S. forces using the same strategy. Alternatively, it may be that the professional senior military command understood that they could not stop the U.S. forces through strictly military face-to-face confrontations, and that they had to

look for additional ways, but they were afraid to tell their political bosses the truth. Whatever the case, the fact that the 1991 Gulf War ended with the Ba'th regime still in power in Baghdad, the Republican Guard still mostly intact, and Iraqi territorial integrity in the south still untouched created an illusion that the Iraqi armed forces were more or less equal to those of the United States and its allies. Those who were not deluded into thinking this way could not express their views. The result was that, even though some senior officers demanded to blow up the bridges throughout the south and to flood wide areas in order to slow down the U.S. advance, Saddam and the more senior commanders around him turned this demand down. At least to Saddam and his close political circle, the main danger was still not the U.S. advance from the south, but rather another Shi'i revolt there. It is true that Saddam ignored reports that the main thrust was coming from the south, and continued to believe that it was coming from the west, from Jordan. However, even when it became clear that large U.S. forces were coming from the south, he was still more worried about a new Shi'i Intifada. Blowing up the bridges and flooding southern Iraq would have made it impossible for him to put down a new Intifada, so he vetoed it. Also, the Iraqi commanders did not even consider laying a large number of mines and preparing a massive barrier of IEDs to be detonated by commandos along the main routes approaching Baghdad. The number of casualties and the delays that could result from such a strategy would have caused the advancing U.S. columns great difficulties, and could have opened the way for some political maneuvers. Certainly they would have enabled Saddam to better prepare the defense of Baghdad, as well as his personal escape routes. Ba'thi politicians promised to turn Baghdad into Stalingrad, probably meaning: fighting behind their women and children, thus taking advantage of the Americans' inability to slaughter civilians. This was not done, and not due to humanitarian considerations. The fact that the 1991 Gulf War ended the way it did created a sense of hubris at the top of the Iraqi political, and possibly also military, leadership. This hubris led to their demise.

In sum, the Gulf War of 1991 was a crucial milestone in the history and development of the Iraqi armed forces. On the eve of that war, the Iraqi armed forces were at their zenith. After that war, they reached their nadir, from which they did not recover even 12 years later. The most surprising of all was the fact that the military command—be it the professional officers or the political boss or both—did not internalize the lessons of the Gulf War, and thus did not adapt to the conditions of the new battlefield. The result was a fast and total collapse, and the end of a proud and experienced military.

Notes

1. *Final Report to Congress- Conduct of the Persian Gulf War* (Washington D.C., Department of Defense, April 1992), p. 9.
2. Saddam's speech on the sixth anniversary of the liberation of al-Fau, al-*Qadisiyya,* April 18, 1994.
3. *Final Report to Congress- Conduct of the Persian Gulf War*, April 1992, p. 9.
4. Saddam's speech on the seventh anniversary of the victory on Iran, *al-Thawra,* August 9, 1995.
5. *Final Report to Congress- Conduct of the Persian Gulf War*, April 1992, p. 11.
6. *Final Report to Congress- Conduct of the Persian Gulf War*, April 1992, pp. 12–13.
7. Announcements no. 2 and no. 3 issued by the Iraqi General Headquarters in August 2, 1990. and August 5, 1990. *Baghdad Radio*, August 2 and August 5, 1990.
8. Al-Liwaa al-Rukn (Staff Major General) Wafiq al-Samarra'i, *Huttam al-bawwaba al-sharqiyya* (The Demolishers of the Eastern Gates) (Kuwait, Sharakat Dar al-Qabas lil-Sahafa wal-Nashr, 1997), pp. 275–277. Hamid Sa'id, 'Abd al-Jabbar Muhsin, 'Abd al-Amir Mu'alla, *Al-Munazala al-Kubra wa Qa'iduha: al-Muqaddamat wal-Waqa'i'* (The Great Battle and its Commander: the Introductions and the Events) (Baghdad, Dar al-Huriyya lil-Taba'a, 1998), pp. 198–202, 207–208.
9. *Final Report to Congress- Conduct of the Persian Gulf War*, April 1992, pp. 84, 251–2; More detailed information: Hamid Sa'id, 'Abd al-Jabbar Muhsin, 'Abd al-Amir Mu'alla, *Al-Munazala al-Kubrawa wa Qa'iduha: al-Muqaddimat wal-Waqa'i'*, pp. 227–229.
10. Al-Liwaa al-Rukn Wafiq al-Samarra'i, *Huttam al-Bawwaba al-Sharqiyya*, p. 234.
11. Hamid Sa'id, 'Abd al-Jabbar Muhsin, 'Abd al-Amir Mu'alla, *Al-Munazala al-Kubrawa wa Qa'iduha: al-Muqaddimat wal-Waqa'i'*, pp. 227–229.
12. *Final Report to Congress- Conduct of the Persian Gulf War,* April 1992, pp. 83–85.
13. Al-Liwaaa al-Rukn Wafiq al-Samarra', *Huttam al-Bawwaba al-Sharqiyya*, pp. 254–255.
14. Al-Liwaaa al-Rukn Wafiq al-Samarra', *Huttam al-Bawwaba al-Sharqiyya*, pp. 261–267.
15. Hamid Sa'id, 'Abd al-Jabbar Muhsin, 'Abd al-Amir Mu'alla, *Al-Munazala al-Kubrawa wa Qa'iduha: al-Muqaddimat wal-Waqa'i'*, pp. 309–312.
16. Hamid Sa'id, 'Abd al-Jabbar Muhsin, 'Abd al-Amir Mu'alla, *Al-Munazala al-Kubrawa,* pp. 312–317.
17. Hamid Sa'id, 'Abd al-Jabbar Muhsin, 'Abd al-Amir Mu'alla, *Al-Munazala al-Kubrawa,* pp. 243–279.
18. *Final Report to Congress- Conduct of the Persian Gulf War*, April 1992, p. 258.
19. Al-Liwaa al-Rukn Wafiq al-Samarra'i, *Huttam al-Bawwaba al-Sharqiyya*, pp. 235–236.

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21. Hamid Sa'id, 'Abd al-Jabbar Muhsin, 'Abd al-Amir Mu'alla, *Al-Munazala al-Kubrawa,* pp. 283–293.
22. Final Report to Congress- Conduct of the Persian Gulf War, April 1992, pp. 207, 213.
23. See an extensive and detailed description by the commander of the Iraqi strategic missile force, al-Fariq al-Rukn (Staff Lt. General) Hazem 'Abd al-Razzaq Shihab al-Ayyubi, *Thalatha wa Arba'un Saruhan 'Ala al-Kiyan al-Sahiyuni* (Thirty Four Missiles on the Zionist Entity) (Baghdad, Dar al-Kutub wal-Watha'iq, 1997).
24. *Final Report to Congress- Conduct of the Persian Gulf War,* April 1992. p. xxi.
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CHAPTER 11

Management of Iraq's Economy Pre and Post the 2003 War: An Assessment

Joseph Sassoon

To assess Iraq's economy after the 2003 invasion, it is important to understand how it was managed on a macro- and a micro-level beforehand. This is not a straightforward task.

The first problem is the lack of data, as economic statistics were considered state secrets during Saddam Husayn's regime, particularly after the beginning of the war with Iran in 1980. The second issue is that by 2003, after two wars, many years of sanctions, and the increasing economic autonomy of Kurdistan, Iraq's economy was highly fragmented, and there was little in the way of a national macroeconomic policy as such. It is essential to keep in mind that, since 1980, Iraq had faced one economic and political crisis after another, and normal circumstances did not exist.

Iraq's dependence on its relatively huge oil revenues since the early 1950s, culminating in the late 1970s and early 1980s, turned the country into a classic case of rentierism.[1] The militarization of the economy and the Ba'th's policy of concentrating power among a minority of clans and groups turned the state into the biggest single employer and purchaser in the economy. A system of economic patronage was established, in which reports were made to the president himself and his close entourage.[2] Decisions were made not on economic grounds, but to reward or to punish certain groups. The economic policy could be described as a "budgetary" one, with the emphasis on allocation of revenues to what and to whom.

During the 1980s, Iraq's economy began to weaken, not only from the war with Iran, but also from a decline in world oil prices. The invasion of Kuwait led to the destruction of oil fields, seriously denting the infrastructure of the country. The sanctions that followed the war prevented Iraq from recovering economically to the growth levels of the early 1980s. Sanctions led to the loss of two-thirds of the country's GDP, soaring inflation, the collapse of private income, and swelling unemployment, signaling the beginning of the demise of the middle class, and professional brain drain.[3] Ironically, however, the sanctions strengthened the regime. The Oil-for-Food program (OFF) defined the management of the Iraqi economy in the period between 1996 and the war in 2003, and turned the government into the sole allocator of the basic necessities of the population, thus increasing its power and ability to favor and enrich its political cronies.

Two wars and more than a decade of sanctions did not lead to reform or internal collapse. This is an interesting point to keep in mind when we examine Iraq after the 2003 invasion and the collapse of the state and its bureaucracy. However, by 2003, Iraq's economy was severely weakened in every area. Its foreign reserves were depleted, and Iraq had become a major debtor country[4]; the Iraqi dinar suffered from chronic depreciation; development planning had virtually ceased; the infrastructure in many vital areas of the economy was damaged, and the vast majority of the population was impoverished, either due to hyperinflation, which depleted their savings, or due to the rising unemployment. GDP per capita, peaking at $4,219 in 1979, dropped to $343 by 1996, while Iraq's total GDP, which stood at $66.2 billion in 1982, dropped to about $26 billion by 2002.[5]

Thus, when the U.S.-led coalition invaded Iraq, three factors shaped Iraq's economy. Firstly, Iraq had a command economy, a single party with a hegemonic control by the state over both the public and private sector. Secondly, being a rentier state shaped the political economy of Iraq's system of state patronage and its powerful bureaucracy.[6] Thirdly, Iraq was a state with a shattered economy and with little or no institutional organization.

After the fall of Baghdad, the Iraqi state collapsed, its power structures disintegrated, and there was nothing to replace them. The Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarianism Assistance (ORHA) under General Garner did not fill the gap created by the collapse of the Iraqi institutions, since its emphasis was to be on refugee work and oil field repair. As it happened, there was neither a refugee problem nor oil field fires.[7] Although the debate within the U.S. administration on Iraq's future had been going on from late 2001, no clear strategy had emerged on how Iraq should be governed.[8] Thus, ORHA's planning for the postwar period was based on assumptions that were proved to be wrong.[9] Gardner himself admitted to

Congress that "this is an ad hoc operation, glued together over about four or five weeks time," adding that his team "didn't really have enough time to plan."[10]

As the old power structures disintegrated after the fall of Baghdad, the country was thrown into almost total chaos. Essential services run by the government were halted. The looting that followed spared no bank, hospital, power station, or government office, and cost the country around $12 billion.[11] No wonder a British diplomat cabled his government in London telling them: "Garner's outfit, ORHA, is an unbelievable mess. No leadership, no strategy, no coordination, no structure, and inaccessible to ordinary Iraqis."[12]

By May 2003, ORHA was dissolved and the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) was established in its place under Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III. Within a week after his arrival in Baghdad, Bremer issued the decree of de-Ba'thification. Overnight, almost 30,000 Iraqis—including middle management in economic ministries, teachers, and doctors—were dismissed from their jobs.[13]

This was a turning point in Iraq's history: first, the senior management of the country had fled or been arrested, and now middle management were kicked out. The result was a huge vacuum that the Americans could not fill. The CPA was finding it hard to recruit the right people for the right jobs.[14] Indeed, very few of the recruits had regional knowledge or expertise in the fields that they were overseeing, or any real understanding of Iraq's history and its economy. Matters were exacerbated by the fact that the CPA relied on a "revolving door of diplomats," causing a lack of continuity.[15]

One of the main hurdles in managing the Iraqi economy was, in my opinion, the ambitious and unrealistic plans that the Americans wanted to impose on Iraq. Bremer deeply believed that Iraq needed "a vibrant private sector to succeed."[16] That might be true, but given the fact that Iraq was emerging from almost 40 years of socialism, since the 1964 sweeping nationalizations by the regime of 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif, plans of privatization on such a scale were like applying shock therapy to a feeble economy. Bremer imagined Iraq as a postwar Germany or post-Communist Europe, and believed things could turn around fast.

The CPA was dealing with one crisis after another (political and economic), and was trying to cope with a crippled economy plagued by price distortions and inefficiencies. But, there were some significant achievements: for example, in July 2003, old dinars were exchanged for new currency, and a law creating an independent Central Bank was promulgated. The CPA also spent money on small but vital projects—sewers, bridges, schools, etc.—that affected the day-to-day quality of life of the population.[17]

The Americans were under pressure both within Iraq and from the outside world to show progress. This led to an emphasis on headline projects to deliver the essential requirements such as oil, electricity, and potable water to the population, while long-term works to improve agriculture and industry were pushed aside.[18]

The money spent by the CPA was not enough and often too late. In September 2003, Congress passed an $87 billion appropriation bill that included $18.4 billion for the reconstruction of Iraq. In addition to this vast sum, the CPA was able to use oil proceeds, frozen assets, and transfers from the Oil-for-Food program. However, by August 2004, almost ten months after Congress had passed the bill, only $400 million (just over 2 percent) had been spent.[19] The failure to spend this money, particularly in the critical first year after the war, became a major problem in light of the increased violence and very high unemployment.[20] Some observers felt that the reconstruction project never took off because it was "heavily centralized under Bremer's office in Baghdad and the Pentagon in Washington."[21] By the end of 2005, the total aid that Congress had allocated to Iraq's reconstruction reached $21 billion, of which about $8 billion remained unspent a year later. Since then, the total allocation has grown to around $50 billion. Most of this had been spent by the end of 2008, with more than half spent on security.[22]

On June 28, 2004, the CPA was dissolved and sovereignty was transferred to the new, interim Iraqi government, thus beginning a fresh chapter in Iraq's economic history.[23] The economy was seen by the Americans as the third vital pillar of a multistrategy approach to stabilize Iraq, alongside security and political development. In order to be able to assess Iraq's economy, it is important to look at the different sectors and the major issues facing them.

Oil

By far the most important sector of the economy since the early 1950s, oil has, since then, constituted the lion's share of the country's revenues. In current dollars, Iraq's income from oil revenues jumped 26-fold, from $1 billion in 1970 to $26 billion in 1980.[24] Iraq's *potential* revenue in 1980 was far higher than $26 billion though, but due to Saddam Husayn's attack on Iran in September 1980, Iraq's oil sales dropped substantially.

Two wars, followed by sanctions, caused the deterioration of the oil industry, depriving it of essential spare parts and new equipment.[25] Thus, the primary objective of the coalition forces after the 2003 invasion was to focus on infrastructure (interestingly, the damage to oil fields during the

invasion was not significant), and to get production back on track. To better understand this sector, it might be worthwhile to focus on the main issues facing the oil industry.

First and foremost is the continuing violence and poor security. Targeted attacks on oil complexes and the homes of oil executives have had a significant impact on oil production. Attacks have differed from region to region, the highest number taking place in the central region. In 2006, the estimated cost to the country ranged from $5 billion to $8 billion per year.[26] As a result of repeated sabotage, the Unitted States constructed Pipeline Exclusion Zones (PEZs), which include various security measures to block access to pipelines. In the quarter up to the end of June 2009, no pipelines within the PEZ were attacked. Outside of the PEZs, the Bai Hassan oil field's pipeline, a gas line to the Mosul power plant, and the Baiji oil refinery were attacked, but this had no impact on oil production or exports.[27]

The second issue plaguing the sector is corruption and smuggling. Corruption continues to impede the development of Iraq's oil and gas sector.[28] Sabotage attacks have evolved into lucrative moneymaking schemes for insurgents and enterprising criminal gangs alike. Insurgents, smugglers, and corrupt officials collaborate at different levels, weaving an intricate web that makes it difficult to distinguish among them. Estimates for smuggling range from $2.5 billion to $4 billion per year,[29] and there are indications that 100,000 barrels of oil are being smuggled from Iraq each day.[30]

Corruption has resulted from a number of factors. Firstly, there is a lack of a metering system of Iraq's oil exports.[31] Secondly, subsidies, set up under Saddam, and still continuing, have led to a huge differential between Iraqi product prices and those of nearby countries.[32] Thirdly, there exists an absence of proper control systems due to the collapse of the bureaucracy after 2003. The fact that the Ministry of Oil has one of the worst records in executing its capital budget (only 3 percent) epitomizes its lack of competence.[33]

No wonder, then, that by mid-2009, oil production of about 2.4 million barrels per day was still below the prewar level of 2.5 million barrels.[34] Production remains below the U.S. and Iraqi goals of 3 million barrels and 2.8 million barrels respectively.

A third obstacle facing the sector is the control of oil in Kurdistan. In Kurdistan, where security has not been an issue, production and exports have been severely limited due to disputes between the Kurdish Regional Government and the central government of Iraq in Baghdad, with regard to revenue sharing and the issuing of export licenses to foreign oil companies.[35]

Table 11.1 Hours of Electricity

	Demand	*Prewar Level*	*Goal*	*March 2006*	*May 23, 2009*
Average amount of electricity generated (in Megawatts)	8500–9000	3958	6000 (to have been reached by July 2004)	4000	6020

Source: Brookings Institution, *Iraq Index,* June 25, 2009, p. 39.

Connected to the fuel shortage is the deteriorating electricity sector. The CPA and, later, the Iraqi governments realized not only the economic importance of the sector, but also its psychological effect on the population. In spite of the fact that electricity has received 23 percent of the allocation for reconstruction, the outcome, as Table 11.1 indicates, is still far from satisfactory, particularly for the Baghdad population.

The power loss in Baghdad is due to sabotage activities, and the difference from the prewar levels reflects Saddam Husayn's emphasis on the capital to the neglect of the other provinces. In addition, there was also an explosion in power demand after 2003, due to the substantial improvement in the purchasing power of civil servants, thanks to the huge increase in salaries.[36] Also, imports into Iraq (especially from cheap Asian producers) of electrical appliances were not taxed, and the public purchased huge quantities of such products. Finally, as electricity was almost free, and because power was provided randomly and people did not know what hours to expect it to resume, most left all the lights on throughout the day.

Finance

As Table 11.2 indicates, nonoil GDP continues to be a low percentage of the overall economy (typical of a rentier state).

To understand Iraq's finances, it would be appropriate to address the major issues that faced and continue to face the financial system.

The first issue is the debt burden. Until the early 1980s, Iraq was fortunate in that it was not only debt free, but had considerable foreign revenues reserves estimated between $35 billion and $40 billion.[37] However, by the end of the war with Iran, Iraq had exhausted its reserves, and accumulated a debt, estimated at $42 billion, to non-Arab governments and banks.[38] Some extra $40 billion that Iraq owed to Gulf Arab states it considered "grant."[39]

Table 11.2 Iraq: Selected Economic and Financial Indicators

							Projections	
	2003	*2004*	*2005*	*2006*	*2007*	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*
Nominal GDP (in billions of US$)	13.6[a]	25.5[b]	34.0[b]	42.2[b]	62.3[b]	84.7[b]	70.0[b]	81.9[b]
of which nonoil (in %)	32.0[a]	30.4[a]	30.6[a]	33.1[a]	25.8[a]			
Nominal GDP per capita (in US$)	517[c]	927[c]	1214[c]	1481[c]	2148[c]	2881[c]	2341[c]	2703[c]
Real GDP (% change)	-41.4[a]	23.0[b]	3.3[b]	6.2[b]	1.5[b]	7.8[b]	6.1[b]	6.0[b]
Population (in millions)	26.3	27.5[b]	28.0[b]	28.5[b]	29.0[b]	29.4[b]	29.9[b]	
Domestic consumer price inflation (year-on-year)	34.0[a]	31.7[b]	31.6[b]	53.2[b]	30.7[b]	3.5[d]	5.4[b]	

Sources: (a) Brookings Institution, *Iraq Index,* June 25, 2009, p. 43; (b) Economist Intelligence Unit, *Iraq Monthly Report*, January 2009; (c) Author's calculations; (d) IMF, *Regional Economic Outlook: Middle East and Central Asia*, May 2009, p. 40.

By 2004, Iraq's total debt reached almost $130 billion. This debt represented about 443 percent of the country's GDP,[40] a debilitating economic burden.

Iraq's debt can be classified into four categories. The first category was about $40 billion owed to the Paris Club of Creditors, which, in November 2004, the Club agreed to reduce by 80 percent in three stages.[41] The second category of about $20 billion belongs to countries outside the Paris Club, such as China and Turkey. The third category of about $20 billion involves hundreds of private-sector creditors, such as banks and construction companies. In January 2006, Iraq issued its first-ever international bond, with a face value of $2.7 billion (carrying a coupon of 5.8 percent with a 2028 maturity), to settle most of this debt.[42] The fourth category is roughly $50 billion owed to countries such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. In May 2007, Iraq obtained a commitment from these countries to forgive the bulk of this debt.[43]

From 2006 to 2008, Iraq succeeded in further reducing its debt by more than the IMF forecast. There is no doubt that reducing and refinancing Iraq's debt has been one of the most significant achievements since the end of the war. However, debt as a percentage of GDP continued to be high, given the slow growth of the economy in those years. With the completion

of the third stage of debt reduction in 2008, Iraq's debt as a percentage of GDP has dropped to about 40 percent in 2009, and is projected to be just under 32 percent in 2011. Needless to say, Iraq's external debt remains vulnerable to any negative oil shock.

The second financial issue facing Iraq is inflation, which began in the 1970s. As a result of the invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent sanctions, hyperinflation became a structural problem.[44] The effect of the soaring inflation had severe economic and social consequences. People were forced to liquidate their assets, and huge disparities in income between the rich and the poor were created.[45] This was the beginning of the demise of the middle class, as will be discussed below.

After the 2003 invasion, inflation stabilized at around 30 to 32 percent per annum (see Table 11.2). However, in late 2005, fuel and electricity prices began to rise sharply. Throughout 2006, inflation spread to most items and became rampant, reaching over 50 percent. The causes of the hyperinflation are numerous: violence, corruption, the fallout from state control. As state control was relieved, the prices of many items increased dramatically, particularly wages and house rentals, with a continuing rise in fuel prices.[46] Again, as in the 1990s, the consequences are devastating for the poor and the shrinking middle class,[47] and encourage insidious forms of corruption such as the blossoming arms trade.[48] The former Minister of Finance, Ali Allawi, estimated that the widespread corruption consumes 25 to 30 percent of the national income.[49]

Tackling inflation leads us to look at the Central Bank and its role. The establishment of a relatively independent Central Bank has been another achievement in postwar Iraq. Since introducing the Iraqi dinar, the Central Bank has been using the exchange rate to manage inflationary rates.[50] The dinar, which initially traded between 1,450 and 1,480 to the U.S. dollar, rose by 12 percent during 2006, reaching 1,295 dinars per dollar in January 2007.[51] In 2008, inflation was brought down to 3.5 percent as exchange rate policy was adjusted, and is projected to be 5.4 percent in 2009. As of mid-2009, the exchange rate stood at 1,188 dinars to the dollar.[52]

Another tool that the Central Bank is utilizing is the interest rate mechanism. This is somewhat limited given the fact that economic activity is still dominated by cash transactions, and the banking system is largely inert. Although there was a revival of private banks after the occupation of Iraq (with U.S. encouragement), it soon faltered due to the continuing violence and chaos that spread throughout the country.[53] The Central Bank has found that the only effective rate is that for deposits, reflecting the banks' high level of liquidity, and raised the rates to 20 percent by early 2007.[54]

Table 11.3 Iraqi Stock Exchange: Sectors and Capitalization

Sector	*No. of Companies*	*Capitalization (Million Iraqi Dinars)*
Banking	18	565,408
Investment Companies	9	12,560
Insurance	4	3,370
Service	13	18,779
Industry	29	158,606
Hotels & Tourism	10	8,914
Agricultural	10	6,795
Grand Total	93	774,522*

Source: Listed Companies on Iraqi Stock Exchange as of December 31, 2006, in www.isx.iq.net.
*At a rate of about US$ 1 = 1300 this is equivalent to roughly $600 million.

However, given subdued price pressures, the policy interest rate was lowered to 15 percent by the end of 2008.[55]

The Central Bank is also encouraging the stock exchange as a way of reducing liquidity to curb inflation. The stock exchange was the symbol of free market economics whose biggest proponent was Paul Bremer. The exchange began trading in June 2004 and, in spite of the emphasis on encouraging the private sector both by the Americans and the subsequent Iraqi governments, the results are extremely modest, as Table 11.3 indicates.

Fiscally, Iraq benefited from the doubling of oil prices between 2004 and 2007. The fiscal balance in 2005 ended in a surplus equivalent to 10 percent of GDP. But that is not necessarily good news, since investment continued below budgeted levels at a time when the country is desperate for increased investments.[56] This is indeed a serious issue. Iraqi ministries are struggling with budget execution due mainly to their inability to operate effectively.[57] In fact, they spent as little as 20 percent of the 2006 capital budget, with some of the weakest spending taking place in the Oil Ministry.[58] The reasons for this are: rapid turnover in governments, security woes, endemic corruption, and a lack of skilled technocrats capable of managing budgets. It is also important to note that throughout the 1980s and 1990s, a generation of middle management grew up without exposure to modern business management.

Agriculture

The economic policy of Saddam Husayn's regime, which focused on rewarding its clients and punishing its foes, was clearly demonstrated in the agricultural sector. The land reforms of the 1970s rewarded those enclaves that

were close to the Ba'th Party. Peasants were forced to join cooperatives that were controlled by Ba'th officials who were often inefficient and inflexible. The result was that eventually the regime had to abandon the cooperative system. Indeed, the sector registered a significant decline in the 1970s and 1980s, due to mismanagement combined with inappropriate use of allocated funds. This led to low productivity, which was exacerbated by problems of soil salinization and rural-urban migration.[59]

Interestingly, the sanctions after the 1991 Gulf War led the government to change its agricultural policy. The need for more strategic food crops such as wheat, corn, and rice forced the government to put more emphasis on the sector. The authorities were paying farmers higher prices for their produce, and these prices were less than competitive at international levels. The new policy resulted in a mini boom in the sector, leading to a dramatic increase in agricultural GDP.[60] But, once the OFF deal took effect, local produce faced tough competition from imports and the sector began deteriorating again.[61]

When the CPA took over, they found that while the sector supports a rural population of seven million people, it suffered from low productivity (Iraq's grain yields were less than half the yields of neighboring countries), poor policy decisions, and a neglected irrigation system. Agriculture accounts for only 8 percent of GDP, although it employs approximately 20 percent of the nation's workforce.[62]

U.S. efforts to revitalize the sector had limited success.[63] Postwar looting damaged a variety of agricultural production and service facilities. More importantly, agricultural policy continues to suffer from a lack of coordination between government ministries, and the sector faces similar issues to the rest of the economy, such as underspending of allocated funds (40 percent), a lack of skilled personnel to run projects, corruption, and lack of security.[64] Iraq's self-sufficiency in food production dropped from 80 percent in the 1960s to less than 30 percent currently.[65]

Some progress has been achieved in northern Iraq, as a number of projects to build dams for irrigation were completed.[66] But the need for a proper irrigation system and flood control definitely remains a top priority.

Water Loss and Desertification: On the Precipice of a Disaster

In July 2008 Dr. 'Abd al-Latif Jamal Rashid, Iraq's Minister of Water Resources, reported that Iraq's estimated annual water needs are approximately 50 billion cubic meters, 60 percent to originate from the Tigris, and the remainder from the Euphrates. The country's need for water is estimated

to grow to 77 billion cubic meters by 2015, at a time when water flows are expected to decline to 43 billion cubic meters annually.[67] This prognosis is part of an ongoing process set in motion since the early 1980s: according to a report by the European Water Association, the share of water flowing into Iraq out of the total flow of the Tigris and the Euphrates has declined by two-thirds in the last 25 years. This is the result of dams built by Iraq's upstream neighbors. Severe drought in the last few years further lowered Iraq's water flow. Iraq, the report warns, is facing "a real disaster," which would mean that the country could become an extension of the Arabian Desert.[68]

The construction of dams and water storage plants on the two rivers and their tributaries, by Turkey in particular, and to a lesser extent by Syria and Iran, have been drying Iraq. The Euphrates Turkish Ataturk Dam, completed in 1989–1990, has already had a great negative impact on the water situation in Iraq. This will be greatly exacerbated when the Aliso Dam is completed. The Aliso Dam, construction of which began on the Tigris River in 2006, will have a storage capacity of 11.14 billion cubic meters, depriving Iraq of the ability to irrigate one-third of the land that it irrigates at the present.[69]

Farmers along the Shatt al-Arab are currently facing a serious threat: saltwater flowing into the waterway, making the water unusable for agricultural purposes. Iraq puts the blame squarely on Iran, saying that Iran's diversion of the Karun and Karha rivers, which feed the Shatt al-Arab waterway, has contributed to the worsening crisis.[70]

In addition to droughts, which are the result of climate change, plus inconsiderate neighbors, Iraqi neglect is part of the problem. Iraqi agriculture has been wasting great amounts of water, as a result of outmoded irrigation and drainage methods. In the hot climate, this has also caused wide-scale salinization. Successive governments have never introduced economic water pricing policies. Water salinity and contamination has also resulted from the discharge of untreated sewage water into the rivers and lakes since 1991.

The situation has reached such extremes that the people of southern Iraq are today importing drinking water from the U.A.E. desalination plants.[71] Finally, during the eight-year war between Iraq and Iran, the heavy artillery fire decimated two-thirds of the palm trees that had provided both income and a protective natural barrier against the expansion of the desert sands.

Today, as a result of all the above, large areas of Iraq are facing a serious problem of desertification. This phenomenon means the spread of sand dunes both in the south and north, as well as the creation of "dust bowls" in the north. In the province of Ninawa, villagers have already deserted 70 villages in search of water because the sands have covered homes, roads, and

land.[72] Even Baghdad is experiencing an unprecedented frequency of heavy dust storms that affect people's health, and shut down Baghdad International Airport for days. The sums needed to reclaim the lost land and the quantities of water required for the task are enormous, and it is not at all clear that Iraq can carry out such a colossal operation.

Industry

Whereas, during Saddam Husayn's era, agriculture registered low erratic growth, the industrial sector fared better, as it was considered an important element in the militarization of the economy. It is interesting to note, however, that industrial workers constituted only 3 percent of the active workforce compared to 23 percent in the military.[73] Wars and sanctions inflicted heavy damage to factories and disrupted the implementation of industrial development programs. The result was that Iraq's manufacturing sector (output and productivity) deteriorated since 1980, in comparison with a wide variety of oil-producing countries.[74]

The development of the sector was based largely on import substitution, but this policy proved ineffective, as it increased the country's reliance on imports. Emphasis was also placed on developing light consumer industries at the expense of productive industries, although oil-related industries did develop (such as petrochemicals and fertilizers).

After 2003, the CPA found a sector saddled with damaged equipment and infrastructure, and poor technical skills among the labor force. Although the CPA spent some money to improve the infrastructure, the emphasis was indeed ideologically based: privatization and liberalization at a fast pace, irrelevant of the local and cultural issues.[75] Interestingly, six years after the end of the war, U.S. and Iraqi officials now believe that some of the old factories considered in 2003 to be "inefficient, government-subsidized behemoths," could present a good opportunity to push reconstruction forward.[76]

There have been, however, some success stories with regard to small industries,[77] but the real success and boom has been in the telecommunications sector. Mobile telephone subscribers have been increasing at a rapid pace of about 200,000 per quarter, reaching about 8.7 million subscribers by early 2007.[78] Three major cell phone companies continued to expand and enroll subscribers at healthy rates. By April 2009, there were 17.7 million cellular subscribers and 1.3 million landline connections.[79] A more dramatic change for the country has been the use of the Internet. During Saddam Husayn's regime, the Internet was virtually unknown among the population and, similar to cellular telephones, its use was restricted to government

circles. Baghdad now has dozens of Internet cafes, and by April 2009 there were around 820,000 Internet subscribers (as compared with an estimate of just 4,500 subscribers prewar).[80] Interestingly, importers and exporters have begun using the Internet to expand their businesses.[81]

The industrial sector suffers today from all of the problems mentioned before, and the economic management still lacks vision with regard to non-oil industries and their role in developing the country.[82]

Conclusions

In assessing Iraq's economy, it is also important to consider the brain drain that the country is experiencing.[83] This phenomenon existed before, but has intensified dramatically in the last few years, and is interrelated with the wiping out of the middle class, which began after the sanctions in 1991. The primary reason is the violence that is becoming pervasive.[84] The brain drain is exacerbating the skills shortage problem that was created in Saddam Husayn's era when hundreds of thousands of able people left the country.[85] The brain drain of doctors in Iraq is a case in point. Since the 2003 invasion, it is estimated that Iraq had lost 30 to 40 percent of its doctors by the end of 2006.[86]

The UN refugee agency, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), estimated that 1.8 million people have already fled to neighboring countries—425,000 of them in 2006 alone.[87] Unfortunately for the country, as well as people migrating abroad, massive internal displacement is taking place due to the rise of inter-communal violence that disrupts the formerly more diverse composition of Iraqi towns and villages. UNHCR estimates that 1.6 million (more than 5 percent of the total population) have been internally displaced since the fall of Saddam Husayn, often loosing their possessions and their livelyhoods in the process. Brain drain on such a scale is hard to reverse, and the implications for the country are far more disastrous than the impaired infrastructure.

Brain drain and a rapidly declining middle class are also correlated to unemployment, another serious problem facing Iraq today. Estimates for unemployment range from 25 percent to 40 percent, which, even at the lower rate, is socially and economically destabilizing.[88] Of particular concern and related to the brain drain, is the United Nations Development Program's report, which estimated a 37 percent unemployment rate among the educated young.[89] Many reports indicate that creating jobs is an important factor for the stabilization and reconstruction of the country.[90]

Six years after the end of the war, and tens of billions of dollars spent on reconstruction, Iraq's economy is still in a dire state. An ex-Iraqi minister

estimated that only 30 cents of every dollar goes to productive expenditure, while the rest is spent on security, corruption or subcontracting.[91] From 2003 onwards, a "reconstruction gap" developed due to poorly managed cost-to-complete schedules, which hampered the execution of projects. Today, Iraq's government is having difficulty in planning and completing projects because of the deteriorating security, corruption, and poor capital execution due to lack of skilled management.[92] Real GDP growth in 2006 was just 3 percent, rather than the projected 10 percent.[93] This indicates that today, the economic management of Iraq is in no better shape than before the war.

There are definitely some anomalies when one looks at the economy today. There are some statistics indicating recovery: the number of registered businesses has increased from 8,000 to 34,000 in three years; stores are stocked with goods; the country is in good financial shape; and real estate in certain "safe" areas is booming.[94]

Looking at Iraq's economy under Saddam Husayn and afterwards, there are certain similarities in both periods. First, Iraq continues to be a rentier state dependent on its oil revenues. Second, the lack of stability is prevalent in both periods, and in general a real vision for diversifying Iraq's economy away from oil is almost nonexistent. Third, in the last 15 years of Saddam Husayn's rule, Iraq was essentially not a single economy, with Kurdistan and a number of other enclaves existing almost autonomously. In the first few years after the invasion, this became even more evident, as the country has almost three economies with different sets of issues and potential for growth: north, central, and south. Iraq today has different economic issues and distinct economic policies in each region. The north, and to a much less extent the south, are not following the government's plans, and each area is heading in a different growth direction. Fourth, the middle class began to weaken dramatically after 1991, and with that started the brain drain. Now, in central Iraq (including Baghdad), the middle class is almost wiped out, and the brain drain has gathered significant momentum. Fifth, corruption was endemic during Saddam Husayn's era, but has now become part and parcel of the economic management of the country.

As for the differences before and after the 2003 war: first, Iraq was under one command center, with Saddam Husayn at its top. Today, there is lack of cohesion, and decision making among Iraqis and Americans is far from centralized. Second, reconstruction projects are mostly short-term based, and no real emphasis on long-term planning has emerged. Third, unlike the prewar era, economic projects and their chances of success are correlated to the day-to-day security situation. Fourth, there is definitely more

entrepreneurship, more economic openness, and the informal economy is having a dominant effect on the country's economy. In fact, there have been numerous success stories, such as in the telecom sector and the emergence of some small industries. Indeed, there is no doubt that the private sector will have to play a major role in the economic future of Iraq. However, because the private sector is hampered by absence of credit and is still relatively dependent on the state, it is doubtful whether, in the short and medium terms, it can ignite the engine for economic success in Iraq.

Notes

1. For a detailed analysis of rentierism see the various articles by Isam al Khafaji on this subject. See, for example, his "A Few days After: State and Security in a Post-Saddam Iraq," in *Iraq at the Crossroads: State and Security in the Shadow of Regime Change* edited by Toby Dodge and Steven Simon (London, Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 77–92.
2. Roger Owen, "Reconstructing the Performance of the Iraqi Economy 1950–2006: an essay with some hypotheses and many questions," *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies*, Vol.1, No.1, pp. 93–101.
3. Abbas Alnasrawi, "Iraq: Economic Sanctions and Consequences, 1990–2000," *Studies on the Iraqi Economy* (Iraqi Economic Forum, London, Al-Rafid Press, 2002), p. 2. See also Abbas Alnasrawi, "Long-term Consequences of War and Sanctions," in *Iraq's Economic Predicament*, edited by Kamil A. Mahdi (Ithaca Press, 2002). See also Ali Alnasrawi, *Iraq's Burdens: Oil, Sanctions and Underdevelopment* (Greenwood Press, 2002).
4. Alnasrawi, *Iraq's Burdens*, pp. 101–102.
5. Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Profile Iraq 2002/2003*, July 24, 2002. These numbers are measured in nominal dollars.
6. Faleh A. Jabar, "Post Conflict Iraq: A Race for Stability, Reconstruction and Legitimacy," United States Institute of Peace, Special Report No. 120, May 2004.
7. Paul Bremmer III, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 2006), p. 27.
8. Back in October 2001, a "Future of Iraq Project" group was set up within the State Department to plan for a possible transition in postwar Iraq and included many experts on the country. ORHA did not utilize any of the previous planning, as political infighting between the Pentagon and the State Department prevented an exchange of ideas and reports. See David L. Phillips, *Losing Iraq* (New York, Westview Press, 2005), p. 126.
9. *ibid*, p. 131.
10. Eric Schmidt and David E. Sanger "After Effects: Reconstruction Policy: Looting Disrupts Detailed U.S. Plan to Restore Iraq," *New York Times*, May 19, 2003.
11. George Packer, *The Assassin's Gate* (New York, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2005), p. 139.

12. Peter Galbraith quotes John Sawers, the British ambassador to Egypt who was in Baghdad to report to British Prime Minister Tony Blair, in *The End of Iraq: How American Incompetence Created a War without End* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 2006), p. 117.
13. See Bremer's point of view, *My Year in Iraq*, pp. 39–42. Also David L. Phillips, *Losing Iraq,* pp. 143–153. See also shortcomings of CPA in the report of Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR), October 30, 2005 *Repor*t, pp. 77–78.
14. SIGIR, October 30, 2005 *Report*, pp. 78–80.
15. Larry Diamond, *Squandered Victory*, (New York, Times Books, 2005), p. 289. Diamond gives an example of a 24-year-old Yale graduate who was in charge of reorganizing the Baghdad stock exchange.
16. Bremer, p. 200. For an extensive analysis of the CPA and its work, see: Ali A. Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq*, *Winning the War, Losing the Peace* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 117–126. See also the personal experiences of a CPA deputy Governor in Southern Iraq in: Rory Stewart, *Occupational Hazards, My Time Governing in Iraq* (London, Picador, 2006), pp. 54–55; 82–83 and 204–211.
17. Packer, *Assassins*' *Gate,* p. 241.
18. Owen, "Reconstructing the Performance," p. 98.
19. Packer, *Assassins*' *Gate,* pp. 242–243.
20. See the *Report of the International Advisory and Monitoring Board* for the period May 22, 2003, to June 28, 2004. The report criticized the CPA for its weak controls over oil extraction, weakness in the administration of resources, and inadequate spending controls in Iraqi ministries, p. 8. See also Michael O'Hanlon, "We Can't Stop Rebuilding Iraq," *Washington Post*, January 24, 2006.
21. Diamond, *Squandered Victory*, p. 307.
22. See the Report of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR), *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience* (Washington, DC, SIGIR, 2009).
23. Back in October 2003, the National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice, took responsibility from Donald Rumsfeld for the CPA. Bremer, pp. 186–188.
24. Alnasrawi, *Iraq's Burdens*, p. 27.
25. *ibid*, pp. 27–28.
26. See for example: *Iraq Updates*, October 1, 2006; *al-Hayat*, December 13, 2006, and SIGIR, *October 30, 2006 Report*, p. 42. SIGIR estimated that $6 billion in oil export revenues were lost over the last three years. Ali Allawi mentions in his book that 30 percent of the $6 billion for fuel imports were smuggled and crude oil were siphoned off abroad at a rate of about $2 billion (pp. 360–361). Thus, he is talking about $4 billion just for 2005. Therefore, SIGIR's estimate looks low. See SIGIR, *January 30, 2007 Report*, p. 44. According to a brokerage research, there have been over 300 attacks on oil infrastructure since 2003; see *Bernstein Research*, January 19, 2007.
27. SIGIR, *July 2009 Quarterly Report*, pp. 74–75.

28. IMF *First and Second Reviews Under the Stand. By Arrangement, Financing Assurances Review*, August 2006, p. 4.
29. James Glantz and Robert F. Worth, "Attacks on Iraq Oil Industry Aid Vast Smuggling Scheme," *New York Times*, June 4, 2006. The article gives interesting details of the mechanism of smuggling. See also *Financial Times*, May 6, 2006. See also Sabrina Tavernise and Qais Mizher, "Oil, Politics and Bloodshed Corrupt an Iraqi City," *New York Times*, June 13, 2006.
30. Ben Lando, "Analysis: Iraq's Oil Smuggling." Parts I and II UPI quoted in *Iraq Updates*, December 15, 2006. See also, James Glanz, "Billions in Oil Missing in Iraq, US study says," *New York Times*, May 12, 2007.
31. The CPA was criticized for not putting in place the right metering systems despite its awareness of the problem at a very early stage. See KPMG reports submitted to the Development Fund of Iraq for the period May 22 to December 31, 2003; January 1 to June 28, 2004; June 29 to December 31, 2004.
32. According to Allawi, the spread ranged from ten times to eighty times, making it extremely lucrative for smugglers. Allawi, *Occupation of Iraq*, pp. 358–359.
33. SIGIR, *April 30, 2007 Report*, pp. 97–98.
34. Brookings Institution, *Iraq Index,* June 25, 2009, p. 37.
35. Business Monitor International, *Iraq Oil and Gas Report Q2 2009.*
36. Allawi mentions that the rapid turnover of CPA personnel responsible for the electricity (seven people in one year) was another factor for the poor performance in the sector. Allawi, *Occupation of Iraq*, p. 258.
37. Alnasrawi, in *Iraq's Economic Predicament*, p. 343.
38. Shakir Latif, "al-Infaq al-'askari: al-mihwar al-asasi fi istratijiyyat al-siyasa al-maliyya lil-dawla al-'Iraqiyya al-mu'asira," *Dirasat fi al-iqtisad al-'Iraqi*, (London, 2002), p. 5.
39. On May 18, 1991, the Iraqi representative at the UN presented a memorandum to the Security Council, which included, for the first time, official Iraqi data on the country's debt. See Ahmed M Jiyad, "The Development of Iraq's Foreign Debt: From Liquidity to Unsustainability," in Mahdi, *Iraq's Economic Predicament,* p. 111.
40. IMF, *Iraq, Country Report*, January 2006, p. 70.
41. *ibid*. Also, HSBC Global Research, *Is Iraq Creditworthy*?, January 16, 2006. Some countries such as the United States, Malta, and Slovakia forgave 100 percent of Iraq's debt. See: *Measuring Stability and Security*, February 2006 Report, p. 15.
42. The bonds were issued at $69.5 face value yielding about 9.2 percent. They traded as high as $73, but dropped by the end of January 2007 to $65.5, reflecting the uneasiness of the situation. As of the end of May 2007, the price stood at $64 (*Bloomberg*, Financial Information).
43. *The New York Times*, May 3, 2007. *Financial Times*, May 4, 2007.
44. Alnasrawi, *Iraq's Burdens*, p. 104.
45. Sinan Al-Shabibi, "An Economic Agenda for a Future Iraq," in his *Studies on the Iraqi Economy* (al-Rafid Press, London, 2002), pp. 24–25.

46. See *International Herald Tribune*, August 26–27, 2006. During the last year of Saddam Husayn's era, rent control was removed and that in itself opened the door for further increases.
47. *Azzaman*, November 20, 2006.
48. C.J. Chivers, "Black Market Weapon Prices Surge in Iraq Chaos," *New York Times*, December 10, 2006.
49. See interview: "Seven Questions: Iraq's Economy" with Ali Allawi in *Foreign Policy*, January 2006, Web exclusive.
50. See Press Communique issued by the Central Bank, October 18, 2006. See *www.cbiraq.org*.
51. *Iraq Updates*, February 2, 2007. See also SIGIR, *January 30, 2007 Report*, p. 76.
52. Exchange rate for June 30, 2009, *www.oanda.com*.
53. See Borzou Daraghi, "Iraq's Ailing Banking Industry is Reviving," *New York Times*, December 30, 2004; James Glantz, "Violence in Iraq is Creating Chaos in Bank Systems," *New York Times*, July 29, 2006; *al-Hayat*, August 2, 2006. A program for private-sector development (*izdihar*) was launched to increase lending opportunities. See SIGIR, *October 30, 2006 Report*, p. 62.
54. IMF, *Country Report*, *March 2007 Report*, p. 1; announcement by Central Bank, December 24, 2006. See *www.cbiraq.org*.
55. IMF, *IRAQ, Country Report*, December 2008, p. 6.
56. IMF, *Country Report*, August 2006, p. 4 and Tables 2–3.
57. SIGIR, *October 30, 2006 Report*, pp. 5–8.
58. James Glantz, "Iraq is Failing to Spend Billions in Oil Revenues," *New York Times*, December 11, 2006.
59. Abdul Munim Al Sayyid Ali, "The Iraqi Economy: Reflections and Prospects," in Mahdi, *Iraq's Economic Predicament*, pp. 374–375.
60. See different statistics presented in 'Ali Hanush, "al-Tanmiya al-zira'iyya fi al-'Iraq: mushkilat al-hadhir wa khirayat al-mustaqbal," in *Dirasat fi al-iqtisad al-'Iraqi* (London, Al-Rafid Press, 2002). Also: Mahmood Ahmad, "Agricultural Policy Issues and Challenges in Iraq: Short and Medium Term Options," in Mahdi, *Iraq's Economic Predicament*, pp. 179–180.
61. Kamil Mahdi, "Iraq's Agrarian System: Issues of Policy and Performance" in Mahdi, *ibid*, pp. 329–338.
62. SIGIR, *October 30, 2006 Report*, pp. 52–53.
63. Funding for agriculture aimed at expanding the private sector began only in October 2004, and by July 2005, only three million out of the $100 million allocated had actually been spent. Eric Herring, Glen Rangwala, *Iraq in Fragments* (London, C. Hurst & Co., 2006), p. 80.
64. For an interesting analysis of the Ministry of Agriculture's strategy, see an analysis by Muhammad Abd-Al Karim Manhal Al-Uquaidi in *Azzaman*, December 4, 2006. See also: *al-Hayat*, March 14, 2006.
65. *al-Hayat*, August 8, 2005.
66. *al-Hayat*, September 21, 2005.

67. *al-Hayat*, London, July 8, 2008 as quoted in Nimrod Raphaeli, "Water Crisis in Iraq: The Growing Danger of Desertification," *Inquiry & Analysis 537 The Middle East Media Research Institute* (Washington, DC, July 23, 2009).
68. Nimrod Raphaeli, *ibid.*
69. *Spiegel Online*, July 8, 2009, as quoted by Raphaeli, *ibid.*
70. "Salt Levels in Shatt al-Arab Threaten Environmental Disaster," in *Niqash*, September 02, 2009. *www.niqash.org/print?php?contentTypeID=28&id=2517&lang=0&plang=0*.
71. *al-Sabah*, July 17, 2008; *Sotiliraq (Sawt al-'Iraq)*, July 11, 2009, both as quoted by Raphaeli, *ibid.*
72. *al-Mada*, June 16, 2009, quoted in Raphaeli, *ibid.*
73. Kiran Aziz Chaudhry, "Consuming Interests: Market Failure and the Social Foundation of Iraqi Etatisme," in Mahdi, *Iraq's Economic Predicament*, pp. 250–252. Military industrialization was part of the military and yet it was some kind of industry. It is not known, though, how many were employed in MI.
74. Tariq Al-Khudayri, "Iraq's Manufacturing Industry: Status and Prospects for Rehabilitation and Reform," in *ibid*, p. 221.
75. See an interesting story of how U.S. officials were buying buses abroad for use in Iraq when a struggling state-owned firm in south Baghdad was making a similar vehicle due to the fundamental view that it would be wrong to buy from such an enterprise. James Glantz, "Iraqi Factories, Aging and Shut, Now Give Hope," *New York Times*, January 18, 2007.
76. *ibid*. See also how Iraqi factories by 2006 have turned into warehouses and repair workshops in *Al-Hayat*, May 26, 2006.
77. See, for example, the story of a pharmaceutical company in Samarra, *al-Hayat*, May 12, 2005.
78. SIGIR, *April 30, 2007 Report,* p. 69.
79. Brookings Institution, *Iraq Index,* June 25, 2009, p. 45. For the problems facing cellular companies and users, see the *Wall Street Journal*, July 21, 2005.
80. *New York Times*, February 10, 2006. Brookings Institution, *Iraq Index*, June 25, 2009, p. 46
81. *Azzaman*, August 16, 2006.
82. Violence, as one of the problems, is not affecting only infrastructure. According to the Iraqi Workers Federation, more than 2,000 of its members were killed between the war in 2003 and mid-2006 in attacks by insurgents. See, *The Economist*, May 6, 2006.
83. For a general discussion of the topic, see: Joseph Sassoon, *The Iraqi Refugees: The New Crisis in the Middle East* (London & New York, I.B. Tauris and Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
84. Recent attacks around the Mustansiriyyah University in Baghdad is another example. It is reckoned that 89 University professors have been killed since 2003. See *Iraq Updates*, November 13, 2006.
85. Estimates of Iraqi exiles abroad before the 2003 war range from two million to four million. See, for example, Allawi, *Occupation of Iraq*, p. 123.

86. Brookings Institution, *Iraq Index*, January 16, 2007.
87. *ibid*. Roughly 750,000 are residing in Jordan and about 600,000 in Syria. The rest are scattered in Egypt, Lebanon, and Iran. See Brooking Institution, *Iraq Index*, January 16, 2007. In 2006, about 9,000 Iraqis applied for asylum in Sweden, up from 2,330 in 2005. See *International Herald Tribune*, January 13–14, 2007.
88. *ibid*. Also, IMF, *Iraq Country Report*, No. 05/294, August 2005, pp. 6–7.
89. IMF, *ibid*.
90. Kenneth Pollack and the Iraqi Policy Working Group, *A Switch in Time: A New Study for America in Iraq*, Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, February 15, 2006, p. 28.
91. See interview with Allawi in *Foreign Policy*. (See endnote 49).
92. SIGIR, *October 30, 2006 Report*, pp. 4–5. There is a vast amount of articles on corruption, embezzlement, and problems with contractors. The Inspector General himself dedicates a large part of his quarterly reports to corruption and measures taken against the perpetrators.
93. IMF, *March 2007 Report*, pp. 6–7.
94. *Iraq Updates*, December 20, 2006; *Washington Times*, January 10, 2007. Other reports indicated that house prices dropped, particularly in Baghdad, from the highs achieved immediately after the overthrow of Saddam as a result of the violence. *The Times*, May 22, 2006.

PART IV

The United States in Iraq 2003–2007/2008

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CHAPTER 12

Iraq after the Surge

Michael Eisenstadt

After invading Iraq and toppling the regime of Saddam Husayn in March–April 2003, the United States soon became mired fighting a complex insurgency waged by tribal, nationalist, and foreign jihadist elements, which morphed into a sectarian civil war following the February 2006 bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra. Unable to halt the mounting violence and facing the prospect of defeat, the United States launched a last-ditch effort in January 2007 to stabilize Iraq by means of a new strategy, popularly known as "the surge," which, as of the summer of 2008, seems to have succeeded beyond expectations in restoring a degree of stability to Iraq. Understanding how this came about is key to assessing future developments in Iraq.

Descent into the Abyss

How the United States nearly squandered its remarkable victory in Iraq through poor planning and flawed policies has been told in great detail elsewhere,[1] but three factors played a particularly important role in accounting for its reversal of fortunes there.

The Operational Design of Iraqi Freedom

The invasion plan, which emphasized speed, and which required advancing coalition forces to skirt major population centers en route to Baghdad,

bore within it the seeds of the insurgency that followed. While the emphasis on speed (to preclude Iraq's use of its presumed stockpiles of nonconventional weapons, prevent atrocities against the civilian population, and topple the regime before international pressure for a premature cease-fire could be brought to bear) and on avoiding unnecessary engagements on the road to Baghdad ensured the rapid collapse of the regime by means of a "long distance coup," it also ensured the survival of large numbers of hard-core supporters of the regime, who lived to fight another day.[2] Coalition forces could have avoided this outcome by detaining large numbers of former regime military and security personnel in the immediate aftermath of the war, though this would have required many more troops on the ground.[3]

Dismantling the Iraqi Army

The dismantling of the Iraqi Army by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) was a tragic error. While, it is true that the Iraqi Army melted away and went home rather than remained in its barracks (contrary to the hopes, expectations, and instructions of coalition forces), there is no reason why the coalition could not have recalled the army to assist with stability operations and reconstruction, as had originally been planned.[4] The argument that the army was a relatively ineffective fighting force and complicit in the crimes of the former regime, and therefore not worth redeeming, are beside the point.[5] The main value of the Iraqi Army was as a means of social control; reconstituting the army could have ensured accountability for several hundred thousand armed men with military skills, and might have prevented many from going over to the nascent insurgency.

Counterproductive Tactics

Finally, inappropriate tactics by many coalition units in 2003 and 2004 (particularly heavy-handed cordon and search, and detainee operations) helped catalyze the nascent insurgency.[6] Herein, however, lays a paradox: although coalition forces were not present on the ground in sufficient numbers to ensure security, had they been present in much larger numbers and employed many of the tactics in widespread use at the time, it is possible that the insurgency would have developed even more quickly than it did. The light footprint, moreover, had two other fateful implications: by precluding the stabilization of Iraq, it forced Iraqis to fall back on primordial identities (tribe, sect, ethnicity) for security; this trend, reinforced by CPA policies, led to the creation of an ethnosectarian political spoils system, and it enabled

al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) to gain a foothold and play a significant role in influencing events in post-Saddam Iraq.

Toward a Better Way of War

It is not yet possible to write with great authority about the evolution of coalition counterinsurgency operations in Iraq; the history of this subject has yet to be written, and generalizations are difficult, because different coalition units (even different U.S. units) and different national contingents often adopted dramatically different tactical approaches during the first four years of the occupation.[7] But several milestones in the development of U.S. counterinsurgency strategy in Iraq can be identified: including the drafting and approval of a counterinsurgency campaign plan by the coalition strategic headquarters in Iraq (Multi-National Forces—Iraq) in August 2004;[8] the approval of a new U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine with the publication of Army FM 3–24 in December 2006; and the implementation of this new doctrine with the launch of the surge in February 2007.

From late 2003 through the end of 2006, operations in Iraq focused on minimizing the United States' footprint by consolidating U.S. forces on large Forward Operating Bases (or FOBs), while ramping up efforts to recruit, equip, and train the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). This strategy was grounded on the assumption that the U.S. presence provoked resistance, and that for this reason, victory would only be achieved by Iraqis. However, the light force footprint ensured that cleared areas could not be held, and were often reinfiltrated by insurgents when coalition forces moved on to clear other areas. With the February 2006 destruction of the Mosque in Samarra by AQI, resulting in a dramatic escalation in sectarian violence and the displacement of more than two million Iraqis due to the sectarian cleansing of mixed neighborhoods in and around Baghdad, it became clear that this strategy was no longer tenable. As a result, in January 2007, the United States introduced a new strategy—the surge—that focused on protecting the civilian population in and around Baghdad by creating a pervasive U.S. and ISF presence there. The goal was to defeat irreconcilable elements (e.g., AQI and Mahdi Army "special groups"), stabilize Iraq, and thereby create conditions conducive to the initiation of a political reconciliation process that could eventually put an end to Iraq's civil war.

A Dramatically Improved Security Situation

The "surge" strategy initially bore mixed results: although civilian deaths fell immediately, insurgent and terrorist attacks continued to climb, as did

coalition and ISF casualties, through June 2007, after which time they began a rapid plunge. With the exception of temporary spikes associated with ISF and coalition operations in Basra and Sadr City in March–April 2008, these favorable trends have continued. Attacks and casualties are now down by as much as 80 percent from peak periods in late 2007 and early to mid-2008.[9] A number of factors account for this dramatic turnaround.

The Sunni Arab Tribal Awakening

The brutal tactics and extreme ideology of AQI, the threat it posed to entrenched tribal power structures and economic interests, and the threat it posed to the very survival of mainstream Islamo-nationalist insurgent groups eventually engendered a backlash that took the form of an anti-AQI tribal uprising in the largely Sunni Arab regions of Iraq. This shaped into a tactical alliance between former Sunni insurgents and U.S. forces, and the creation of U.S.-supported tribal "awakening councils" in Anbar province and elsewhere. The violent "cleansing" of many formerly Sunni communities and neighborhoods in and around Baghdad also stoked Sunni Arab fears that their community faced a defeat of historic proportions at the hands of their Shi'i adversaries and (as many Sunnis saw it) the latter's Iranian sponsors. While the "tribal awakening" predated the surge (its beginnings can be traced to around September 2006), the surge lent it additional impetus, particularly after coalition forces started paying tribesmen in June 2007 to create armed Concerned Local Citizen (CLC) groups, recently renamed Sons of Iraq (SOI), to fight AQI. Because many CLC/SOI had worked previously with AQI as facilitators or cobelligerents, they knew the local AQI members, and were therefore able, with the help of coalition forces, to root them out and roll up their networks.[10]

The Surge

The deployment of five additional U.S. Brigade Combat Teams to Iraq between February 2007 and July 2008, in tandem with a parallel surge by the ISF, enabled coalition forces to more aggressively pursue AQI and Mahdi Army/Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) cells, and to not only "clear" but also to "hold" areas in and around Baghdad that they had been unable to hold previously, due to the paucity of coalition forces on the ground. Coalition forces set up 68 combat outposts and joint security stations throughout Baghdad (the number has since been increased), permitting them to maintain a 24-hour, seven-day a week presence throughout the capital, conveying in the most dramatic way possible the United States' commitment to protecting the

civilian population—thereby transforming the psychological environment in Baghdad by giving the civilian population the confidence to cooperate with coalition forces and the ISF, and to provide them actionable intelligence regarding AQI. Coalition forces have pursued AQI relentlessly, killing many, and forcing the rest to go to ground, or to flee to Ninawa and Diyala provinces, where they have attempted to regroup. The surge also succeeded as a result of aggressive military operations that disrupted Iraq's conflict system, by taking on the main drivers of violence in Iraq prior to the surge—AQI suicide bombings on the one hand, and JAM cells engaged in revenge killings and sectarian cleansing on the other. By doing so, coalition forces were able to break what previously had been described as a self-sustaining cycle of civil violence.

JAM Stands Down

As part of the surge, coalition forces also took on JAM cells engaged in sectarian violence and attacks on coalition forces in Baghdad, and criminal activities and political violence in the south. Together, coalition forces and the ISF detained hundreds of JAM members in Baghdad and the south in the course of 2007.[11] Moreover, clashes between JAM cells and ISF units in Karbala in August 2007, which led to scores of civilian deaths (for which JAM was largely held responsible), apparently convinced Muqtada al-Sadr of the need to consolidate control over an organization that had attracted numerous opportunists and criminal elements as a result of its rapid expansion since 2003. Many of these individuals were not responsive to central direction, and were engaged in thuggish behavior and criminal activities (such as protection rackets) that were alienating the movement's popular base of support. (Coalition forces have tried to exploit the alienation of JAM's popular base by establishing tribally based "awakening council"-type organizations and SOI groups in largely Shi'i regions of Iraq.[12]) As a result, Sadr ordered JAM to stand down from military operations in order to deflect external pressures and focus on internal discipline and command and control problems by instituting a purge and reorganization of his organization—although some so-called "special groups" continued to carry out attacks on coalition forces.[13] With the brief exception of a spike in JAM operations in March–April 2007 in response to ISF offensives to pacify Basra and Sadr City, the freeze in JAM operations more or less remains in place.

Two other factors may have also contributed to the reduction in violence since the start of the "surge": the sectarian cleansing of many neighborhoods in and around Baghdad has eliminated the rationale for additional violence in many areas; and the sharp decline in the number of foreign volunteers

coming to Iraq to be suicide bombers, due to the blow to AQI's image caused by its nihilistic and bloody-minded tactics, and the disruption of AQI's "rat lines" inside Iraq by coalition military operations.[14]

Several policy-relevant conclusions can be drawn from this experience: (1) while the coalition military occupation and U.S. tactics may have provoked and further stoked insurgent violence in Iraq between 2003 and 2006, conditions on the ground and attitudes toward the United States have changed (for tactical reasons) and the United States is, at least for now, a force for stability[15]; (2) while some violence in Iraq is undoubtedly the product of random and revenge killings, there is no evidence that the violence is "cyclical" or "self-sustaining," rather, violence is used in an instrumental fashion by armed groups whose activities can be disrupted and whose decision calculus can be influenced by military and nonmilitary means[16]; (3) the slogan "winning hearts and minds" miscasts the fundamental precondition for success in Iraq and in other counterinsurgencies—convincing the civilian population that they have an interest in working with coalition forces (regardless of how they feel about the coalition), that U.S. forces are less of a threat than the competition (e.g., AQI or JAM), and that coalition forces can protect those civilians who opt to work with them; and (4) the sectarian composition of the ISF is not necessarily an insuperable obstacle to their effectiveness, and much depends on how they comport themselves and relate to the civilian population in their area of operations, although the ethnic and sectarian composition of a unit should still be taken into consideration when employing units for internal security missions.[17]

Nonetheless, despite the greatly improved security situation, Iraq is still a fairly violent place; there are still large numbers of Iraqis committed to pursuing their goals by violent means. And should the "awakening movements" and JAM decide to resume attacks, the security situation in Iraq could very quickly take a turn for the worse. As General David Petraeus is fond of saying, progress is "fragile, and reversible."[18]

Preserving Recent Gains

The immediate challenge faced by coalition forces in Iraq is how to preserve recent security gains in the face of the current drawdown of surge forces, and future additional drawdowns. Has the security environment changed in a fundamental way, such that it is unlikely to be affected by the drawdown? Or is violence likely to spike as the surge comes to an end? Given continuing levels of violence, it would be reasonable to assume that groups still engaged in violence will seek, and likely find, new opportunities to

act as the surge comes to an end. However, it is worth noting that despite the drawdown of U.S. forces in Iraq to presurge levels, the decline in violence has continued unabated. That is a noteworthy, counterintuitive, and hopeful development. There are a number of other developments, however, that could further complicate the security situation in the future. These include:

- The failure to incorporate SOI personnel into the ISF could lead to the dissolution of the various "awakening" movements and the resumption of anticoalition and anti-ISF violence by tribal and insurgent militias.[19]
- Tensions over influence and access to resources between the various tribal awakening movements and more established Sunni Arab parties, such as the Iraqi Islamic Party, could erupt into sustained open violence (there has already been sporadic violence).[20]
- Muqtada al-Sadr might end the freeze in military operations and order his militia to resume attacks on Sunni Arab civilians and militias, coalition forces, rival Shi'i parties and militias, or the ISF.
- Simmering tensions around Kirkuk and Mosul, deriving from Kurdish efforts to consolidate control over contested areas and demands for a referendum over these regions future, could explode into open violence involving Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen, and other groups.
- Turkey and/or Iran could resume and/or intensify military operations against expatriate Kurdish separatist groups based in northern Iraq.
- Returning internally displaced persons (IDPs) or refugees could resort to violence to evict squatters from their homes, or could be met by violence upon their return, reigniting sectarian violence in previously "cleansed" neighborhoods or communities.

Some of these developments would have only local consequences. Others could have far-reaching implications for stability and security in large parts of Iraq. Dealing with these ongoing problems and potential challenges will require the active involvement of the Iraqi government, and the sustained engagement of U.S. military and diplomatic personnel, as well as the President of the United States.

In some cases, the political process offers the means to deal with these problems In other cases, new mechanisms will have to be devised to deal with the problem (such as that of returning IDPs and refugees). Much will depend on the success of the ISF in taking up the slack as U.S. forces draw down, and on the political savvy and negotiating skills of Iraqi politicians and U.S. diplomats.

A Growing Role for Coalition Air Power

The United States also has to prepare for the possibility that as it draws down, violence might flare up again. Under such circumstances, it will probably not be feasible, for political and/or military reasons, to recommit large numbers of ground forces. For this reason, the United States will likely become increasingly reliant on air power, in conjunction with residual U.S. and Iraqi ground forces, to respond to future contingencies.[21] Increased emphasis, therefore, needs to be put on improving U.S.-Iraqi air-ground coordination—if this is not being done already—and on further refining tactics, techniques, and procedures developed for targeting terrorists from the air, against insurgents, sectarian militias, and warlords. And while coalition airpower can assist the ISF, it is ultimately no substitute for effective Iraqi ground forces.

Toward a Political Solution

Assuming that security gains of recent months can be preserved, the continuing challenge will be to translate these gains into political achievements. Experience elsewhere shows that the factors that make an inconclusive insurgency or civil war ripe for settlement often include: (1) a hurting military stalemate that leads both sides to conclude that they cannot achieve their objectives by violent means; (2) an emerging consensus among the belligerents over the terms of a settlement; and (3) authoritative leaders capable of speaking and negotiating on behalf of their respective constituencies.[22] Though there have been signs of progress toward fulfilling these conditions during the past year, these conditions are still not present in Iraq.

The Utility of Violence

Most Iraqi civilians are weary of violence, although Sunni insurgent and JAM cease-fires in the past year seem to be driven more by the imperatives of organizational survival than by any assessment of the long-term utility of violence. (The exception is AQI, which remains committed to violence, even if its ability to engage in it has been dramatically diminished by coalition military operations.) Thus, many Sunni Arabs, fearing an AQI takeover of their communities and Shi'i (read: Iranian) domination of Iraq, apparently concluded that they risked marginalization, or worse, if they did not cut a deal with the United States—while the U.S. saw a deal with these insurgents as the only way to salvage a desperate and deteriorating security situation. Doing so has enabled the Sunnis to weather the AQI challenge and

to position themselves for a greater political role in Iraq as a result of pending provincial elections, as well as to prepare for possible future phases of conflict. (A key indicator that it may, in fact, be the former, however, is the degree to which the SOI consistently turn over weapons caches to coalition forces, rather than exploit them for their own use.)

Conversely, Muqtada al-Sadr, under pressure from coalition forces, fearing the loss of control over his movement, and risking a loss of support among his popular base, ordered JAM to stand down in August 2007 while he sought to reassert control over his cadres. Recent news reports indicate that Sadr has decided to continue with the freeze of operations for most of his forces, while authorizing only small clandestine cells (so-called JAM "special companies") to conduct operations against U.S. forces.[23] It is not clear, however, how the detention of thousands of JAM militiamen in recent months, and the deployment of the ISF to former Sadrist strongholds in Basra and Sadr City in April–May 2008 and Amara in June 2008, have affected the military capabilities of JAM.[24] Whether the current reduction in violence is just a tactical pause or becomes an enduring trend remains to be seen, but clearly most armed groups have the ability to resume military operations in the future, if not the intention of doing so. But for now, participation in the political process seems to be the order of the day.

Consensus on Terms of Settlement

The political gap at the national level between Sunnis and Shi'is, and Arabs and Kurds, remains broad and deep. While many Sunni Arabs have evinced deep misgivings about dealing with a government that is the product of a foreign occupation and composed of Iran-affiliated Shi'i parties committed to consolidating their own primacy, there have been signs of growing willingness on both sides to engage, for example, the willingness of many SOIs to join the ISF, and the willingness on the part of the government to integrate them into the ISF, though progress in this area has been slow. To date, only 17,000 SOIs have been hired by the Iraqi police; it is not clear what will happen to the remaining 86,000.[25] Major differences over key policy issues (e.g., oil, federalism, and the status of Kirkuk) also remain. For instance, the Kurdish parties and ISCI support a loose form of federalism, while the Sadrists [al] Maliki and most Sunni Arabs favor a strong unitary state.

Authoritative Leadership

While the Kurds seem to have transcended their internal divisions (at least for now), the Shi'i and Sunni Arab communities remain bedeviled

by internal divisions and lack authoritative leaders capable of speaking with a single voice or of negotiating on their behalf. If anything, the trend has been toward the fragmentation of political and religious authority in both communities. In the Shi'i camp, divisions between ISCI and Da'wa on the one hand, and the Sadrists on the other, have only deepened in the wake of the events of March–April 2008. And while Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki emerged from these events strengthened, he still lacks an independent power base. As for religious figures, while Ayatollah 'Ali Hussayn al-Sistani proved unable to stem the slide toward sectarian violence in 2006, and while he remains an important figure, his influence clearly has limits. And it is still not clear if Muqtada al-Sadr controls all elements associated with his movement. ISCI, Da'wa, and JAM remain locked in a bitter power struggle in the south (a struggle that sometimes has also involved the Fadhila Party), and in recent months, coalition and ISF units have detained or arrested thousands of JAM members in Baghdad and the south, perhaps portending a shift in the balance of power in some parts of southern Iraq.[26]

As for the Sunni Arabs, while many revile the current government, there is apparently growing support for joining the political process and for seeking employment by the ISF as a way of protecting the interests of the community. This has led to splits in the ranks of the Sunni Arab insurgency between those who embrace and reject politics (e.g., the reported split in the 1920 Revolution Brigades in March 2007), and splits in the broader community between de facto and elected leaders (e.g., the members of the various awakening councils, and the Iraqi Islamic Party).[27] At the same time, there are signs that the possibility of a U.S. withdrawal has caused some Sunni Arab insurgent groups to come together in order to preclude a self-destructive power struggle in the aftermath of such an eventuality (e.g., the formation of the Political Council of the Iraqi Resistance in October 2007, made up of six Islamist and nationalist insurgent groups).[28]

The trend toward political fragmentation in Iraq continues, with more than 500 individuals and parties registering to run in provincial elections held in Januray 2009.[29] However, despite the trend toward fragmentation of authority at the national level, local leaders frequently retain sufficient influence to negotiate on behalf of their constituents.[30] Thus, fragile local accommodations have occurred in various parts of Iraq, even if national reconciliation remains a distant, unattainable goal at this time. The failure to achieve national reconciliation in such a short time frame should, however, come as no surprise: national reconciliation remains an elusive goal in other

deeply divided societies (e.g., Yugoslavia, Lebanon, Afghanistan), and could take years, if not decades, to achieve in Iraq.

Conclusions

While Iraq remains a dangerous place, the security situation has improved greatly, creating the possibility of political and economic progress in the coming year. Many challenges lay ahead, and there is no guarantee that recent security gains can be sustained. In this regard, it is worth keeping in mind the finding of a recent World Bank study, which found that nearly half of all countries that have experienced civil wars experience a relapse within five years.[31] That aside, for the first time in a long time, there is reason to believe that an acceptable outcome—a reasonably stable Iraq that can offer its citizens a modicum of peace and dignity—may be feasible. The key is continued U.S. military and diplomatic engagement, even as the United States draws down its forces in Iraq in the coming years.

To preserve the tenuous improvements in security achieved over the past year and to set the conditions for additional (if glacial) political progress, U.S. forces, working with the ISF, must keep up the military pressure on militia groups and insurgents that continue to engage in violence, and convince them that: for them, a military victory is unattainable; that the United States will stand by the Iraqi government, come what may; that the United States will retain a potent (if somewhat diminished) military presence in Iraq for years to come in order to preclude the triumph of armed militia and insurgent groups; and that such a U.S. presence will remain a major constraint on Shi'i revanchist violence and Iranian influence in Iraq, thereby preserving the rationale for the tactical alliance between former Sunni Arab insurgents and U.S. forces.

Finally, the U.S. President must realize that his campaign promises and his initial policy pronouncements upon assuming office could have a major impact on the viability of the status quo in Iraq. A commitment to a rapid withdrawal, if not hedged with credible security assurances, could alter Iraqi political and military calculations in a way that could undermine the tenuous security gains of the past years, as well as progress toward political accommodation or reconciliation. And he should keep in mind how often U.S. policy assumptions about Iraq have been proved wrong or overtaken by rapidly changing events, and how often Iraq has confounded both the most dire and optimistic predictions, and should therefore have modest expectations regarding U.S. abilities to use the threat of withdrawal to goad Iraqi politicians into demonstrating greater flexibility, adopting a more conciliatory stance vis-à-vis their former enemies, and embracing more "normal" politics.

Notes

1. See, for instance: Donald R. Dreschler, "Reconstructing the Interagency Process After Iraq," *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 28, no. 1, February 2005, 2–30; Nora Bensahel, "Mission Not Accomplished: What Went Wrong with Iraqi Reconstruction," *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 29, no. 3, June 2006, 453–473; Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006); Ali A. Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), and; Joseph J. Collins, *Choosing War: The Decision to Invade Iraq and its Aftermath*, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Occasional Paper No. 5, April 2008; Bing West, *The Strongest Tribe* (NY, Random House,2008); Donald P. Wright, Timothy R. Reese, *On Point II, Transition to the New Campaign: the US Army in Operation Iraq Freedom May 2003-January, 2005* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2008).
2. Had the 4th Infantry Division invaded via Turkey, as originally planned, it would not have made a difference; the regime's supporters in the north would have gone to ground and into hiding, just as the regime's supporters in the south did during the invasion.
3. According to Bob Woodward, the CIA obtained the personnel files of all 6,000 members of Iraq's Special Security Organization prior to the war; if true, coalition forces could have rolled-up many individuals who subsequently played a key role in initiating the "postwar" insurgency. Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 2004), 302. Concerning the role of former regime elements in the nascent insurgency, see: Greg Grant, "Inside Iraqi Insurgent Cells," *Defense News*, August 1, 2005, 1, 8, and 12.
4. Although the full story of how this came to pass has still not been told, the most detailed accounts are: Peter Slevin, "Wrong Turn at a Post-War Cross-Roads?" *Washington Post*, November 20, 2003, A1; Michael R. Gordon, "Fateful Choice on Iraq Army Bypassed Debate," *New York Times*, March 17, 2008,
5. Walter B. Slocombe, "To Build an Army," *The Washington Post*, November 5, 2003, A29; L. Paul Bremer, "What We Got Right in Iraq," *The Washington Post*, May 13, 2007, B1.
6. See Ricks, *op cit.*, 149–202.
7. The evolution of U.S. counterinsurgency strategy in Iraq is a matter of much controversy, even among U.S. officers who served there during this period. See, for instance, LTC Gian P. Gentile, "Misreading the Surge Threatens U.S. Army's Conventional Capabilities," *World Politics Review*, March 4, 2008, at: http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/article.aspx?id=1715, and; COL Peter Mansoor, "Misreading the History of the Iraq War," *Small Wars Journal Blog*, March 10, 2008, at: http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2008/03/misreading-the-history-of-the/.
8. Frontline interview with COL William Hix, MNF-I Chief of Strategy, at: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/endgame/interviews/hix.html. For an updated, unclassified version of the campaign plan, see: National Security Council, *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*, November 2005, at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/iraq/iraq_national_strategy_20051130.pdf.

9. Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, Report to Congress, June 2008, 20–34.
10. For more on the Sunni Arab tribal awakening, see: Combat Operations Study Team, Interview with COL Sean MacFarland, January 17, 2008, at: http://cgsc.cdmhost.com/cgi-bin/showfile.exe?CISOROOT=/p4013coll13&CISOPTR=1010&filename=1011.pdf; COL Sean MacFarland and MAJ Niel Smith, "Anbar Awakens: The Tipping Point," *Military Review*, March-April 2008, 41–52; David Kilcullen, "Anatomy of a Tribal Revolt," *Small Wars Journal Blog*, August 29, 2007, at: http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2007/08/anatomy-of-a-tribal-revolt/, and; LTC Michael Eisenstadt, "Iraq: Tribal Engagement Lessons-Learned," *Military Review*, September–October 2007, 16–31, at: http://usacac.army.mil/CAC/milreview/English/SepOct07/eisenstadtengsep-toct07.pdf.
11. Sudarsan Raghavan, "Shiite Contest Sharpens in Iraq: Sadr and U.S. Ally Refocus on South," *Washington Post*, December 26, 2007, A1.
12. Amit R. Paley, "U.S. Enlists and Arms Patrols in Sadr City," *Washington Post*, June 12, 2008, A13.
13. Amit R. Paley, "Sadr's Military Enforces Cease-Fire With a Deadly Purge," *Washington Post*, February 21, 2008, A10.
14. Rowan Scarborough, "Suicide Recruits Dropping in Iraq," *Washington Times*, June 11, 2008, 1.
15. This conclusion stands in contrast to Gen. John Abizaid's assertion that "we are an antibody in their culture," which, while not necessarily incorrect, fails to adequately convey the importance of contextual factors. Michael R. Gordon, "Debate Lingering on Decision to Dissolve the Iraqi Military," *New York Times*, October 21, 2004, A1.
16. For the allegedly "self-sustaining" nature of the violence, see: National Intelligence Council, *Prospect for Iraq's Stability: A Challenging Road Ahead*, National Intelligence Estimate, January 2007, 7–8, at: http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20070202_release.pdf. For a study of the second Palestinian intifada that raises questions about the concept of a tit-for-tat "cycle of violence," see: David A. Jaeger and M. Daniele Paserman, "The Cycle of Violence? An Empirical Analysis of Fatalities in the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict," Center for Economic Policy Research, Discussion Paper No. 5320, October 2005.
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18. Testimony of Gen. David H. Petraeus before the Senate Armed Services Committee, April 8, 2008, at: http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=18280&Itemid=1.
19. Matt Sherman, "Iraq's Sunni Time Bomb," *New York Times*, April 3, 2008.
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22. This formulation of the prerequisites for a negotiated end to insurgencies and civil wars is based on the works of I. William Zartman, "Dynamics and Constraints in Negotiations in Internal Conflicts," in I. William Zartman (ed.) *Elusive Peace: Negotiating an End to Civil Wars* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1995), 3–29; "Ripeness: The Hurting Stalemate and Beyond" in Paul Stern and Daniel Druckman (eds.) *International Conflict Resolution After the Cold War* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 2000), 225–250.
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26. Raghavan*, op cit.*
27. See, for instance, Lydia Khalil, "Divisions Within the Iraqi Insurgency," *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 5, No. 7 (April 12, 2007), and Alexandra Zavis, "Sunnis Divided in Anbar Province," *Los Angeles Times*, January 3, 2008.
28. Ahmed Janabi, "Iraq's Armed Groups Formed an Alliance," *Aljazeera.net*, October 1, 2007, and "Iraqi Fighters Form Political Group," Aljazeera.net, October 13, 2007.
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30. See, for instance: Lt. Col. Michael Eisenstadt, "Iraq: Tribal Engagement Lessons-Learned," *Military Review*, September-October 2007, 16–31.
31. Paul Collier, V.L. Elliot, Havard Hegre, Anke Hoeffler, Marta Reynol-Querol, and Nicholas Sambanis, *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2003), 83–91.

CHAPTER 13

Amateur Hour in Iraq: A Worm's-Eye View on the Failure of Nation Building

A. Heather Coyne

The problems of the U.S. occupation in Iraq have been documented and debated extensively, but primarily at a strategic level—a bird's-eye view. Analysts focus on failures in planning, and on the higher order decisions that had the most impact, such as troop levels, de-Ba'thification, the disbanding of the army, and even whether a nation-building or democratization effort in Iraq was possible in the first place. While these strategic considerations indeed shaped—and perhaps doomed—the course of rebuilding postwar Iraq, analysis often neglects the crippling lack of capability on the ground at the tactical and operational levels. This failure may be seen through a "worm's-eye view." Coalition military forces and civilian agencies worked at cross-purposes, in most cases without even basic conceptual and organizational frameworks for their well-intentioned initiatives. With all its experience in postconflict areas, the UN, too, demonstrated a surprising level of inadequacy. As a result, even with a "perfect plan" on the high strategic level, the operation still likely would have failed because of the fundamental lack of capability to implement it.

Regardless of whether success in Iraq was ever possible, an understanding of the gaps in U.S. implementing capability is critical to the current efforts to restructure U.S. and international responses to the complete range of peace operations—anything from humanitarian intervention to larger-scale

reconstruction efforts in failing states. The following report is a testimony of the failure of the United States and the UN in Iraq, as observed by an eyewitness from the grassroots perspective.

I worked on the reconstruction operation in Iraq for three years, first as an Army Civil Affairs officer, and then switching over to become the chief of party for the U.S. Institute of Peace—changing my combat boots for Birkenstocks. As such, I watched the first attempts to engage Iraqis and make improvements in their quality of life. What I saw was not so much an inevitable failure of a doomed undertaking, as you might expect, but rather missed opportunity after missed opportunity, a series of mistakes that squandered the goodwill that had met us when we first arrived, and that set the stage for the subsequent meltdown.

I was assigned to the CPA office responsible for the local councils and civil society in Baghdad. At one point, we met with the army colonel who was in charge of the sprawling neighborhood of Sadr City, where some two million mostly poor Shi'is live. He had been struggling to establish the Sadr City district council and build its authority. He had finally hit on the idea of a street cleanup program—pay $10 a day to everyone who came out to clean up the streets. Not rocket science; this was all the same a quick, simple way to create jobs and handle some basic services. The project had been running smoothly for a while when he interviewed the community to find out what people thought. The responses were enthusiastic: "We love this program," they said, "we have money in our pockets, we can take care of our families, the streets are cleaner, it shows concern for our communities, we are so happy for this program and we are so grateful to Muqtada Sadr for it!" The colonel did a double take: "Muqtada Sadr? No, no, this is a program provided by the Army and the District Council." "No, this is Muqtada Sadr's program," they said. "Why do you think that?" he asked. "Because Muqtada Sadr TOLD us it was his program." Sadr's agents had been telling people that this was Sadr's idea and Sadr's program. And since they didn't hear anything else, they believed him.

The colonel was clearly crushed—all the credit for his good idea was going to the Army's archnemesis. I asked him, "Sir, Why don't you, when you hand out the 10 dollars, also hand out a certificate that says 'thank you for participating in the reconstruction of Iraq, this is a small but important step toward rebuilding the country, etc, etc. Signed, Your friendly neighborhood local council. PS your local council meets every wed at 3, and encourages the public to attend to discuss your thoughts on this program and other community priorities.' " The colonel looked at me and said, "That's a good idea, but we don't have the capability to print certificates."

Even aside from the army's own resources, an entire branch devoted to doing nothing but printing certificates and brochures, and the CPA's strategic communications division, you could just walk into any print shop in Sadr City and order 10,000 certificates—with the added bonus that it is great for local business. But the colonel refused to do this. The problem was that the colonel, probably stretched to the limit already with running Sadr City, had only enough resources to come up with the basic idea; he was not able to think it all the way through, nor to integrate it into the wider goals of the mission, nor was he able to identify and access resources outside his immediate sphere of influence, and most importantly, he wasn't able to put his plans into the context of the society he wanted to help. Unfortunately, that was the common theme of the entire operation: an amateurish approach to something that was tremendously complex and required the utmost subtlety and thorough planning, as well as fully mobilized resources and expertise, if it was even possible to do at all.

All the recent books on the failure of Iraq have their favorite top ten list of strategic mistakes that we made that changed the course of the operation: the looting, leaving the borders unsecured, de-Ba'thification and, of course, disbanding the army are among the most popular. Most of those books place the blame squarely on the leadership for its lack of planning and for these major decisions that turned the tide against us. While probably true, those strategic mistakes do not fully explain what was happening on the ground. They don't fully account for the conceptual, procedural, and structural problems that the United States faced every time it undertook this kind of operation in Somalia, Bosnia, East Timor, Kosovo, Haiti, Haiti, and Haiti again.

The harsh truth is that there is no capability to carry out this mission, either in the U.S. government or in the international community. So even if the United States makes smarter choices at the top, namely, at the strategic levels, it still does not have the capability to implement them on the ground.

Amateur Hour in Community Development

A closer look at our approach to community development programs can provide a better sense of the systemic shortcomings in implementation capability. Significantly, these programs became a center of attention again with the emphasis on Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP) and the Provincial Reconstruction Teams in the new strategy of "surge," the troops increase in Iraq that began in June 2007.

CERP was invented when military commanders on the ground complained that the civilian community development programs had started too

slowly, and were too bound up in red tape and strict contracting procedures. To tackle this problem the military created CERP to provide commanders in the field with funds to carry out projects independently. CERP gets a lot of credit for being flexible and having an immediate impact, but three major problems are bedeviling it. First, the military has little expertise in sustainable development. Commanders were looking at the immediate needs of the community, and attempted to address those needs right away. For instance, they would look at a community that needed health care and decide to build a clinic. Soon they'd have a shiny new clinic but empty shelves and no doctors, because they hadn't built in operating costs for medicines or figured out how to hire doctors to work there. They were in such a hurry to help that they did not prepare the analysis that might have indicated that what was needed was not a new clinic, but reliable access to the hospital in the next town. In this way, the projects were not really helping solve problems.

Second, the units that were running CERP also have had little expertise in budgeting and contracting. They would make a contract with a local Iraqi company, for example, to refurbish a school. The companies often got away with providing shoddy quality goods and services, so a year later, the desks fell apart and the computers broke down. The communities knew how much the contractors had received, and they knew what they got out of it in the end, and thought that either the Americans are corrupt and getting kickbacks from the contractors, or that they are fools to pay so much for so little. These experiences tended to alienate communities from the U.S. commanders instead of winning hearts and minds.

Finally, there was no integration with other projects to create a sense of a building momentum. The projects were all ad hoc, unconnected to each other or to a any sense of a well thought-out process of decision making. Iraqis simply saw a few improvements here or there, which only fed a mentality of "what have you done for us lately," instead of creating local involvement in and ownership of community development activities.

We might expect all this from the military, where community development has never been a high priority. But we had similar problems in community development programs run by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the civilians. USAID had three major programs for community development. The *Local Governance Program* was designed to help create local councils in all communities of Iraq to serve as local government. The *Community Action Program* (CAP) aims at assisting small infrastructure development projects. In addition, the *Civil Society Capacity Building Program* is designed to help new grassroots organizations develop and implement projects of their own. After the invasion, Iraqis formed hundreds of new NGOs. Some were doing it to take advantage of the donor

money, but most just wanted to be involved in rebuilding the society and to help their fellow Iraqis. All, however, were very weak and had no capacity to plan or implement projects, so capacity building was desperately needed.

The Local Governance Program

We were under tremendous pressure to create councils quickly. USAID and the army cooperated in holding town halls/caucuses to select the lowest level of councils, and then almost immediately had those neighborhood councils elect representatives to the higher-level district councils and city council. The representatives had no time to work with each other to determine who was a good leader, or to implement local projects that would create a connection to their constituency, so we ended up with people who had very little legitimacy and no experience at all. We invested a huge amount of time and effort in building their capacity, especially at the top city council level, but the training was not methodical, and the councils were not given the budgets or authority that would allow them to have a real impact on their communities, either in the minds of their constituents or on the level of the national ministries. So, at the end of the experiment, the result was a plethora of organizations with no power, no constituency below, no respect from above, and no chance of being reelected. In fact, the first thing the new government did was to disband the city council.

On the other hand, the *Community Action Program* was very successful initially. It trained Iraqi "mobilizers" who led communities through a process of identifying needs in the community, prioritizing them, and then participating in the implementation of projects to address the highest priority. USAID provided the resources, while the community took the lead in implementing the project. Unlike the CERP projects, in this area there was a very intense process of developing community involvement in and ownership of the effort, and over time community leaders emerged. Those were people who played a major role in organizing the project, gained experience in addressing community needs, and earned the respect of their community. These leaders could be ideal candidates for the local councils. Unfortunately, though, the local councils had already been filled, with no more space for these leaders who emerged later in the game. They would have to wait a few years for the next election, which never took place. At the same time, the *Community Action Program* often resulted in the development not only of individual leaders, but of small groups of people who organized themselves around a project. Again, they appeared to be ideal candidates for the third USAID program, the *Civil Society Capacity Building*. They were much better suited than the average new Iraqi NGOs made up of people who had formed

spontaneously with no experience. The program could help the CAP groups move to the next level of organization, namely, to apply for donor funds and to start work on the next highest priorities identified by their communities. But that program started only two years later. These three programs were all run from the same USAID department, but they were not coordinated or synchronized. They not only failed to reinforce each other, but, in fact undermined each other.

In addition to the military and USAID programs, there were also the programs run by the big contractors. Those were plagued by a huge cultural chasm. To demonstrate this chasm, one may bring up the case of a hypothetical bridge. The CPA needed a bridge built. The typical approach was to turn to the nearest group that knew how to build bridges, a big U.S. contractor. The U.S. contractor assured the CPA: "Don't worry, we know bridges, we'll build you the best bridge. We'll bring in the best architects and engineers and an experienced labor force. We'll import the best materials, we will build you a bridge that will last for a thousand years." But within six months, someone blew up the wonderful bridge because USAID did not hire local labor, did not buy materials from local businesses, and did not get the message to Iraq's universities: "Send us your architects and engineers, there's a future for them in Iraq." The contractors did not understand that the bridge was only one component in the overall equation. The bridge did not need to last for 1,000 years; it only needed to last for 20 or 40 years, as long as it was built in a way that had an Iraqi buy-in that gave Iraqis a stake in the process.

The various branches of the U.S. government consistently bought the wrong items, empowered the wrong people, and sent the wrong messages. My experience with this was at the local level, but the problem was just as relevant at the national level. Furthermore, this phenomenon was not limited to the U.S. operations. Even the United Nations, and the presumed "international expertise" that it brought, failed to rise above the amateur threshold, as detailed below.

Amateur Hour in the Constitution Process

A colleague who has participated in constitution building processes around the world told me that the Iraqi process was the worst of its kind in post-colonial history. For me, it was the worst failure in the long string of failures over the years that I was involved in during the Iraq reconstruction effort, first as an Army Civil Affairs officer and then as the U.S. Institute of Peace's Chief of Party. Though less dramatic than some of our other blunders, writing the constitution was the last good opportunity to turn

things around. After it, there were no more chances left to avoid a slide into widespread violence.

After several unsuccessful starts, the CPA and the Iraqi leadership created a timetable for the constitution process and certain basic principles that would be followed by the transitional government, laid out in the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL). The TAL stipulated January 2005 elections for a Provisional Assembly that would elect a Provisional Government. Much more importantly: within six months, the Provisional Assembly would draft a constitution. The draft had to be completed no later than August 15 of that year, then a popular referendum on the constitution held on October 15, and then new elections for a permanent Assembly held on December 15. Some flexibility was built into the TAL, by providing the option of a six-month extension for this timetable if the Provisional Assembly requested it by August 1. On the other hand, if the Assembly did not request an extension, and did not complete a draft by August 15, the TAL called for its dissolution and a "start-over" from square one.

The process was up against two major problems. First, how does one write a constitution that represents everyone's needs when the people writing it do not represent everyone? The National Assembly that had been elected in the January 2005 elections was to write Iraq's constitution for the whole nation, but representation in the Assembly was incomplete, as most Sunnis wouldn't or couldn't vote in the January 2005 elections. After the elections, they realized very quickly that they hadn't just lost a chance to take part in the government, but that they were going to be excluded from the process that determined the structure of all future governments in Iraq. They promptly demanded a "second bite at the apple" and a voice in the constitution drafting, even if they had boycotted the elections. Inadvertently, one clause in the TAL gave the Sunnis a veto right over the draft: even if the majority of the population voted for the constitution, if 66 percent of three provinces voted "no," the constitution would fail. This clause was originally included in the TAL as a way to reassure the three Kurdish provinces that the constitution would have to meet their approval, but because there are also three Sunni majority provinces, it turned out to be a tool for the Sunni areas to demand a bigger role.

How to include the Sunnis in the constitution drafting became one of the biggest challenges of the process. This was especially complicated because, since they hadn't participated in the election, no one knew who the "Sunnis" were—who their leaders were, what parties represented them, or what individuals could speak for the Sunni community. The Shi'a and the Kurds had pretty clearly established parties and leaders, but even after

everyone had agreed that the Sunnis should be at the negotiating table, no one knew whom to invite.

The other major issue was the timeline itself. The U.S. and British governments believed unquestioningly that it was essential to meet the deadlines to "maintain the momentum of the political process." They were not entirely wrong—getting the foreign troops out of Iraq would be an important step in defusing the insurgency, as was a move toward a more legitimate government (with full participation in the elections). In addition, U.S. domestic support for Iraq was drying up, and the administration would not be able to argue for continued resources for Iraq unless it could show Congress signs of progress. But rushing a constitution process is a dangerous business. USIP did a study of 20 countries that had recently written constitutions, producing a report on lessons for Iraq. The most compelling conclusion of the report was that a process characterized by public participation and transparency can be a transformational one that facilitates peace and stability, but that without those features, such a process can further fracture the country. The single best way to derail transparency and participation is to rush the process, so that there is no time for an organized approach that allows public education, consultation, and review of early drafts, for lobbying and advocacy—in other words, time to get the Iraqi people actively involved in the constitutional debate.

Things got off to a bad start on both fronts. Even the squeezed time of six months envisioned between the January elections and the August 15 deadline was "eaten up" by the long delay in forming the government and in bringing the Sunnis into the Constitutional Committee (ConComm). Thus, the Iraqis ended up with really only about six weeks to write a constitution for a nation in the middle of a serious sectarian conflict. The United States blocked any serious discussion of taking the extension offered by the TAL. At the same time, the Sunnis who were added to the Constitutional Committee were not really representative of their communities. The names that were put forward included many former elite, ex-Ba'thists and "rejectionists"—people who weren't interested in a political solution, but wanted to keep polarizing the debate and blocking compromises so that the process would fail. The Shi'a and Kurdish leaderships warned the U.S. Embassy that these were the wrong people, but the U.S. administration was so intent on moving the process along on time that they pushed for the most expedient choices instead of more lengthy, but more legitimate, ways of choosing Sunni representatives.

So how did it come to this? Why weren't those destructive tendencies recognized and managed from the beginning by the UN, the repository of the world's expertise on constitution making? The UN's main role in the

constitution-writing process was to serve as the coordinator for international community resources. However, the UN was unable to hold a weekly meeting on a designated day of the week in nine months of weekly meetings. Instead, meetings were called randomly, often about 24 hours before the time, making it nearly impossible for groups coming from outside the Green Zone to attend. The UN was also unable to create an e-mail list of the people who attended such meetings, in order to notify people of them. After six months, a new staffer created a Google group to manage communications, which worked well except that most people didn't know the Google group existed, and thus didn't get any messages.

One anecdote captures the level of disarray and failure to apply the international expertise garnered from previous constitution-making processes. The UN, recognizing the importance of public participation, had by July brought some people on board to work with the Iraqi Constitutional Committee on outreach. They developed a plan to distribute submission boxes around the country so that people could submit comments. The boxes would be blue and would be placed in shops, banks, places of worship, schools, just about everywhere. The submission boxes would be the beginning of a national dialogue on the constitution. The UN developed a far-reaching media campaign to let everyone know about the blue boxes and encourage them to submit comments.

As the advertisements started to roll through TV and radio and the press, the UN held one of its infamous weekly meetings, at which they announced that the blue boxes hadn't yet been placed, or even purchased. In fact, the funding hadn't been transferred to the Iraqis to make the purchases, and even though that issue was being resolved, no one was sure that there were enough—or any—blue boxes available for purchase. But the media announcements went out anyway, because the UN had already "done a lot of work on the campaign."

Soon afterwards, the Iraqi ConComm outreach unit told UN staff that they had found a suitable container and could buy thousands of them to place around the country. Pleased, the UN staffer went to see what they had found. It was a blue garbage can. Imagine: millions of brave Iraqis going to put their comments on the future of their country into a garbage can. It was more appropriate than we knew at the time. The UN staffer actually praised their ingenuity until another international official stepped in to tell the Iraqis that, symbolically, this would be an outrage, and urged them to find something else. The ConComm ended up contracting carpenters to make boxes, which were distributed around Iraq. The boxes, when we finally saw them, were brown. Hundreds of boxes were distributed around Baghdad and others sent to some of the provinces. The boxes intended for the Kurdish and

the Sunni areas were never distributed. But even in Baghdad, I never found an Iraqi who had seen a submission box.

Some submissions did come in through the box system. Unsurprisingly, most submissions came from Shi'a areas, particularly areas associated with the ultraconservative Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI, pronounced by many Iraqis, appropriately enough, as "scary"), the Shi'a party that was managing and staffing the ConComm outreach unit. However, without time to build a system that reached all parts of the country, the outreach unit relied on its own networks and contacts to manage the effort. Not surprisingly, most of the people they did reach belonged to their own communities.

The ConComm outreach unit had put out a questionnaire with seven simplistic questions such as "do you prefer a parliamentary or presidential system?" These were virtually useless questions for a populace that had not been educated on the fundamental concepts of governance, but it was at least a token effort at public consultation. Most of the submissions that came in were these filled-in questionnaires: yes/no answers that were relatively easy to enter into a database that the UN and a USAID contractor had helped the ConComm outreach unit set up. The database created elegant reports and charts showing that 98 percent of respondents favored such and such a structure, and that 97 percent of respondents believed women's rights should be in accordance with Islam, etc. The consolidated totals were unsurprising, given that most of the respondents were SCIRI supporters. But many Iraqis had turned in "free form" submissions. Civil society organizations were running their own public participation process, holding workshops and debates across the country, collecting comments from their communities, writing analyses of the needs and interests of their citizens and organizations, even drafting language for sections of the constitution. These submissions were probably much more thoughtful than the seven-question form, and more representative of the communities in Iraq. The database, however, had no way of incorporating these comments, so they were left out of the statistics. As a result, the vast majority of these thoughts and questions that Iraqi citizens had come up with themselves about the future of their government and their society were never seen by the ConComm members.

Some of the UN's working group had the opportunity to visit the ConComm outreach unit's office, which was collecting and processing all the public comments. We saw literally mountains of paper, returned questionnaires, and other documents submitted to the ConComm. An intensely dedicated staff was working day and night, with no security, to enter the responses into the database and create a report on public opinion for the ConComm members. The report—with only the biased selection of

data—reached the ConComm chairman a couple of days before the deadline. There is no indication it was ever circulated to the other members or to the Assembly. But that didn't matter anyway, since decision making had long moved out of the ConComm to the "Kitchen": a small group of the most important leaders of the biggest political parties. The Kitchen, notably, did not include any Sunnis, so all the desperate arrangements made to pad the ConComm with Sunni representatives were useless, since the ConComm was out of the loop and the Sunnis did not have access to the final negotiations.

In other words, the decisions had been transferred to the elite who have been in control of Iraq from the start, and who were utterly disinterested in anything their citizens had to say to them. Effective public participation in the Iraqi constitution process was virtually nonexistent. There was a tremendous surge of energy and enthusiasm from Iraqi civil society organizations and the public, but it did not happen at the level necessary to impact the process. None of the Iraqi citizens' energy and enthusiasm ever translated into effective pressure on the political leadership to take seriously the views of the citizens, or really even to pretend to listen to them.

The UN's contribution to other aspects of the constitution process—education on comparative approaches for the drafters, technical assistance, logistics, printing and distribution, media campaigns, electoral law—was similarly poor. The result was that the expertise and comparative knowledge of how this process has worked in other countries was unavailable to the ConComm, though it should have been. This was not only the fault of the UN, because the ConComm was reluctant to allow international advisers into the process. But, ultimately, the UN was unable to convince the ConComm or the political parties of the value of what it had to offer, and the necessity of developing a good process, and the result was that the ConComm was working from scratch without any of the best practices that had been gleaned from other recent constitutional experiences. The divisiveness of the resulting process could largely have been avoided, or at least moderated, by better planning and judgment. Even to the last minute, the government was still making mistakes, like interpreting the electoral law in a way that would heavily and unfairly favor a "yes" vote, alienating the Sunnis yet again, and then retracting after the predictable outcry. Hence the final result was again amateurish, even though such a wealth of applicable experience was available.

Most of the blame lies squarely on the shoulders of the U.S. administration, which forced the Iraqis to keep to an arbitrary and unrealistic deadline. The United States did so in spite of the best advice from the best experts in the world. As the time the crunch started to hit in July, one of the experts

exclaimed that even if they finished the constitution that very day, there would not be enough time to even print it before the deadline. But the administration was committed to this forced march through the calendar, even if every milestone only marked a hollow achievement. And although it was the U.S. administration at fault in forcing the process to meet the deadline, the biggest failure is that of the UN because it did not stand up and say "no."

Taking Stock

The factors that devastated the international contribution to the constitution process are the same ones that undermined our community development programs. First, time pressure causes a constant trade-off between doing it well and doing it quickly, and doing it well lost most of the time. That is the wrong trade-off for these kinds of missions. Second, how one does things is as important as what one does; in fact, often it is more important. Thus, a quick employment program needs to be tied to building the legitimacy of local institutions; development projects need to be accompanied by the creation of processes for decision making in the community; infrastructure contracts need to address vocational skills training and the development of business associations; grants to local NGOs need to incorporate standards and capacity building as a community, and so on. Also, crucially, constitution making must be tied to populace participation in the democratic process. In large part, all this may be achieved through shifting the focus from the question of how the foreign power can itself attain the goal to how it can engage local partners effectively for them to do it themselves. Lack of expertise underlies both of the above-mentioned factors.

This really was amateur hour. The lack of expertise was exacerbated by overreliance on the military, which did not have the necessary skill sets or even the appropriate organizational culture for such a mission. But the skills are not even in place among traditional development agencies like the UN. Among the coalition, this was made worse by short rotations, because just as personnel started to learn, they were rotated out. Some critics equated lack of expertise to lack of manpower, saying that the United States needed more troops. This is an oversimplification, because if 100,000 more troops were still doing the wrong thing, they would have still failed to reach the desired result. The United States almost certainly needed more people in Iraq, but it needed the right people. Most importantly, expertise is about more than people with skills. It is about doctrine, training, equipment, materials, organizational culture, and institutional relationships. It is a whole system to build and transfer and use knowledge. To get that right, one needs an

organization dedicated to doing this mission, one that is staffed, trained, equipped, and resourced to do it.

Probably, it is already too late for the United States to do all this for Iraq. Since 2003, its credibility and political will have deteriorated, making its interactions with the population more difficult, just at the time that senior leaders recognized that a change in approach was necessary. Although political developments and, to some extent, the surge led to a reduction of violence (at least temporarily), the period in which outsiders took the leading role in shaping Iraq's reconstruction is largely over. While the international community remains engaged in reconstruction projects, we are no longer in that critical period in which effective engagement of the Iraqi population could have empowered citizen influence on the development of a new political order. All the same, however, the United States and the UN will likely still be expected to help in postconflict peacekeeping operations, maybe even in nation-building operations that will call for this kind of expertise, and they cannot afford to repeat their mistakes. The United States must create that capability before it is needed again.

Note

This is an expanded and updated version of an article that appeared in *The American Interest on Line*, November–December 2007.

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CHAPTER 14

Until They Leave: Liberation, Occupation, and Insurgency in Iraq

Judith S. Yaphe

Introduction

Much has been written comparing the British and U.S. wars for and occupation—or liberation—of Iraq. Observers inside and outside the country have argued over Iraq's imperial and colonial legacies, identity, and viability. For many non-Iraqis and Western political observers, the country was an artificial creation of secret agreements between British and French diplomats eager for booty when World War I ended. Iraqis were primarily Arabs or Kurds, Sunnis or Shi'as, Christians or Jews. What they were not, according to this perspective, was Iraqi. For many Iraqis and a smaller number of scholars, however, Iraqi nationalism was born in the ashes of the Ottoman Empire, and was the force that shaped modern Iraq, despite British efforts to impose foreign values, institutions, and rulers. Much of the extant literature about the liberations and occupations has been written by observers more interested in prescribing policy than understanding Iraq. Their work bears limited resemblance to actions on the ground and reactions of Iraqis to the events shaping their history and political culture.

There are commonalities in the actions and assumptions of the foreign governments invading Iraq, in the choices to be made regarding appropriate governance and governors, and in setting priorities before turning government back to the Iraqis. *Three questions remain unanswered, their relevance*

especially important for those looking for an exit strategy for the United States and the possible consequences for Iraq. What was similar, and therefore predictable, in the behaviors of the two occupiers and in the reaction of the Iraqis? What was different, and therefore unpredictable, in the behaviors of the two occupiers and in the reactions of the Iraqis? What do the reactions of the Iraqis to their liberations, occupations, and insurgencies suggest about Iraq's behavior until the United States leaves and after?

Liberation

The British Expeditionary Force entered Basra in November 1914, shortly after the start of World War I, taking Baghdad in 1917. Britain's goal in the Middle East was to keep non-British influences (primarily Russian and German) out of the region, and protect Britain's strategic interests in Iran's oil fields of Khuzistan-Arabestan and the refineries of Abadan, and its links to India and the Arabian side of the Gulf. As they moved north, the British issued a number of announcements, apparently intended to secure internal cooperation and external support. They promised the local population liberation from the Ottoman yoke, and what was understood to be independence. When General Maude, Commander in Chief of British forces in Iraq, entered Baghdad in March 1917, he issued a proclamation written by the Foreign Office to the people of Baghdad promising that the British Army had not come as "Conquerors or enemies but as Liberators." Britain, he said, could not remain indifferent to Iraq, but did not wish to impose alien institutions on the people of Baghdad. They were, rather, to "flourish and enjoy their wealth and substance under institutions which are in consonance with their sacred laws and their racial ideals." He invited the nobles, elders, and representatives of the Baghdad *vilayet* (province) to participate in the management of their civil affairs, in collaboration with the political representatives of Great Britain. A Foreign Office memorandum issued in November 1920 promised the people of Iraq "to recognize and support the independence of the inhabitants, and to advise and assist them to establish what may appear to be the most suitable forms of government, on the understanding they seek advice and guidance of Great Britain only."[1]

Two other agreements—both secret—gave conflicting views of post-Ottoman Iraq. One, the correspondence between the British and Sharif Husayn ibn 'Ali, the Amir of Mecca, promised the creation of an independent Arab state, although its borders were not clearly defined, in exchange for the Arabs starting an anti-Ottoman revolt. The other, known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, divided the Middle East into British and French spheres of influence and, in effect, ensured that Britain would be

the dominant power in the Persian Gulf region after the war. The latter proved to be the most binding. It served as the basis of the Anglo-French Declaration of November 1918 and the Treaty of Versailles in 1919.

The United States occupied Iraq after three weeks of war in March and April 2003. The United States unilaterally decided on war because of Saddam Husayn's refusal to comply with UN Security Council resolutions and declare Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), and his alleged support for terrorism, in particular for the Islamist extremist organization, al-Qa'ida. Both claims were discredited after the war—neither WMDs nor corroborating evidence for the claims of support for al-Qa'ida was found.[2] And, unlike the war to liberate Kuwait, the Bush Administration did not list oil as a factor in its decision to topple Saddam. Few in Iraq believed this disclaimer. Saddam's brutal treatment of Iraqis—be they Kurd, Arab, Sunni, or Shi'a—was well documented, however. He used tactics of ethnic cleansing, arrests, torture, execution, and mass murder to eliminate real and imagined opponents; he used WMDs on Iranian troops during their eight-year war and on Kurds in Iraq to punish them for alleged aid to Iran and overall obstreperousness.[3] On entering Baghdad in April 2003, the commander of the U.S. coalition force echoed the words of General Maude. Like the British before them, the Americans would talk about liberation and creating a new Iraq based on principles of democracy, human rights, and economic liberalization. Iraq's experiment, it was hoped in Washington, would ultimately be emulated by all the countries in the region. Both powers defined their motivations in terms of Western ideals and not Iraq's reality. British colonial officers were prepared to assume "the White Man's Burden" and both British and U.S. soldiers believed they had liberated Iraq.

Occupation

Once ensconced in Baghdad, both British and U.S. military and civil administrators clashed over how Iraq would be ruled, who would rule, and what role Iraqis could play in the creation of their new state. Both set about creating symbols of democratic rule while withholding the substance. The policy debates in both London and Washington reflected deep ideological and institutional differences between the Foreign Office and War Office and the State Department and Defense Department.

The Mechanics of Occupation, British Style

When World War I ended in 1918, British public sentiment focused on bringing the troops home, and economic recovery after four years of costly

and devastating war. As a result of economic constraints and domestic pressures, the British government was forced to seek a less expensive means to govern Iraq. They found it in three instruments of indirect rule.

- They established a constitutional *monarchy* in Iraq headed by Amir Faysal, son of the Sharif of Mecca, Husayn ibn 'Ali, who had cooperated with the British during the war. In 1921, after a carefully controlled plebiscite, Faysal became the first of three Hashimite kings to rule Iraq. The constitution gave the king great, though not absolute, powers. Britain exercised its influence through an authoritarian monarch and a network of British advisers in key ministries.
- They detailed their mandatory relationship with Iraq through a series of *treaties*, the first of which was signed in 1922 and the last in 1932, which ended the mandate, granted Iraq formal independence, and provided Britain with bases and other facilities in return for help, advice, and protection for the new state.
- They expanded their use of *air power*, to monitor tribal movements and security threats and quell rebellions. First used to suppress a Kurdish rebellion in 1919, and again in 1920 to suppress Arab tribes in revolt, Britain's use of air power enabled it to control mandatory Iraq with fewer soldiers.

Two questions framed the postwar policy debates in Whitehall: would the acquisition of new territory (Iraq) make Britain stronger or weaker, and should allowance be made for the strong feeling in the Muslim world that Islam had a political as well as a religious existence? The answers to these questions depended on how one assessed Iraqis' capacity for governance. Three views are worth noting:

- In London, Winston Churchill, then Colonial Secretary, and the British General Staff saw little strategic value in Iraq, and deplored the ingratitude of the liberated Arabs in demanding self-rule.
- The India Office, which ran the civil administration, viewed Iraq through the prism of India's Muslims and needs. Its chief administrator, Sir Arnold Wilson, believed that the Arabs were incapable of self-rule, and that a tutorial and imperial role was appropriate for Iraq. His determination to incorporate Iraqis into government gradually would lay the groundwork for mistrust and rebellion. His favorite candidate was the warrior shaykh of Arabia, Ibn Sa'ud, whom he described as "an Arab we could control."[4]

- The Arab Bureau, which was part of the Foreign Office, reflected the views of Gertrude Bell, then in Baghdad as secretary to the British High Commissioner, Sir Percy Cox, and in London by T.E. Lawrence.[5] They anticipated the rise of Arab nationalism, and favored Amir Faysal and a more direct role for a government representing the interests of all Iraqis.[6]

The debate of who would rule Iraq and how ended with the Iraq revolt of 1920. A monarchy was installed and a parliament established, both with little authority or power. The fate of the Mosul province and Iraq's Kurds was not settled until 1923. Although the League of Nations, in the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres, promised the Kurds of northern Iraq and southeastern Turkey some kind of self-rule, the idea was abandoned following Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's military success and a series of Kurdish tribal rebellions.[7]

Britain chose Amir Faysal to be king of Iraq for several reasons, including a history of cooperation and the assumption that they could manipulate him. Although he had virtually impeccable Arab nationalist and Muslim credentials, as a leader of the Arab Revolt and a descendant of the family of the Prophet Muhammad, many Iraqis regarded him as an interloper. As an Arab, he lacked Kurdish support, as a Sunni he lacked Shi'a favor, and as a Hashimite from Arabia he was rejected by many local old Sunni noble families. Yet, Faysal had the loyalty of Iraqis who had served in the Ottoman military and defected to the Arab Revolt. He was a known quantity to British and Arab observers, with no ties to any Iraqi political faction or region of the country—surely a plus in British eyes. Faysal was "elected" by unanimous resolution on July 11, 1921, in the Council of State. His government pledged to be constitutional, representative, democratic, and limited by the rule of law. A plebiscite managed by the British gave the king 96 percent of the popular vote—Kurds and pro-Turkish elements opposing Arab rule did not vote, nor did Shi'is in southern Iraq who preferred theocratic government.

The debate in Whitehall was irrelevant to most Iraqis. Many Arab and Iraqi nationalists who had served in the Ottoman military and civil service and in the Arab Revolt of 1916–1918 realized that cooperation with the British could confirm their national hopes and personal ambitions; they accepted a role in the new government and the promises of the British. They acquired wealth and status from their cooperation, creating a political culture of corruption that would haunt them in later years.[8] Others became embittered, and the years of British occupation and manipulation would result in the rise of nationalist groups resenting British cooptation and usurpation of rights. Ultimately, their resentments would yield a disturbing pattern of military revolts, political repression, ethnic cleansing, and civil unrest.

The British who governed Iraq after World War I believed in direct British rule and, at first, tried to apply the India model of imperial rule to Iraq. They saw the Arabs as inherently inferior and unable to rule wisely or justly. They opposed appointing local Arabs to positions of responsibility, preferring young, inexperienced military officers to "advise" local Arab leaders. British district political officers administered justice, maintained law and order, settled disputes between town and tribe, and attempted to pacify quarrelsome tribes. In 1916, the British drew up a Tribal Criminal and Civil Disputes Regulation, which was renewed in 1918 and eventually incorporated into the constitution. It gave the political officer authority to convene a tribal council (*majlis*) to settle disputes involving tribesmen, according to tribal custom. Tribal shaykhs designated by the British were empowered to settle all disputes with and between members of their tribe, and charged with collecting taxes on behalf of the government. The political officer relied on civil police constables recruited from Aden and India, as well as native soldiers, tribal levies, and local police recruited from the Arab tribes of the district. Ultimately, the presence of the British military, especially the Royal Air Force (RAF), kept town and tribe together and quiescent.[9]

Beginning in 1919, the British Civil Commissioner, Sir Arnold Wilson, introduced measures aimed at sustaining British control over Iraq. A plebiscite asked prominent Iraqi notables what shape of government and constitution they preferred. The responses seemed to indicate support for a state comprised of three provinces under Arab rule, but with no consensus on the form of government or ruler. Wilson reported a preference for "Englishmen speaking Arabic" to French or U.S. officers, and proposed that British political officers should continue their work. In Basra, in particular, where most of the people interviewed were either landowners or others who had benefited personally from British occupation, the majority naturally favored direct British rule.[10] Tribal leaders in the rich agricultural regions on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers asked for continuation of British rule.

The new cabinet included representatives from all three former Ottoman provinces. Most members were prominent representatives of the Sunni Arab community, with a few Christians, Shi'a, and a Jew as ministers. Municipal councils were restored, each council and ministry with a British adviser. Shi'a were noticeably absent from most government offices, partly because of their lack of administrative experience, partly because of prevailing anti-Shi'a attitudes among Sunni Arab notables in Baghdad, and mostly because of British wariness of Shi'a clericalism. The old order was reestablished—Ottoman-educated Sunni Arabs and "Arabized" Kurds under foreign patronage dominated Iraq once again. Finally, Iraq's first army was formed,

comprising 600 returning Ottoman-trained Iraqi army officers, almost all from Sunni Arab families.

The Mechanics of Occupation, U.S. Style

The U.S. military campaign in 2003 was carefully crafted to focus on selected targets of high value to Saddam and his loyalists. Less care was paid to the dangerous period after Saddam's regime had collapsed and before a new administration was in place. Except for protecting the Oil Ministry and oil fields, little thought seems to have been given to protecting Iraq's people, hospitals, schools, antiquities, or treasures in museums and libraries. Criticism came quickly from Iraqis who told Western journalists their expectations that the Americans would fix everything.

The United States, however, was slow to implement security, humanitarian relief, and reconstruction measures for the civilian population. Two problems impeded U.S. efforts in Iraq. The first problem was the apparent disparity between military war plans and civilian reconstruction plans. Civil administrators planned to begin relief and reconstruction on a rolling basis, coming in behind the military once an area was secure. Military strategy, however, focused on reaching Baghdad quickly to strike at the heart of Saddam's regime, a good strategy except that it meant bypassing towns and cities in southern Iraq, which contained strongholds of regime supporters. There was not enough time or military personnel to fight for Baghdad, secure towns, and ensure the well-being of all Iraqis.

The second problem was more serious, if only because it was systemic. Competition between the State Department, the Pentagon, and the intelligence community impeded efforts to plan for the war or the post-Saddam period. The Pentagon assumed control of humanitarian aid, public diplomacy, information dissemination, civil reconstruction, and state building—tasks not normally favored by the military. Administrative experience and knowledge of Iraq were less important than political loyalty and ideological correctness. The Pentagon ignored projects such as the State Department's Future of Iraq Project, which brought in Iraqi exiles—lawyers, business people, engineers, educators, and civil administrators, for example—to draw up plans for post-Saddam projects to reconstitute civil society and reconstruct the country. Instead, the Pentagon favored strong postwar controls, disbanding the Iraqi military and security forces and banning Ba'th Party members from government, civil service, and teaching posts. And, like the British, it preferred to rely on known quantities—Iraqis, most of whom had long been in exile and represented extreme sectarian or ethnic positions, but

professed loyalty to the occupiers' goals. All were on relatively good terms with Iran.

Many key decisions had not yet been made when the war started in mid-March, or if they had, they were not publicized. The first civil administrator was Jay Garner, a retired three-star army general who had served briefly in northern Iraq in 1991; Garner headed the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA). He was soon replaced by Ambassador L. Paul Bremer, former head of the State Department's counterterrorism office, and the effort renamed the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). Bremer was close to socalled neo-conservative supporters of the Bush administration and reported directly to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. He shared their views on regional security, sources of terrorism, and how post-Saddam Iraq should be "guided," especially regarding democratization and economic privatization. The only uncertainties seem to have been how much authority would the provisional and permanent Iraqi "governments" be given, and would they be empowered to make decisions? Or would the United States repeat the mistake of the British Civil Administration and insist that its handpicked political advisers wield the real power?

Most of the Iraqis who were put in place by the United States after the collapse of Saddam's regime had spent much of their adult lives outside Iraq in exile; their worldview and experiences were shaped by years of struggle, antiregime activity, clandestine operations (some of them occasionally cooperated with Saddam), and not by the reality of surviving in Saddam's Iraq. Bremer appointed a governing council of 25 exiles to be the public face of post-Saddam Iraq. It was a mathematically correct group—13 Shi'a Arabs, five Sunni Arabs, five Kurds, a Turkman, and a Christian—and the presidency rotated monthly among nine of its most prominent members. Many Iraqis blame this mathematical modeling of the Governing Council as the first stages of the sectarianism that led to the civil violence.

The Governing Council was replaced by two interim governments, the first under Iyad Allawi, a secular Shi'a politician, and the second in January 2005 led by Ibrahim Ja'fari, a member of the Shi'a Da'wa Party. The mission of the first provisional government was to write a constitution and prepare for the election of a permanent government. In December 2005, a coalition of several Shi'a parties, dominated by the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI, later the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq [ISCI]), the Da'wa, and the Sadrist Movement, won control of the parliament. It was the first truly transparent election in the 85 years since the Mandate.[11]

Bremer was responsible for three controversial measures, which reflected his and the Bush administration's efforts to reshape governance and civil

society.[12] The first two were announced shortly after he arrived in Iraq. One was the abolition of the Iraqi military and security services. This meant the release of nearly 450,000 Iraqis from service. Those conscripted into the military and who had served against their will were happy not to return to barracks, but approximately 150,000 career soldiers in the Republican Guard and internal security services became unemployed. The other effort was the de-Ba'thification Law, which banned virtually everyone who had belonged to the Ba'th Party from the level of *firqah* and above from serving in government or the military.[13] An estimated 30,000 were dismissed[14] Both measures appeared to intentionally target Sunni Arabs, many of whom filled the ranks of the officer corps and the Ba'th Party hierarchy, the security services, and ran much of the government bureaucracy. Few people outside Iraq realized that many Shi'a had joined the Party and served in the government and the military senior officer ranks. Bremer and the Pentagon insisted that there was no Iraqi armed forces when the war ended; they saw no problem in deep de-Ba'thification, even if it closed most schools and affected a substantial number of Iraq's skilled professional class who had to join the Ba'th Party to work. This policy may have been intended to eliminate Ba'thist influence from post-Saddam Iraq, but its Draconian application by newly empowered Shi'a and Kurdish exiles exceeded the bounds of similar postwar situations. It eerily resembled the British policy of 1914–1920 of excluding Iraqi Arab ex-Ottoman officials and officers from government service.

The third measure was the clearest indicator of the U.S. vision for the new Iraq. It was the interim constitution, referred to as the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL); it was written in 2003 by Iraqis, according to Bremer, but with "guidance" from Bush administration advisers. The document resonated with protections for individual rights and civil liberties, as detailed in Western constitutions. It described Iraq's government as republican, federal, democratic, and pluralist. Its key sections dealt with issues of federal versus provincial/regional rights, the role of Islam in the state, and the structure and nature of governance. Most of its provisions were written into the permanent constitution that was approved in a nation-wide referendum in October 2005. It established a weak central authority, with most power residing in the regional or provincial governments. Should a provincial government oppose a law or should an issue be contested by both the federal and provincial governments, then the provincial government's authority would be paramount. The federal government has control over defense, internal security, currency, and foreign policies, but the power to tax was not allocated or even mentioned.[15] The 2005 constitution was less a rejection of the highly centralized 1925 document written by the British than it was a deliberate attempt by Kurdish and Shi'a parties to prevent a

Saddam-like dictator from emerging in control of a strong, highly centralized *mukhabarat* (police) state again.

Iraq's constitution leaves significant issues unresolved, and many Iraqis are dissatisfied with what is includes. The reluctance of Kurdish and many Shi'a Iraqis to support a strong central government is understandable, given the long years of living in a highly centralized state in which all decisions were made in Baghdad, and abuse of power was the rule and not the exception. On the other hand, Iraqi Sunnis and some Shi'is fear that a weak central government, and an imbalance of power to the provinces could result in the country's partition. Kurds and Arabs have identity issues, with differences between Kurds and Arabs on how to define Iraq, and Kurds, Christians, and secular Arabs objecting to the provision recognizing Islam as the religion of the state and preventing enactment of any laws that contradict the *Shari'a* (religious law). Islamists prefer an avowedly Islamic government, with *Shari'a* as the foundation of all law. The constitution, like its predecessor document crafted by the CPA, guarantees protection of minority rights, but until there is meaningful national reconciliation and better security, Iraq's many sectarian and ethnic elements will not feel protected.

In 1924, the British were able to pressure the parliament that they had created into accepting the constitution they had crafted. Superficially, it looked like a British-style democratic constitution with the powers of king, parliament, and British High Commissioner defined. In reality, the king was given clear advantage over parliament. In 2003, Bremer oversaw the production of the TAL. It defined a true Western-style parliamentary democracy, plus it required that no less than one-quarter of the seats in parliament be held by women. However, its implementation of a list-based election of representatives (rather than a U.S.-style direct vote for representatives) led many Iraqis to conclude that the United States was intentionally reinforcing ethnic and sectarian differences, rather than trying to eliminate them.[16]

Insurgency

Iraqis have long resented rule by foreign occupation, regardless of whether the occupiers were Turkish, British, Iranian, or American. In 1919 and in 2003, Iraqis had great expectations of determining their own government and political culture. In both cases, they were disappointed, and the response was the same: revolts in 1919–1920 and insurgency in 2003. The words were different, but the goal was the same—end foreign occupation and establish self-rule. In 1920, Iraq's Arabs—Sunni and Shia, urban and tribal—joined together to protest occupation and seek self-rule. Arab Sunni military officers and officials who had served under the Ottomans and

been marginalized by the British joined Shi'a notables, clerics, and tribal shaykhs to defend Iraq and Islam and seek independence from foreign rule. With the exception of the Kurds, the scenario repeated itself in 2003 with the collapse of the Ba'thist regime. While Iraqis may have disagreed over the desirable form of government and leadership—Islamic state or secular monarchy—many Iraqi Arabs, if not most of them, shared a distaste for foreign rule, be it direct or through Iraqi proxies. The idea in 1920 and again in 2003 that Iraq would only gradually become an independent, self-governing nation-state under tutelage of a foreign power was seen as ominous and patronizing.

Insurgency, 1920 Style

Beginning in spring 1919, Shi'a clerics and tribal shaykhs from the Middle Euphrates joined Sunni nationalists who were unemployed civil servants, ex-soldiers of Faysal, teachers, scholars, and lawyers. They held mass meetings in Baghdad at Sunni and Shi'a mosques, opposing British occupation and calling for cooperation in the nationalist cause for Iraqi independence. They sent representatives to the Sharif in Mecca, stating their support for one of his sons as king of an independent constitutional monarchy. During Ramadhan in May 1920, Sunnis joined Shi'a in large anti-British demonstrations and combined religious services in Sunni and Shi'a mosques. The notables appealed to Acting Civil Commissioner Arnold Wilson for the creation of an elected national assembly to determine the shape of the nation-state of Iraq. Wilson could not imagine the Shi'a Arabs of southern Iraq making common cause with the Sunni notables of Baghdad and Mosul. Moreover, he opposed the innovative idea that numbers should now count in politics, and he opposed extending any official invitation to Shi'a clerics to participate in the new regime that he was constructing. In this, he underestimated the strength of the nationalist movement, the persistence of the Shi'a clerical establishment and their opposition to non-Islamic domination, and the overall perception that the new Mandate was merely a disguised form of colonialism.

In May 1920, the British Civil Administration announced that the League of Nations had granted Britain the Mandate for Iraq "until such time as it can stand by itself," that a provisional committee drawn from former representatives in the Ottoman parliament would be established, and that elections would be held for a constituent assembly. The provisional committee chose a newly returned exile and supporter of the returning Ottoman-trained military officers, Sayyid Talib al-Naqib, to be its president. The British viewed this as a step toward creating the kind of national

institutions called for in the Mandate. They viewed the politicians from the old regime as the obvious people to consult.[17]

Opinion was divided among prominent Iraqis on the proper course of action to serve Iraq's interests and their own. Some Sunni notables and Shi'a tribal shaykhs looked to the British to secure existing privileges, and agreed to support Britain so long as Britain guaranteed them the same privileges that they had held under the Turks. Others, fearing loss of autonomy, land tenure, and increased taxation, rejected any form of colonial tutelage. Arab middle and lower middle-class nationalists who had received some secular state education in Baghdad, Mosul, Najaf, and Karbala feared the consequences of prolonged British rule for their personal well-being and dreams of national self-rule. Ex-Turkish and Iraqi officials and army officers were disappointed by their failure to find jobs and status in the British-run Civil Administration. Many Shi'a clerics were dismayed by the British refusal to establish an Islamic state under an independent Islamic government and efforts to manipulate popular opinion. Tribesmen were unhappy with the stringent tax system and forced labor. Worse still, the British imposed new shaykhs on many tribes, and forced the peasants to pay them rent on land that was traditionally collective tribal property.

Representatives from Najaf and Karbala petitioned the local British political officer for an independent Iraq free from all foreign intervention, under an Arab king, limited by a national legislative assembly. The British refused to accept the petitions.[18] They saw in them a clerical attempt to create a state ruled by Islamic law (*Shari'a)*. In Karbala, a leading Shi'a cleric, Ayatollah Muhammad Taqi al-Shirazi, issued a *fatwa* declaring that "one who is a Muslim has no right to elect and choose a non-Muslim to rule over Muslims" and that service in the British administration was unlawful.

When the British refused to accept the petitions, demonstrations broke out in Karbala, the British sent in troops and armored cars to suppress them, and revolt erupted in the cities of southern Iraq. The Kurds rose in northern Iraq. However, in 1920 (as in 1991), Kurds and rebellious Arabs operated in isolation from each other. By late July 1920, Shi`a rebels controlled districts around Baghdad and the towns and cities of the Middle Euphrates, a pattern that would be repeated in 1991.

The 1920 revolt was over by November. The main fighting took place in the Shi'a south. Apart from occasional attacks on British targets, the Sunnis did not fight the British in 1920.[19] The tribes had run out of arms, ammunition, and supplies. The RAF used aerial bombings to level whole villages. Karbala, Najaf, and Kufa surrendered in mid-October. With most of the leaders under arrest or in exile, the tribes and towns of southern Iraq submitted to British authority. The tenuous ties that had bound the fractious Iraqi

Arabs of town and tribe were easily broken. Religious sects, social groups, and political groups resumed their traditional rivalry. Moderate political figures told the British that they opposed the Mandate system, which was only a disguised form of annexation, fearing similar schemes in Syria and Palestine.[20] Yet, they began collaborating with Mandate authorities.

The rebellion had failed, but the events of 1920 played an important role in the creation of an Iraqi national myth and in shaping future British policy in Iraq. For Iraqis, it became the symbol of nationalist pride and opposition to colonial domination. Gertrude Bell wrote in the autumn of 1920 that "No one, not even His Majesty's Government, would have thought of giving the Arabs such a free hand as we shall now give them—as a result of the rebellion."[21]

For the British, the nine months of continuous military operations represented a crippling financial and human burden at a time when postwar sentiment against outside adventures was growing, and widespread political and military economies were being implemented. The insurgency had lasted three months, affected one-third of the countryside, and cost Britain 400 lives and 40 million pounds sterling. Britain chose to draw down its military force in Iraq as quickly as possible. It decided to use air power and local levies for internal security operations, and create a pliable government that would accept and implement British "advice." In October 1920, Sir Percy Cox, now High Commissioner for Iraq, ended military rule, formulated a constitution in consultation with local elites, and established a provisional government with an Arab president and council of state. He selected as president an aging leader of Baghdad's Sunni community, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Ghaylani, the Naqib of Baghdad and head of the Qadiri Sufi order, whose sole qualifications were his religious position, family background, lack of political experience, and support for British rule. This left Cox to exercise real authority. Council members came from traditional upper classes, and were mostly Sunni religious leaders, landowners, and tribal shaykhs who could be expected to support the British. The Shi'a, for the most part, refused to participate in a British-controlled political system, although some Shi'a would later serve in parliament and as prime ministers.

Insurgency, 2003 Style

With the collapse of Iraq's Ba'thist government in 2003, the United States appeared to be in a unique position to shape Iraq's political direction, create democratic-style governance, and establish protections for civil society. U.S. military commanders talked about leaving Iraq quickly. Despite Iraq's history of serious political violence, it had no history of outright sectarian

warfare, and there was reason to hope that such warfare could be avoided. Initially, the need of Kurd and Arab, Sunni and Shi'a to establish bases of power and lines of authority in the nascent political process masked communal unease. Early attempts by Sunni extremists and renegade Ba'thists to provoke violence and civil war failed to provoke the Shi'a. At that moment, the United States' ability to influence nation building and to create a more equitable and secure country was at its greatest.

The moment was brief. As U.S. leverage over Iraq's political future waned, Iraqi factions that had long been excluded from power assumed dominant roles in the newly formed provisional governments, and proceeded to deconstruct Iraqi politics, society, and security. Kurds began seeking to right historic wrongs through maximalist demands for territory and wealth, while Arabs and Turkmen tried, in response, to defend their own rights to land and resources. Others identified themselves primarily according to religious sect—Sunnis trying to reestablish their historical political dominance, Shi'a determined to enjoy their new-found status as the majority group in a newly democratized country.

The Americans viewed the violence that began with the collapse of law and order in April 2003 as looting and random acts of violence. Few saw the rising danger of insurgency or detected any patterns in the violence. The lull was short-lived. In April 2003, a senior influential Shi'a cleric who had just returned from exile in London was murdered in Najaf. In the following years, the acts of violence would escalate in size and scope, with Sunni extremists killing Shi'a clerics and innocent civilians in the hopes of starting sectarian civil war. Then, in August 2004, a preeminent Shi'a cleric, Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) head Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, was murdered in Najaf and the Grand Mosque, where the Imam Ali is buried, was seriously damaged. Al-Qa'ida in Iraq claimed responsibility for the attack, as well as for suicide bombings in predominantly Shi'a neighborhoods. Still, the Shi'a remained quiescent until February 2006, when a group claiming affiliation with al-Qa'ida and led by Jordanian-born Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi bombed the Golden Mosque, the 'Askari Shi'a shrine, in Samarra.

By 2006, Iraq appeared locked into an escalating series of violent attacks by Sunni and Shi'a extremists. The attacks were well planned and carefully orchestrated, the attackers well informed and willing to act cooperatively, despite differences in intent or outlook. Sunni extremists included the small but lethal al-Qa'ida cell headed by Zarqawi who deliberately targeted Shi'a civilians, as well as foreigners and other *salafis*—ultraconservative Muslims influenced by Wahhabi-style teachings and possibly supported by

the Saudis. Other predominantly Sunni terrorists included Saddam loyalists (ex-Ba'th Party members, disgruntled army officers, and criminals who had been recruited into Saddam's Fida'iyyin). Prominent Sunni tribal shaykhs sat by, reluctant to enter the fray until the winner emerged. The largest Shi'a militias included the Badr Brigade, which was Iranian trained and armed and belonged to the SCIRI, and the Jaysh al-Mahdi, a less coherent "army" of Sadr loyalists and criminal elements. The Badr Brigade was absorbed into the Interior Ministry and legitimized as Iraq's police force; it fought the Jaysh al-Mahdi for control of Najaf, Karbala, and Basra—battles which, as of early 2008, still not had ended. By most definitions, Iraq appeared to be locked in an unending sectarian civil war, with an ethnic war (Arab-Kurdish) looming on the horizon.

Iraq is not in the midst of a single insurgency focused simply on ending U.S. occupation. Nor is it enmeshed in a sectarian civil war in which one clearly defined religious faction makes war on another over doctrinal differences. Instead, struggles over national identity, political power, and wealth lie at the heart of the issue. Iraq is experiencing a complicated set of civil wars and power struggles over conflicting visions of identity and reality. Much of the political conflict and social violence is waged in sectarian Sunni-Shi'a terms. Yet, underneath the sectarian war, Shi'a are fighting Shi'a, Sunnis are battling Sunnis, Sunni Turkmen are fighting Shi'a Turkmen, and criminals and opportunists are using the instability to enrich themselves and empower warlords.

In the midst of this multifaceted conflict, Iraqis are under constant siege from poverty, unemployment, a dysfunctional government, corrupt political leaders, and vicious militias combining fundamentalism with material self-aggrandizement. At the same time, the Maliki government is under pressure from the U.S. government and politicians to show progress on U.S.-established political benchmarks, including revision of the constitution and enactment of laws on control of the country's oil resources, de-Ba'thification, national reconciliation, and center-province relations. The problem is that the process of creating a new set of accepted, legitimate norms for the governance of Iraq based on a common vision is far from being completed. Instead, seven years after the collapse of Saddam Husayn's regime, the key contenders are still battling for power, now mostly through the ballots, but violence is still rampant.

Inventing an Exit Strategy

Getting into war mode is easy. Getting out of a war is less easy. Like the British in the 1920s, many Americans have grown weary with a war they

believe is ambiguous and lacks a defined mission and decisive conclusion. What is the end state, they ask, where is the exit strategy?

An Exit Strategy for Britain

Having secured the countryside and installed a compliant government in Iraq, British military and civilian authorities believed they had resolved the challenges to their place in Iraq. British politicians, however, faced war fatigue and economic woes in postwar Britain, while a population less interested in the security of empire raised questions about the duration of the presence in Iraq and its cost to the British taxpayer. Iraqis, too, had little patience with British dominance, even though politicians and military leaders preferred cooperation with London to military confrontations. To ensure key national security needs, Britain began difficult negotiations with Iraq that would ultimately lead to Iraq's virtual independence.

For Britain and Iraq, several issues needed resolution. A series of agreements negotiated in the 1920s outlined Iraq's rights and Britain's role.

- ***The 1921 agreement*** created Iraq as a state under British mandate, recognized Faysal I as king, established the Iraqi army, and stipulated that Iraq would be responsible for its internal and external defense in four years. So long as Iraq was in debt to Britain, it had to heed Britain's advice on all matters affecting British interests, especially on fiscal policy. Iraq had to pay half the costs of the British residency as well as other administrative costs, making Iraq economically dependent on Britain. Iraq was also required to appoint British officials as advisers and inspectors, underscoring the basis of continued, indirect British rule. If Iraq defaulted or refused to cooperate, Britain could apply military sanctions.
- ***The 1924 constitution*** was crafted by the British to empower the king, while giving the high commissioner sufficient executive power to govern effectively, uphold the treaty, and provide political representation for various elements of the population. Negotiations stalled on the powers to be accorded the king, whom Britain hoped to make its instrument, and parliament, which the nationalists hoped to control. Parliament was given power to bring down a cabinet, but the king confirmed all laws and could issue ordinances to fulfill treaty obligations without parliamentary approval. Ministers were responsible to both king and parliament, but the king could prorogue and dissolve parliament. The constitution, which remained the law of land until the 1958 coup, fostered Britain's indirect control by making the king both a

symbol of unity and the means by which Britain could influence decisions and shape policies. It failed to take root, however, because Iraqis were never given actual responsibility and regarded it as an instrument of foreign control.

- ***The Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930*** promised Iraq independence and League of Nations membership in 1932, but included security and foreign relations clauses demanded by the British. Iraq's military forces would receive aid, training, and equipment from Britain, while British forces would receive Iraqi access to all facilities, including railways, ports, and airports in time of war. The RAF would remain at two Iraqi air bases. Foreign advisers and experts had to be British. Finally, the high commissioner was replaced by an ambassador, who would take precedence over other ambassadors.

Iraqi reaction to the treaties was mixed. Nationalists opposed the 1930 treaty because of its 25-year duration and requirement to lease bases, consult on foreign policy issues, and employ British advisers. The government in Baghdad, now headed by Nuri al-Sa'id, held controlled elections, and parliament ratified the unpopular treaty. Thereafter, the British hand was seen behind everything that happened. Iraqi minorities opposed the treaty because it weakened their ties to Britain; they feared a loss of status—and they were right. Assyrians, who looked to Britain for support and who served in British military units in Iraq in the 1920s, were massacred by the army in 1933. The Kurds, whose demands for League of Nations and British safeguards were ignored, launched more uprisings. The British exercized their treaty rights in 1941 when a coup that was planned by pro-Nazi senior army officers and civilian politicians led by a Baghdad-based dignitary, Rashid 'Ali al-Ghaylani, threatened to end Britain's role in Iraq and ally Iraq with Germany. The coup was crushed, and the treaty remained in effect until the 1958 revolution.

Britain found in Iraq a society in isolation, political disarray, tribal unrest, social chaos, and economic uncertainty. Focused more on imperial issues and on crafting a peace treaty to protect its spoils of war, London's foreign policy establishment paid little time or attention to the hopes and ambitions raised in the Middle East, least of all the Mesopotamian *vilayets,* by the War to End All Wars. British foreign and defense policy-making establishments—the War Office, the Foreign Office, the India Office, and the Arab Bureau—were divided in outlook and mission. Britain ultimately shaped the government and borders of the new state to suit its interests, but Iraqis' experiences from that period would shape the nationalist and anticolonialist visions of its rulers, from King Faysal to Saddam Husayn.

Is there an Exit Strategy for the United States?

Washington, too, was focused more on imperial interests, it could be argued. Bush administration officials claimed Iraq's wealth would pay for the war, democratic institutions would be quickly established, and a process of region-wide political change would begin. America's foreign and defense policy makers were also divided by outlook and mission, with the Pentagon first assuming control of all aspects of war, diplomacy, intelligence, and reconstruction, and then denying responsibility for much of the chaos that accompanied occupation. For the United States, however, the mission soon became how to keep Iraq united, strong enough to defend itself but too weak to threaten its neighbors, and moving swiftly on the road to political accountability, economic privatization, and national reconciliation. And all of this at the same time that U.S. interests were served. As with previous occupations, Iraqis' experiences under the U.S. occupation would shape a nationalist vision, only this time the identity was Kurdish and Arab, Sunni and Shi'a, while smaller minorities—the Assyrian and Chaldean Christians, Yazidis, and Turkmen—were forgotten.

Iraq's political leaders welcomed the improved security environment fostered by the U.S. and Iraqi military surge in 2006 and 2007. However, they resented the Americans' insistence on a comparable political surge. Some opposed the passage of a law by the National Assembly ensuring an equitable distribution of oil revenues, while others opposed a law ending de-Ba'thification and declaring amnesty to insurgents, or a provincial elections law, or a law regulating center-province relations.[22] Iraqis in the government did not ask the United States to set a date for withdrawal—despite some public pressure in Iraq and suggestions from visiting U.S. politicians. Iraqis still see U.S. demands for a quick fix as intrusive and relevant only to U.S. domestic politics. The resentment has fueled tensions between Iraqis and Americans, and risks undermining U.S. influence in Iraq and the region. Washington's sense of urgency is not shared by Iraq's politicians or by its neighbors, especially Iran. Since Baghdad needs recognition and accommodation from Tehran as well as Washington, a satisfactory exit strategy will be difficult to craft. It will depend on a number of factors, including sustained improved security, economic recovery, a political buy-in by all elements of Iraq's diverse population, and cooperation rather than conflict between the United States and Iran.

Three documents outline U.S. and Iraqi efforts to regulate relations between the two sovereign states and define the boundaries of any U.S. military presence in Iraq. The first is a joint declaration of principles issued by President Bush and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki in November 2007.[23]

In the declaration, Iraq says it will no longer request extension of the UN Security Council resolutions legitimizing the U.S. military presence in Iraq, asks to be reinstated as a member in good standing of the UN and the international community, and promises to work cooperatively with its neighbors in promoting regional security. The United States, in turn, pledges to help Iraq defend its democratic system, move to a market economy, provide preferential treatment in trade, and encourage foreign investment, debt forgiveness, and recovery of stolen assets.

One year later, the United States and Iraq signed two agreements governing military and civilian relations. The first, a Status-of-Forces Agreement (SOFA), outlines the process of withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq. Reminiscent of British efforts to secure the security requirements it believed it would need after withdrawal, the United States promises to help "deter foreign aggression against Iraq that violates its sovereignty and integrity of its territories…, combat all terrorist groups…," and defeat them. The United States also pledges to "support the training, equipping, and arming of the Iraqi Security Forces to enable them to protect Iraq…, and complete the building of its administrative systems, in accordance with the request of the Iraqi government." The second agreement, the Strategic Framework Agreement, outlines areas of nonmilitary cooperation and U.S. assistance in areas such as trade, education, and agriculture.

Progress has been made on several fronts. The first stages of the SOFA—drawdown of U.S. forces from the cities and turnover to Iraq of most military facilities—were implemented July 2009. One year later, by the end of August 2010, the United States had withdrawn nearly 50,000 combat troops from Iraq, with the remaining 50,000 to be withdrawn by 2011. Joint U.S.-Iraqi committees have been meeting since the Strategic Framework was signed. Less successful have been U.S. efforts to assist Iraq in ending sanctions imposed under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter and to get debt that was incurred by Saddam—primarily to Europe, Russia, and the Gulf Arabs—canceled. The Paris Club agreed to lower debt, as did Saudi Arabia, but Riyadh has yet to implement its promise and Kuwait is actively lobbying against ending Chapter 7 sanctions on Iraq until Baghdad has fulfilled all its obligations, including payment of reparations.

Several issues could raise difficulties for Iraq and the United States. One is U.S. help to Iraq to reconstitute a modern military force that is armed with advanced aircraft and weapons systems to allow it to defend itself without seeming to threaten its neighbors. The agreements with the United States do not restrict Iraq's right to seek other alliances, security arrangements, or the weapons it seeks to purchase. Iraq has requested the sale of U.S.-made aircraft and is shopping on the international arms market for weapons systems.

What happens if all UN resolutions restricting arms sales and banning the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction are removed?

Second, what happens if Iraq does not fulfill its pledge to "serve the interest of coming generations based on the heroic sacrifices made by the Iraqi people and the American people for the sake of a free, democratic, pluralistic, federal, and unified Iraq"? What happens if Iraq's two most important allies—the United States and Iran—demand that Iraq accept conditions incompatible with the sovereign rights of an independent state? What if the United States insists on full operational control of its forces in Iraq, regardless of the reason or Iraqi disapproval? What happens if Iran demands reparations payments for the 1980–1988 war? What happens if Iran repeats or expands its military takeover of a southern Iraqi oilfield, as it did in mid-December 2009? What if Iraqis, already unhappy with Iranian interventions in their country, protest Iran's support for pro-Iranian politicians and militias and penetration of Iraq's internal security system? Other examples could include the United States not seeking Iraq's permission to conduct counterterrorism operations, arresting Iraqis suspected of terrorist acts without Baghdad's concurrence, or using military facilities to monitor suspected Iranian nuclear and missile activities.

These and other issues remain unresolved for the moment. Iraq needs the kind of security that is provided by a stable, legitimate government in control of its territory and governance if foreign investment and reconstruction are to begin in earnest. The United States needs assurances that the high cost of liberation and occupation produce adequate financial incentives and safeguard U.S. security interests in the region. In the end, U.S. security interests in 2010 are not very different from those of the British in 1932. It is the risks from a failed Iraq and a nuclear-arming Iran conducting a proxy war with the United States in Iraq that raise the level of future risks and opportunities for all.

Notes

1. See Sir Arnold T. Wilson, *Loyalties: Mesopotamia, 1914–1917,* (Oxford, 1930), pp. 237–238.
2. http://a.abcnews.com/images/pdf/Pentagon_Report_V1.pdf/.
3. For background on Saddam's use of chemical weapons, see Joost Hiltermann, *A Poisonous Affair: America, Iraq, and the Gassing of Halabja* (Cambridge: 2007).
4. For more on the imperial school, see Sir Arnold T. Wilson's memoirs, *Loyalties: Mesopotamia, 1914–1917,* and *Mesopotamia, 1917–1920: a clash of loyalties,* London: Oxford Press, 1931. Two excellent studies on British colonial psychology and motivation are Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq* (New York: 2003) and Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq, 1914–1932* (London: 2007).

5. After the war, Sir Percy Cox became the first Civil Commissioner for Iraq; he was replaced by Sir Arnold Wilson as Acting Civil Commissioner in 1919.
6. They were dubbed the Hashimite school because of their support for the claims of the Hashimite Sharif of Mecca and his sons. Proponents of the Hashimite plan included Prime Minster Lloyd George, Foreign Secretary Lord Arthur Balfour, T. E. Lawrence, and Gertrude Bell.
7. The Treaty of Sèvres provided for "Local autonomy for the pre-dominantly Kurdish areas" (Article 62). The definitive Treaty of Lausanne (1923) made no mention of the Kurds. See, for example, Michael M. Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (N.Y., St. Martin's Press, 1992), p. 2.
8. See, for example, David Poole, "From Elite to Class: the Transformation of the Iraqi Elite 1920–1939," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* 12 (1980), pp. 331–350.
9. The number of British officers serving in the "temporary" Iraqi government grew at Arab expense. In 1917, 59 British officers served in the civil administration; by 1920 their number had grown to 1,022, with Arabs holding less than 4 percent of the senior grades. In 1923 there were 569 British advisers; by 1931 the number had shrunk to 260. See Dodge and Sluglett for additional background.
10. Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, pp. 112–113.
11. Some scholars point to the 1954 parliamentary election as free and transparent, but within months its results were declared null and void by the monarchy's strong man, Nuri al-Sa'id. See Adeed Dawisha, "Democratic Attitudes and Practices in Iraq, 1921–1958," *The Middle East Journal,* Vol. 59, no. 1 (Winter 2005).
12. See L. Paul Bremer III *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, with Malcolm McConnell (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006).
13. A *firqah* is a division within the Ba'th Party. The Party was composed of cells, *halaqah*, which had between three and seven members. From this, a minimum of two and a maximum of seven cells formed a *firqah.* Above it there was the *shu'bah*, then the *far',* then the *Maktab,* and at the top the Regional (all-Iraqi) Leadership.
14. Amatzia Baram, interview with a senior Pentagon official, June 2004. Other sources claim that the number of forced retirements reached approximately 50,000.
15. For the full text of Iraq's constitution approved October 25, 2005, see http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/9719734/.
16. See Jonathan Morrow, "Weak Viability: The Iraqi Federal State and the Constitutional Amendment Process," *United States Institute of Peace, Special Report No. 186* (July 2006).
17. Abd al-Razzaq al-Hasani, *Tarikh al-thawrah al-'Iraqiyyah* (Sidon: 'Irfan Press, 1935) pp. 52–53; letter of July 11, 1920, in Burgoyne, II: Elizabeth Burgoyne, *Gertrude Bell from her personal papers, 1914–1926.* 2 vols. (London: 1961) pp. 146–147; editorial in *The Times* (London), August 16, 1920, p. 9.

18. Hasani, *Tarikh al-thawrah al-'Iraqiyyah,* p. 59; Fariq al-Muzhir al-Fir'aun, *Al-Haqa'iq al-Nasi'at fi al-Thawrah sinat 1920 wa nata'ijha*. Baghdad: al-Najah Press, 1952, p. 109–110.
19. See Amal Rassam Vinogradov, "The 1920 Revolt in Iraq Reconsidered: the Role of Tribes in National Politics," *IJMES* Vol. 3, No. 2 (April 1972), pp. 123–139, and Judith S. Yaphe, *The Arab Revolt in Iraq of 1920,* unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Illinois, 1972.
20. Hasani, *Tarikh al-Iraq al-Siyasi al-Hadith*, II, 3 vols. (Sidon: Irfan Press, 1948) pp. 126–127; Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, pp. 267–268.
21. Burgoyne, II, ibid.
22. The Iraqi National Assembly passed a partial de-Ba'thification Law in January 2008. It allows most former Ba'thists to reapply for government positions and to receive their pensions. Still excluded, however, are those Iraqis who were senior officials and complicit in the humanitarian crimes of Saddam Husayn's regime. On February 13, 2008, the Iraqi parliament simultaneously passed laws that defined the relationship between the central and provincial governments, an amnesty law, and the 2008 national budget. These issues, along with a debate on widening the powers of the president, continue as of June 2008. For background, see Jason Gluck, "From Gridlock to Compromise: How Three Laws Could Begin to Transform Iraq Politics," USIP, March 2008.
23. See: Declaration of Principles for a Long-Term Relationship of Cooperation and Friendship Between the Republic of Iraq and the US of A, released by the Office of the Press Secretary, November 26, 2007.

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