B

THE POLITICAL SITUATION OF IRAQI SHIITES: WHAT PROSPECTS ARE THERE FOR THE FUTURE?

by

Mohannad Hage Ali

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Master of Science

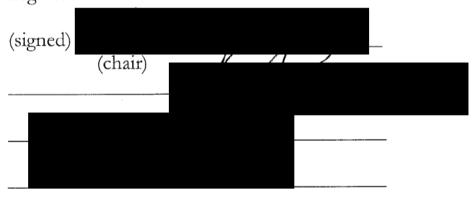Thesis Advisor: Dr. Walid Mubarak

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
January 2005

LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE STUDIES

We hereby approve the thesis of

Mohannad Hage Ali

Candidate for the Master of Arts
degree:

(signed) ███████████████████

(chair)

██████████████

███████████████████

Date _July 14, 2005_

*We also certify that written approval has been
obtained for any proprietary material contained
therein.

2

THE POLITICAL SITUATION OF IRAQI SHIITES: WHAT PROSPECTS ARE THERE FOR THE FUTURE?

CONTENTS

I.   INTRODUCTION

THE SHIITES OF IRAQ

For centuries, the Shiite sect was the silenced majority in Iraq, who despite their political tendencies, they did not rule or participate effectively in the governing of Iraq. Over this period, several elements whether they were regional, historical, imperial or psychological, contributed towards forging the political misfortune of Iraqi Shiites and feeding prejudices against them. The various books that tackle these issues did not consider the growth of the sectarian and cultural identity of Iraqi Shiites at the expense of Iraqi nationalism and Arab nationalism, especially since the rise of the Baath regime. This paper will focus on the rise of clerical Shiism as an alternative to communism, Arab nationalism, socialism and the other ideological trends of the day, whilst more specifically trying to elucidate how severe government violence against Shiite activists has helped strengthen their popularity within their community in Iraq.

The books that tackle these issues have neither focused on the rising significance of the Shiite sectarian identity, nor have they covered the aftermath of the recent war. Mr. Isaac Naccash's *The Shiite's of Iraq*[1] covers the cultural and historical aspects of Iraqi Shiites especially under the Ottoman and Monarchist eras and whose book is an important reference to the culture and politics of Iraqi Shiites. This book can be seen in conjunction with Abdallah Nafisi's *The Role of Shiites Towards Iraq's Modern Political Evolution*[2] which deals with the political influence of Iraqi Shiites in the 1920s. Joyce N.Wiley's *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as*[3] accounts for the rise of Shiite fundamentalism in Iraq through a focus on the relation between Shiite fundamentalist movements and the Iraqi successive regimes. In addition to this, Wiley explores the social background of the clerics who founded the

---

[1] Nakash Yitzhak (2003), The Shi'is of Iraq, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
[2] Al- Nafisi Abdullah (1973), "The Role of Shiites Towards Iraq's Modern Political Evolution", Beirut: Al-Tayyar Publishing House.
[3] Wiley, Joyce N. (1992). The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc

Islamic movements in modern Iraq. The significance of Wiley's book lies in its attempt at shedding light on the various circumstances and elements that accounted for the rise of fundamentalist Shiism and cleric-hood as an alternative to the leftist leanings inside the Shiite community, contentions which I found helpful in my research.

My thesis will be also based on semi structured interviews I conducted in Damascus and London where a large number of Iraqi officials and former opposition members are based. Some of those interviews were conducted before the current war in Iraq, while the rest were carried out throughout a period stretching from May 2003 to October 2004. Documents supplied by different political groups were also used in order to draw a general picture of the ethnic and sectarian distribution of power during Saddam's long rule.

The sectarian divisions within the Iraqi society were not obvious at the popular level. In order to tackle this issue more effectively, I relied on articles published after the 9th of April such as Yitzhak Naccash's "The Shi'ites and the Future of Iraq", which was published in the July/August 2003 edition of Foreign Affairs, where Naccash tackled notions of the rising Shiite sectarian identity[4]. The first signs of this sectarian/political inclination appeared soon after the occupation of Baghdad on the 9th of April 2003. After hours of the symbolic removal of Saddam's statue in Alferdaws Square in Baghdad, Shiite demonstrators filled the streets of Basra and the Shiite suburbs of Baghdad, waving black flags and other religious symbols that emphasized their sectarian identity. The name of Saddam's city was changed to "al-Sadr's city" where Shiite militiamen appeared wearing their traditional black uniforms. Will this be the political mood of the Shiites in the coming phase? What will be the shape of the new political system? (will it be federal for example), and what will be the

---

[4] Naccash Yitzhak, "The Shi'tes and the Future of Iraq", Foreign Affairs, July/August 2003.

role of the Shiites in the future of Iraq, A country which now seems to be divided along ethnic and sectarian lines. I will try in my research to answer these questions by focusing on the political and social aspects that helped to forge the political inclinations of Iraqi Shiites. Furthermore, I will also try to anticipate different scenarios for the political future of the Iraqi Shiites after the toppling of Saddam Hussein from power.

II. Historical background: The Role of the Shiites and Their Political Inclinations Before 1979.

Modern Iraq is located at the northwest end of the Persian Gulf, with western and southwestern Iraq being part of the Arabian Desert and northeastern Iraq being composed of high mountains and steppe. Between the desert and steppe lays the central plain known as Babylonia or Mesopotamia, forming the land between two rivers; the Tigris and the Euphrates. It was here that some of the Semitic people from the south, as well as the Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Chaldeans and the Arabs themselves established great empires before vanishing into the ethnic multiplicity of Mesopotamia.

Conquerors also came here from the east and the land of the Tigris and the Euphrates had been under Persian control for over 800 years when the Arab Muslim armies triumphed there in A.D. 637. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of the population has adopted the Islamic religion and Arabic language of the conquerors, and maintained both thereafter despite subsequent periods of Persian and Kurdish domination. At this time, the ruling Sassanian Persians dealt with each community through its religious leader; for example in central Iraq the Sassanians held one Jewish official responsible for the entire Jewish community and these religious leaders themselves were given privileges. In 1258 AD the Moguls invaded Baghdad, leading to a period of complete anarchy in the region as local tribes tried to conquer and take over each other. Then the Ottomans came with their overwhelming military power in the sixteenth century to rule the region in the name of Islam.

The Ottoman rulers viewed government as being for the benefit of rulers not the ruled[5] and it was under the Ottomans that the Shiite population only had religious freedom during times of pilgrimage, as situation which weakened their chances in military and political participation[6]. Despite this however, the Shiite clergymen were able to make their way financially through the "*Khomos*", an Islamic tax paid by loyal followers, especially feudal lords.

During World War I, Shiite *Ulamas* declared *jihad* against the "infidel" allied forces and many of them joined the fight, including Mohsen Alhakim, who later rose to the rank of *Marjeh*[7]. When the British were able to occupy all three Ottoman states, *Mosul, Baghdad* and *Basra,* they depended on tribal economic leadership to rule the region because of budget cuts and the demobilization of their strong army. After the end of the War, the British government decided to unite the three ottoman provinces and this new territorial assemblage enriched the new state's ethnic and religious diversity, forming the modern Iraq. In this new country, the north was predominantly Sunni and Kurd and the south was Shiite, while the center including Baghdad was an ethnic and sectarian mixture. When Baghdad fell to the British forces in 1917, the Shiite clerics formed the first political group, which decided to take up arms as a legitimate means to gain independence. Mohammad Jawad al-Jazaery, Mohammad Bahr Aloloum and Abbas Ali Ramahi formed the "Al-Nahda" Group which struggled to end the British occupation and replace it with Islamic rule that would support other Islamic and Arab countries[8]. This Shiite Islamic group was behind the so-called "Najaf revolution", which was a prerequisite to the famous June 1920 revolution. The *Al-Nahda* group was to become a competitor to "*Al-Ahed*", the predominantly Sunni political group and it was *Al-Nahda* activists who were able to inflict high casualties and losses on the British side.

---

[5]Wiley, Joyce N. (1992). The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc page13
[6] Ibid page 14
[7] High-ranking Shiite prelate with the authority to issue religious fatwas
[8] Al-Chemrani, Ali. (2003). Siraa' Al-Addad. London: DAR ALHIKMA. Page 120

One of their major attacks was on the headquarters of the British governor that lead to the killing of the British officer W.M. Marshal and several of his soldiers[9]. The British, as expected, retaliated harshly by hanging thirteen Najafis from this group, incarcerating several others and sending more than a hundred to India, then known as "British India"[10]. Shiites, Sunnis and other national forces joined forces against the occupation and formed the "Independence Guards" which included Seyyed Mohamad Al-Sadr who later became a prime minister under the Monarchy. Shiite youngsters also formed "The *Jaafariyeh* Youth Group" in 1919, which later dissolved into the Independence Guards. It is important to note that not everyone in Iraq detested the British occupation; some praised the modern approach of the occupiers especially those among the middle clasess in the major Iraqi cities.

THE 1920 REVOLUTION

The British occupiers reacted harshly to any revolt or action that targeted their mandatory status given by the League of Nations and in June 1920 the British authorities imprisoned Sheaalan Aboljoun, a tribal leader in the Rumaitha city, for refusing to pay the new agrarian tax imposed by the British government. From this Shiite City, which lies in the Middle Euphrates region, a local revolt started, which then spread throughout Southern Iraq. The revolution continued for months and the British did whatever they could possibly to halt its progress. By mid-August the same year, the British losses were intolerable; amounting to 450 dead and 1500 injured[11]. From this, the British decided eventually to form an Iraqi council, which would satisfy some of the revolting Iraqis' demands but which would still guarantee ultimate British control over the country.

---

[9] Nafisi Page 57
[10] Al-Chemrani, Ali. (2003). Siraa' Al-Addad. London: DAR ALHIKMA. p.121
[11] Simons. From Sumer to Saddam. p.212

Before asking Faisal I, their longtime ally, to claim the thrown of Iraq, the British Government appointed an interim government and it was only later, on August 23rd 1921 that Faisal became the king of Iraq, inaugurating the *Hashimite* era which lasted till 1958. The Shiite tribes where satisfied by the appointment of King Faisal who embarked on a conciliatory policy with the Shiites, although he did not hesitate to use force against the Shiite tribes and clergymen whenever they were considered a threat to his rule[12]. This was a direct consequence of the Shiite prelates who played an important role in agitating their followers and the tribal leaders who usually followed the obligatory religious orders and "fatwas" of the 'Marjehs".

The British signed a treaty in 1930 with the Iraqi government, which provided them with wide powers in the country, namely that they were to receive two air bases and the right to use Iraqi facilities in times of war. The treaty also preserved important stakes for Britain in Iraq, namely commercial interests in the Mosul and Kirkuk oil fields, whilst maintaining a reduced form of the native Iraq Levies. Due to the important strategic land and air links with India, Britain also had the right to move troops through Iraq.

In 1932, Iraq was officially granted its independence and finally joined the League of Nations under the auspices of King Ghazi, the son of Faisal I, who was the most popular of all Hashimite kings in Iraq[13]. It was after the death of Ghazi and specifically in the 1950s, Saleh Jaber, a secular businessman, was appointed as the first Shiite prime minister. Jaber tried unsuccessfully to amend the 1930 treaty with the British, however this ended in revolt and resulted in a revolt, which was later named "*al-Wathba*". The main provocation for this revolt was by the re-assignment of the Sunni General Nouri Assaeed, an ex-Ottoman officer and a monarchist, to the role of prime minister.

---

[12] Batatu, Hanna. (1978). The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq, Book III page 26.
[13] Al-Chemrani, Ali. (2003). Siraa' Al-Addad. London: DAR ALHIKMA. Page 48

THE IRAQI COMMUNIST PARTY

The British-backed monarchy in Iraq, although backed by Shiite feudal lords and clergymen, was very unpopular among the young Iraqis from the middle and working classes and it was this young and disfranchised generation that would later be politicized by the rising communist wave in the world. In 1932, the Communist party was formed by several Communist activists lead by a Christian worker called Youssef Soleiman Youssef who was also nicknamed "*Fahed*". At this time in the 1950s, the Communist party was able to attract many workers and middle class technocrats and although the party was illegal, it was able to gain tremendous popularity among the unprivileged Shiites in the southern cities of Iraq and the slums of Baghdad. These moves and developments infuriated Shiite clergymen, especially as the party was very active among the traditional religious families and tribes.

Thus, there was a growing sense among the clergy that their historical position was threatened. Consequently, Seyyed Mohammad Baqer al-Sadr (1931-1980), Mohammad Baqer al-Hakim, Saleh al-Adeeb and others established in 1957, in a secret meeting held in the residence of the former, the Islamic Da'wa Party. The ideological thought of Al-Sadr and his new party was reflected in his two influential books: *Our Economy* and *Our Philosophy* and these books are critiques of capitalism and socialism's philosophy and economy, offering an Islamic (Shiite) alternative to the inadequacy of both systems. Al-Sadr like many other Islamists believed that Islam, throughout the preceding centuries, had deviated from its course and caused a separation of religion from the customs of the people, thus to a belief and obligation to "'apprise the people of the true nature of religion and its role in life'".[14]

---

[14] Wiley, Joyce N. (1992). The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc. page 31

In July 14th 1958, Abdel-karim Qassem, a high ranking army officer, was the head of a successful coup organized by the "free officers", a clandestine group of army officers, against the monarchy. Consequently, Abdel-karim Qassem, a Sunni whose mother was a Shiite, became a traditional rival to the charismatic Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel-Naser. As president, Qassem allowed the communist party into the country and throughout his period allowed them to prosper. This act was considered as a pre-emptive action against the Baath party, which had followers in key positions and posed a threat to Qassem's regime, especially as the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) had already attracted many supporters especially in unprivileged areas in Iraq like the Shiite southern and Kurdish Northern parts.

After the coup of July 14th 1958, the Al-Da'wa party won the support of Ayatollah Mohsen Al-Hakim who had felt threatened by Communist participation in the government and the subsequent rise of its popularity among Shiites. General Qassem, the new leader of Iraq, forged an alliance with the ICP and enacted a land reform law which had serious consequences for landlords who formed the backbone of financial support to the clerical establishment lead now by Ayatollah al-Hakim[15]. The support the ICP gained among Shiites in Iraq posed a direct threat to the authority of Ayatollah Al-Hakim, and as a result of this Al-Hakim issued a religious order (fatwa) prohibiting Shiite followers from joining the communist party, making it an act that would be considered a gateway to infidelity. The rising communist forces in Iraq clashed with other forces, including the Islamic groups and a bloody clash in Najaf with Islamists left several dead. Abu Bilal Al-Adib, the spokesman of Al-Dawa in Tehran described the clashes with communists by saying, "'the communists committed several atrocities in Najaf and other Shiite cities'", which he thought lent a

---

[15] Wiley, Joyce N. (1992). The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc. page 33.

bad image to the Qassem era.[16]   Although, the rising communist forces at times clashed with Qassem's regime, it was the golden age of the communist party, because of its participation in several governments in Iraq during the late fifties and early sixties.

In 1959, an assassination attempt on General Qassem's life was made by several young men affiliated to the Arab Baath socialist party: among the participants was Saddam Hussein al-Tikriti.   Then on February 18th 1963, Abdel Salam Aref, an army colonel and a long time friend of Qassem, lead a coup organized with the Arab Baath Socialist Party in which Qassem was brutally murdered by the new regime.   The Baath party through its militia (known as the national guards) executed and repressed members of the strong and popular Communist party and Aref soon got rid of his Baathist partners in November of the same year. He also repressed the Iraqi Communist Party and hunted down its members, even though the Baath Party had already diluted much of its leadership and *cadres*.

Abdel-Salam Aref died in 1966 in a suspicious air accident and was succeeded by his brother Abdel-Rahman who ruled until 1968 when the Baath party, after a successful coup, inaugurated a new era of oppression and intolerance.   Led by Ahmad Hassan El-Bakr, a Sunni from Tikrit, the new Baath party institutionalized its repression of any possible opposition through the creation of several powerful intelligence and security bureaus, the most powerful and brutal of which was the notorious *Mukhabarat*.

Saddam Hussein al-Tikriti was born on April 28th 1937 in Al-Awja near Tikrit, to the north west of Baghdad. After his participation in the coup attempt, in which he was injured, Saddam held in the late 60s and 70s several senior posts in the Arab Socialist Baath Party (ASBP) and the Revolution

---

[16] Abu Bilal Al-Adib Al-Dawa spokesman, phone interviewm Tehran July 2003.

Command Council (RCC) - the state's supreme authority under the Baath regime - and was often

referred to in the Western media as the '"Iraqi strong man"'.[17]

[17] Batatu, Hanna. (1978). The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq, Book III page 399.

III. Shiite Opposition Groups in Iraq

Mohammad Baqer Al-Sadr

Al-Sadr was a unique and skilled clergyman in the theological sense, who reached the *Ijthad*[18] level at an early stage of his life[19] and it was this early advancement in the *Hawza*[20] that gave him the chance to study Western philosophy which gave him a profound knowledge of political and economic thought. Al- Sadr's two famous books: *Our Philosophy* and *Our Economy* reflected the deep worries of the Shiite establishment in Iraq during the 1950s, the era of the Communist boom, especially among Shiites in Iraq. Additionally, al-Sadr's sister, Bint Alhuda, mobilized Shiite women to the Islamic cause and it was she who asserted her Shiite fundamental message through short stories which evolved around a Western style troubled love affair where Shiite Islam appears to be the final and most convenient solution. Furthermore, Al-Sadr's popularity enabled him to form an autonomy-like situation among the Shiite faithful, who solved their disputes in front of local *Marjehs*, rather than going to the courts. This autonomy had existed before al-Sadr but was politicized and strengthened by him as a challenge to the local secular authorities.

Al-Sadr's concern about the rise of communism led him to start a rival party based on the theological view of government and society. The Al-Da'wa Party became one of the earliest and most visible manifestations of Shiite fundamentalist political thought in Iraq and elsewhere[21]. Even though the Islamic Da'wa Party had existed before the 1958 coup, its political activities were not tangible until

---

[18] A rank in the Shiite clergy, enabling its holder to issue a fatwa (a religious edict).
[19] He became a Mujtahed, a high religious level which enables him to issue fatwas, at the age of 12.
[20] A Shiite religious university.
[21] Hazelton, Fran (Ed). (1994). IRAQ SINCE THE GULF WAR: Prospects for Democracy. Page 158

the end of the 60s[22]. The party's goal was to overthrow the Baath Party from government and establish an "Islamic Revolutionary State", similar to that in Iran after the revolution which would take place there in 1979. Al-Sadr, the party's main founder[23], shared Imam Khomeini's political ideology which was based on the *Welayat Fakih* (supreme leader) principle. However, Al-Sadr and Muhsin al-Hakim began to distance themselves from al-Da'wa in the 1960s, and Al-Sadr and Muhsin al-Hakim's sons, Mahdi and Muhammad Baqer, left the al-Da'wa party in 1961/2. Until this day, it remains unclear to what extent al-Sadr's withdrawal from the party was to protect it from repression or out of political differences. One thing is sure though and that is that al-Sadr's concern over the future of the Shiite university in Najaf was obvious in a *fatwa* he issued in the early 1960s, which clearly prohibited students who attended religious seminars from becoming members of political parties. Despite such actions, none of these precautionary actions sufficed to prevent the inevitable clash between the regime and Islamists. Ayatollah Hakim refused in 1969 to condemn the Shah in a row about the status of the Shat al-Arab region, which lies on the border between Iraq and Iran and it was this refusal which led to an imminent reprisal by the regime; Mehdi al-Hakim, the son of the Shiite *marjeh* was arrested and allegedly tortured before his release at a later date.

Al-Da'wa's affiliation with Imam Khomeini's ideology led the Iraqi regime to issue a decree to execute any person who was or had been a member of Da'wa or associated in any way with it[24]. As a result, Sayyed Mohammad Baqer Al-Sadr, Da'wa's spiritual father, was assassinated along with his sister by regime thugs in 1980[25]. Thousands were also executed by regime's agents in a cruel campaign that did not spare a single person who was known to be compassionate towards Da'wa or

---

[22] Al-Chemrani, Ali. (2003). Siraa' Al-Addad page154.
[23] The party was originally formed by five, and they are Sayyed Mohammad Baqir Al-Sader, Sayyed Mohammad Baqir Al-Hakim, Mehdi Al-Hakim and two others.
[24] Al-Maliki Jawad, the representative of al-Da'wa in Damascus, personal interview, Damascus 12/01/2003.
[25] Al-Chemrani, Ali. (2003). Siraa' Al-Addad page155

was even religious and looked like one of its members[26]. This collective punishment led to a further alienation of the Shiite masses.

However, Al-Sadr's legacy surpassed these events and his death gave the Islamic movement a broad legitimacy among Shiites who were still largely secular and leftist. Even though al-Sadr was unrelated to al-Da'wa at the time of his death, he is still considered its spiritual father, founder and above all, its martyr. Furthermore, the decline of the Iraqi Communist Party's popularity in the aftermath of its alliance with the Baath under President Bakr, the execution of thousands of Da'wa members and the Iranian support during the Iran-Iraq war gave a popular boost to the Shiite Islamic movements in the 1980s.

After al-Sadr's death, his close circle technically took charge of the Shiite Islamic opposition, though no clear united organization existed at that time and Seyyed Mohammad Baqer and Mehdi al-Hakim were prominent members in this circle. Seyyed Mahmoud al-Hashimi, one of al-Sadr's students who lived in Iran and later became the head of its judicial body, took charge of a new umbrella organization, the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). As a consequence of these links to Iran, many inside the Da'wa regarded the SCIRI with suspicion since its foundation in 1982.

---

[26] Ibid page 155.

THE DA'WA AFTER AL-SADR'S DEATH

The al-Da'wa's confrontation with the ruling regime led to the destruction of its leadership base and the escape of many of its cadres to exile. Al-Da'wa, after massive persecutions started during the second period of Baath rule, maintained its policy of secrecy, which is based on the Shiite religious principle of *Taqiya*. In this way, the party is composed of secret cells numbering a few people who usually know little about the party's leadership, a facet which had also remained a secret until very recently.

Additionally, the party first adopted a strategy of stages similar to its Sunni model, the Muslim Brotherhood (*Ikhwan*). The first and second stages are preparatory, and comprise improving each member's knowledge of fundamental Shiite Islam and the spread of its ideology among traditional fellow Iraqis. The final stage, which seemed very farfetched, is embodied in the struggle for the establishment of an Islamic state. Al-Sadr was an advocate of *welayet alfakeeh* (the supreme leadership), unlike the Grand Ayatollah AboulKassem al-Khouei[27] who was supportive of limited authorities for the leader, believing in limiting the authorities of the supreme leader, to taking care of people with special needs as well as orphans. The new Shiite *marjeh* in Najaf, Ayatollah Ali Sistani, maintains the same position regarding *Welayet al-Fakih*. This stage-based strategy of al-Da'wa has led to the formation of new groups advocating violent means to achieve the Islamic goals; one of the earliest of which was *Jond al-Imam* ("the soldiers of the hidden Shiite Imam") which was established in 1969.[28] The party believes that a Shiite state should be established in order to bring about the reemergence of the *Mahdi*, the hidden imam.

---

[27] Al-Khouei, an Azeri, became the top Shiite prelate in Iraq after the death of Ayatollah Mohsen Al-Hakim.
[28] Shiites believe that their twelvth and last imam has disappeared more than a thousand year ago and they still await his reappearance.

The formerly exiled leaders of Da'wa, including Muhammad Baqer al-Nasri, are now returning to Iraq, especially to the southern Shiite city of Nasiriya, where it is largely influential and popular among the population. The al-Da'wa has also laid down its headquarters in Baghdad[29]. Also among the party's prominent leaders is Ibrahim Ja'fari al-Ushayqir[30], its official spokesman of the London branch, now based in Baghdad, and who is now the deputy of the Iraqi president Ghazi al-Yawer. Other prominent members include Abu Bilal 'Adil al-Adib (member of the Political Bureau of Da'wa's Tehran branch, also a teacher from Karbala), 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Kadhami, Dr Haydar al-Abadi (former interim minister of communications), Dr Haydar Abbas (London representative), and Muhammad Bakr al-Nasri. The Iraqi branch of the party is most probably led by 'Abd al-Karim al-'Anzi.

THE SUPREME COUNCIL FOR ISLAMIC REVOLUTION IN IRAQ (SCIRI)

Along with the main Kurdish groups, the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) formed the main armed opposition to President Hussein and was first formed as an umbrella to several Shiite groups, which included al-Da'wa and smaller Islamic groups like the Islamic Action Movement. Since it was formed in Tehran, it was made up mainly of exiled Iraqi Shiites, with its spiritual and political leader, Mohammed Baqer al-Hakim, being based in Tehran since 1980, while his party has representatives in several western and Arab capitals[31]. The participation of al-Da'wa along with the smaller parties in SCIRI soon came to an end over differences among the leadership ranks.

---

[29] The Sindbad youth centre.
[30] Al-Jaafari, a Shiite Doctor, left Baghdad in 1980 to Tehran where he resided till the late 1980s when he moved to London. He became the leader of the Islamic Da'wa party in the 1990s.
[31] A leaflet published by the SCIRI in Syria on the Life of its leader, Mohammad Baqer al-Hakim (2001).

ditionally, Tehran's strong influence over the group aroused national sentiments[32] and the Iranian

uence was strongest in SCIRI's armed force, the *Badr* corps. The *Badr* militiamen were trained by

Iranian Revolutionary Guards, the ideological branch of the Iranian armed forces, and even wore

r uniforms. According to al-Da'wa, the major difference was upon adopting the Iranian concept

elayet alfakeeh and obeying the Iranian supreme leader's orders[33]. Unlike SCIRI, al-Da'wa has

r collectively endorsed the notion of *wilayat al-faqih* for the future government of Iraq, indicating

independence from Tehran and one of the Da'wa's prominent leaders, Murtada al-'Askari, went

further by criticizing such a notion. Furthermore, the more pro-Iranian jurisprudent of al-

a, Kazim al-Ha'iri (from Najaf but exiled in Qom) also left the party in 1987 or 1988. Al-Ha'iri,

later became the spiritual leader of the Sadrite movement, claimed that the *faqih* should have a

decision-making role within the party, and that the Iranian state should have authority over the

as a whole. The party leadership began to oppose this, when Ha'iri along with his supporters

to call themselves *al-Da'wa/ almajles alfiqhi* (the Jurisprudent Council). This group remained a

f SCIRI. Furthermore, one of the strong advocates of the Iranian notion was Muhammad

al-Asifi, al-Da'wa's Secretary General in Iran, who continued to argue a pro-Iranian line until

forced to resign in 2000.

BADR CORPS

n governments have estimated that the group's armed force, the *Badr* corps, constitutes of

o fifteen thousand men. The Corps has played an important role during the Iran-Iraq War,

oth sides employed armed opposition members in the battlefield for both intelligence

ki Jawad, representative of al-Da'wa Party in Syria, personal interview, Damascus 30 January 2003.

gathering and guerilla attacks and here the *Badr* corps was an effective tool in the war against Iraq. The *Badr corps'* militiamen were either Shiite defectors from the Iraqi Army, prisoners of war persuaded of joining the force or Iraqi refugees living in Iran. *Badr* also participated in the uprising against Saddam's regime in 1991 after crossing the border from the Iranian side. During the uprising, which occurred immediately after the first gulf war, *Badr* was accused of committing serious atrocities on the Iraqi side such as sabotaging Southern Iraqi Petroleum facilities "to destroy the reputation of the Shiite uprising"[34]. Al-Da'wa has maintained after the Shiite uprising in 1991 that it remains the most popular Shiite party in Iraq.

---

[34] Al-Maliki Jawad, representative of al-Da'wa Party in Syria, personal interview, Damascus 30 January 2003.

IV. Saddam Hussein's repressive regime

With the rise of Shiite fundamentalism after the Islamic revolution in Iran (1979), the ruling Sunni elite, who were secular Baathists, felt threatened by the rise of a dissident trend among the Shiite majority. This fear, along with the war against Iran, drove Saddam Hussein to depend heavily on Sunni loyalists to exert control of the Shiite masses[35]. Saddam's reliance on repression through security and intelligence agencies was the outcome of his long-term experience in the Baath special security agency, which was nicknamed *Jihaz Hanneen.* The Iraqi leader, who was considered the architect of the security backbone of the Baath party, was also responsible for security during the President Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr era (1968-79).

Saddam Hussein's regime's most influential security and repression bodies were the secret police (*mukhabarat*), the army (especially the Republican Guards, and *fida'iyyu*[36] - led by Uday Saddam Hussein), and, finally, the party's militia.[37] The secret police agents were active in major Iraqi cities including the capital, Baghdad and overall this apparatus exerted a Stalinist model of oppression, which included the transfer of residence and utilizing tough techniques in interrogations.[38] The Shiites, who were a minority in the leadership of the new Baath regime, were also the prime victims of the new oppressors and the Sunni monopoly of power in the party and government drew resentment among Shiite cadres in the Baath party[39].

---

[35] United States, Congress report, Iraq: U.S. Regime Change Efforts and Post-Saddam Governance (Washington: August 25, 2004).
[36] Loyalist fighters.
[37] Republic of Fear, Samir al-Khalil, page 3.
[38] Republic of Fear, Samir al-Khalil, pages 4-10.
[39] Ibid page 11.

im Kzar, a 1969 appointee of Saddam Hussein, became one of the few Shiites to occupy a

ion of real power and figured prominently during the repression campaign led by the first

e of Baath rule in 1963. Kzar also played an important role in the second Baath coup during

h he was the head of the powerful secret police. However he was executed in July 1973 with

five accomplices, after he took hostage the ministers of interior and defense in a failed

attempt.[40]

the Kzar affair, the Baathist regime's "eyes were open", as Saddam outlined in a speech,

few months later the failed coup ended with a bloody purge. The new regime, in which

m was the "strong man" used general and flexible terms like "the people", "the revolution"

raitorous agents" to justify its wide and ruthless campaign of oppression. Soviet support

so sought to strengthen the regime's grip of the country and under Andropov, the KGB

an agreement with Saddam, which provided Soviet help in reorganizing all aspects of

l security, in the supply of sophisticated surveillance and interrogation equipment and in

ning for Iraqi personnel[41]. After the Soviet help was introduced and which included the

nge of information" between both countries, Iraqi intelligence agents were hunting down

ts abroad, acting upon the words of Saddam which stated that "the revolutionary hands

h out to its enemies wherever they are found".

qi regime's policy of repression of non-*Baath* political parties was inspired by Michel 'Aflaq's

tional *Baath* theory. According to 'Aflaq, "'a successful national activity is one that is lethally

tive to those who constitute an opposing body to the nationalistic thought... the opposing

stic thought is not intrinsically existing; rather, survives through supporting persons whose

ge 6.
il, Samir, Republic of Fear, page 12.

end result in its demise'".[42] In addition to the ideological incentives provided, both the idea and the practice of repression during the second Baathist rule, resembled many of the Sunni tribal traits, which are deeply affected by the concepts of revenge and virtues of toughness. Those traits were best embodied in Saddam and his close associates, who came mainly from rural Tikrit and its neighboring villages. This combination of Baath ideology and tribal loyalty, constituted the driving force for eliminating adverse political parties present in Iraq throughout Baathist rule. Every security apparatus in Iraq under Saddam had its own prisons, military courts and also a leader, who was usually a relative of Hussein, or a Sunni whose tribe was loyal to the Iraqi leader. Each city had its *"Muderiyya"* where much of the investigations were done.

Former political prisoners (under the Baath regimes), who were interviewed by the writer of this thesis recalled that in each prison there was a quota for political-based executions[43]. Saadi Al-Hamra who was incarcerated under Saddam states that when he was in prison from 1986 to 1990, "the executions' quota swung between 100 and 200" political prisoners. He recalled that at times the number of those convicted did not suffice, "so a few life sentences were upgraded", whilst claiming that "we were executed because we are respectable Shiites. The Sunni merchants were imprisoned for only a couple of days and then released". Any Shiite, according to Saadi, was considered by the regime as "susceptible of working for the opposition" and Saadi, who lost two of his brothers accused of breaching the trading law, recalled how the prison officials used to provide the authorities with hundreds of prisoners to meet the execution quota every Sunday and Wednesday[44]. Saadi recalls; "I still remember when a friend of mine read a presidential order which demanded the

[42] Batatu, Hanna. (1978). The old social classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq, Book III page 46.
[43] Al-Hamra, Saadi, a former prisoner during Saddam's regime, personal interview, 3rd of January 2003.
[44] Al-Hamra, Saadi, a former prisoner during Saddam's regime, personal interview, 3rd of January 2003.

immediate upgrading of the life sentence of a prisoner to immediate execution. I still encounter midnight headaches because of that incident".

The regime's policy of repression in the 1980's affected anyone who looked like a Shiite Islamist, or dared to speak out about his ideology or against the regime. The culmination of this repression was symbolized in an amendment of the constitution, which made the penalty of insulting the head of the state punishable by death. Human Rights Watch, the Washington based NGO, issued a report about "prison cleansing", a policy which resulted in the death of thousands of Shiite inmates[45], and it was this report that stated that "'President Saddam Hussein's son Qusay toured the prison on April 26 and issued an order for the execution of an estimated 2,000 inmates held in one section. At six the following morning, the executions began. By nine that evening, 2,000 Iraqis had been executed. Most of them were from the South, accused of joining parties and taking part in [opposition] activities'"[46].

Death was not even restricted to adults and children were also the victims of this repression. The Iraqi Human Rights committee reported in mid September 2003 that 17 students in the Kathemiya suburb of Baghdad were all executed after the *Mukhabarat* found out that they had written "death to Saddam" on a billboard. Perhaps the most painful experience many Iraqi political prisoners passed through was the detention of family members, especially women and children, during their interrogations. Some reported that their tongues were extracted and removed because of negative comments they made about the regime[47].

---

[45] "Iraq: The Death Penalty, Executions, and Prison Cleansing", A Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper, March 2003
http://www.hrw.org/backgrounder/mena/iraq031103.htm.
[46] Ibid.

[47] Loyd Anthony, "14 years of torture and humiliation in Saddam's jail" The Times, 25 February 2003.

V. THE SHIITE REACTION TO SADDAM'S DEFEAT IN KUWAIT

After the defeat of the Iraqi forces in Kuwait in the wake of the first Gulf War in 1991, retreating soldiers swarmed the southern Sunni towns of Abu al-Khassib and Al-Zubair, firing at Saddam's wall paintings and triggering a Shiite "Popular Uprising". The uprising spread throughout the Shiite southern cities and towns. On March 1, the rebels controlled Basra and throughout the following days they took over the rest of southern cities[48], driven on by the desire for avenging former atrocities, they assassinated Baathist leaders in their areas and then mutilated their bodies.

Apart from the retreating soldiers, urban rebels also joined the fight, resulting in the fact that nearly every political force within the country participated, or at least said it did, in the uprising. Tribes from the marshland areas, angry urban residents, defecting civilians and some divisions of the *Badr* corps all took part in the *Intifada*[49]. The effect of Sadr's death was very apparent during the Shiite uprising in the south when his portrait was seen as an icon in every city that they controlled[50]. In the north, Turkmens (ethnic Turks), many of them Shiites, and Christian Assyrians participated alongside Kurds in the uprising, although in relatively small numbers because of fear of the political consequences of Saddam's demise[51]. Through this widespread support, the uprising was viewed by many as 'the final divorce between Iraqi Nationalism and official Arab nationalism' paving the way

---

[48] A.Jabar Faleh,The Shiite Movement in Iraq, p. 269.
[49] Ibid pages 270-1
[50] Roy Parviz Mottahedeh, "History, religion, power: understanding Iraqi Shiites", THE DAILY STAR (Beirut), 8 August 2003.
[51] Dr. Abdallah , Farouk, the secretary general of the Iraqi Turkmen Front, personal interview, Ankara, 22nd of November 2003.

for a new sectarian identity[52]. It also signaled the huge differences and gap between the regime's policy and the people's (especially Shiites) aspirations.

The Shiite uprising consumed the southern part of Iraq right up to the outskirts of Baghdad, covering most of the areas with Shiite majorities (please refer to Diagram 1). Rebels came to US troops, who were then deployed in the Euphrates Valley, begging for US intervention to support for their nascent movement, while the Shiite political parties sent emissaries to the few Americans who would see them[53]. The Shiite groups were worried about a tragic end to their uprising, if the Americans did not support them and ambassador Peter W. Galbraith who was in southern Iraq at the time has recalled that "'to this day, I am haunted by the desperation in the appeals made to me by one group, as they realized time was running out for their countrymen'"[54].

In interviews conducted in Damascus on the eve of the current war in Iraq, several Shiite Islamic Iraqi opposition members expressed deep distrust towards American policies in the region, especially when Shiites are concerned, citing the American "betrayal" during the Shiite uprising in 1991 as a prime example of such a sentiment.

---

[52] A.Jabar Faleh,The Shiite Movement in Iraq, page 270.
[53] Peter W. Galbraith, "The Ghosts of 1991", The Washington Post, 12 April 2003.
[54] Ibid.

DIAGRAM 1[55]

City	Shiites	Sunnis	Minorities
Baghdad (including Thawra city)	80-85%	15-20%	
Salladin (including Tikrit)	30-35%	65-70%	
Kout (Waset)	90-95%	5-10%	
Hella (Babel)	90-95%	5-10%	
Najaf	100%	-	
Ramady	10%	90%	
Karbala	100%	-	
Ba'akouba	80-85%	15-20%	
Mosul	30% (Turk-Ar)	60%	10% Christians
Sulaimaniya	30% (Kurds)	70% Kurds	
Arbil	-	95%	5% Christians
Dhuk	-	70%	30% Christians
Kerkuk (Alta'mim)	40% (Turk)	60% K +T	
Basra			
Amara (Misan)			
Annaseriya (Zhi Qar)	90%	7%	3% Mindaiyeen
Diwaniyeh (Qadisseyah)	95%	5%	
Samawa (Muthana)	80%	20%	

AMERICAN "BETRAYAL"

On February 15th 1991, President George H.W. Bush called on the Iraqi military and people to overthrow Saddam Hussein. On March 3rd, an Iraqi tank commander returning from Kuwait fired a shell through one of the portraits of Hussein in Basra's main square, igniting the Shiite uprising in the south. Meanwhile, Kurdish rebels succeeded in ending Saddam's control over much of the north.

Although Bush had called for the rebellion, his administration dealt with it suspiciously, in what was considered by the Shiites a bloody "betrayal". The administration's knowledge about the Iraqi

---

[55] This diagram was provided by SCIRI.

sition was minimal because as a matter of policy it had refused to communicate with them since

were affiliated with neighboring countries, specifically Iran and Syria. In addition, American

ymakers tended to stereotype Iraq's main ethnic and sectarian groups; the Shiites were feared as

pro-Iranian and the Kurds as being anti-Turkish[56]. Indeed, the US administration seemed to

r the continuation of the Baath regime (without Saddam) to the success of the Shiite rebellion.

American skeptic approach to the Shiite rebellion was manifested in the decisions made by the

ilitary on the ground, as US commanders rebuffed the Shiite rebels' plea for help and allowed

m to send Republican Guard units into the southern Shiite cities and to fly helicopter gunships,

e of a ban on flights. The consequences were devastating as Hussein's forces leveled the

cal centers of Shiite towns, bombarded sacred Shiite shrines and executed thousands on the

Some estimates put the number of people killed between March and September in reprisal for

empted uprising at 100,000 while Shiite opposition members put it as high as 300,000. Many

es were even committed in proximity to American troops, who were ordered not to intervene.

from the so called "American betrayal", another reason for the uprising's failure was its

eity and disorganization, which led to its failure in marching towards Baghdad. The

ization was also a result of Ayatollah Abulqassem al-Khoue's decision to keep his distance

e insurgency until it had swept most of the country. Even at the advanced stage of the

, the Shiite prelate undertook a shy initiative, in which he only played a role in administrating

l areas. After the regime had succeeded in crushing the *intifada* (uprising), Abul Qassem al-

was shown on the official Iraqi TV sitting beside Saddam Hussein. Shiism was attacked

and Uday, the elder son of Saddam, wrote an article in *Babel,* his notorious daily newspaper,

he denounced Shiite rituals in Ashoura, the commemoration of Imam Hussein's

---

Galbraith, "The Ghosts of 1991", The Washington Post, 12 April 2003.

"martyrdom". These events and repercussions of the insurgency widened the ruling regime's distrust of the Shiite majority.

As a result of this movement and the regime's success in crushing it, economic deprivation of the Shiites, the rogue element in Saddam's Iraq, was widened under the sanctions that followed the withdrawal from Kuwait. Baghdad shortchanged the south in the distribution of food and medicine, contributing to severe malnutrition among vulnerable populations, most of who were impoverished Shiites. Will Day, the chief executive officer (CEO) of CARE International UK, one of the largest humanitarian organization in the world, who visited Iraq on several occasions, observed the following on BBC's "Hard Talk"; "'those of us who know the south well and have visited the north, know it is a completely different country'". Unemployment reached high levels and most families relied solely on the government's food rations, which existed under the United Nations' Oil for Food program.

The hunting down of suspected dissidents also continued in this period and some 100 Shiite clerics were murdered, including four senior ayatollahs, in the decade following the uprising. In addition, Saddam made the most ecologically devastating decision in Iraq's history, as his regime drained the marshes, a wetland environment that extends over an area of about 20,000 square kilometres, and eventually displaced some 400,000 Shiite Marsh Arabs, destroying a culture that was one of the world's oldest, as well as causing immeasurable ecological damage. For the first time, Saddam's repression of Iraqi Shiites affected the nature of their historical habitat[57].

---

[57] "The Iraqi Marshlands: A Pre-War Perspective", The Crimes of War Project, ⁻ᵗʰ March 2003, http://www.crimesofwar.org/special/Iraq/news-marshArabs.html.

THE RETURN TO TRIBALISM

The years following the insurrection also witnessed an official return to tribal and religious values and traditions, which resulted in strengthening the tribal leaders' authority vis a vis the central government[58]. Saddam's regime depended more on buying the loyalty of tribal chiefs rather than relying solely on its security apparatus. As the Shiite junior tribal chieftains constituted the base of the Iraqi authority[59], those who were not loyal to Saddam's regime were replaced by loyal and younger tribal leaders. Saddam's dependence on the Sunni triangle (Falluja, Ramadi and Mosul) was stronger than ever and he rewarded his loyalists in the vast Anbar province by offering them oil that would be later smuggled through the porous border with Syria. The Anbar region's special position was strengthened after the insurrection, while the south suffered heavily from negligence[60], as Saddam's loyalists from this region were viewed as the privileged class even in impoverished areas like the Shiite south.

THE EMERGENCE OF NEW OPPOSITION

Following the *intifada's* failure, new Iraqi opposition groups were formed in exile, as the hope that the Gulf War would signal the end of Saddam's regime drove hundreds of exiled Iraqi to form their own political parties. In this way, groups that were affiliated with regional and international powers, were formed. In addition to political parties, traditional and influential families provided candidates to participate in any new Iraqi government. Ahmad Chalabi, the son of Abdul Hadi Chalabi, the well known Shiite politician and businessman, became the new George W. Bush administration's Iraqi

---

[58] Al-Amin, Hazem,"Ashaer Al-Ramadi", al-Hayat Newspaper (Arabic), 11th of November 2003.
[59] Al-Amin, Hazem,"Islamiyu alfallouja wbaatheyoha", al-Hayat Newspaper (Arabic), 10th of November 2003.
[60] Ibid.

favorite. The Iraqi opposition groups held a conference in Beirut where they formed a committee which comprised five major parties and several other personalities including Chalabi, the Iraqi Communist party, the Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution in Iraq, the Da'wa party and the two Kurdish parties, who together formed the base of the new opposition movement. The Syrian-Iranian influence on the new opposition and their coordination of their actions was not welcomed among conservatives in Washington, who were strong advocates of regime change in Iraq[61].

In Vienna, an Iraqi opposition conference was held without the participation of the major communist and Islamic parties[62] and Chalabi, a wealthy and very well connected Shiite, connived with a group of liberal Shiites including Dr. Laith Kuba to overthrow the opposition status quo[63]. The conference resulted in the formation of the Iraqi National Congress whose executive committee leader was Chalabi and thus the conference's main objective was achieved as it succeeded in imposing a new equation on the Iraqi opposition through altering the Syrian-Iranian equation. The new Vienna conference was entirely financed by the United States, as the nephew of Mr. Ahmad and close associate Salem Chalabi later admitted[64], and succeeded in maintained the Shiite majority status achieved in Beirut's conference.

After the Vienna conference, the opposition groups participated in a conference held in Salahuddine, which lies in the Kurdish autonomous region in the north of Iraq. The conference decided to form a unified leadership of the opposition under what was called the Iraqi Unified National Congress, led

[61] Kessler Glenn, "U.S. Decision On Iraq Has Puzzling Past", Washington Post 12 January 2003.

[62] Rangwala Glen, "IRAQ'S MAJOR POLITICAL GROUPINGS", 1 October 2002, http://www.iraqwatch.org/perspectives/rangwala-100102.htm.

[63] Dr. Laith Kuba, an Iraqi opposition figure, phone interview, Washington DC., 12 July 2004.
[64] Chalabi Salem, head of the Iraqi Special tribunal and nephew of Ahmad Chalabi, personal interview, October 2004.

by Chalabi, the Bush administration's favorite Iraqi politician at the time[65]. The conference wide participation of such an idea lasted only for a few months, during which the Islamic Shiite parties withdrew their support. In November 2002, when the Anglo-American war on Iraq became imminent, opposition parties held a conference in London where they decided to form an interim government in exile. The conference formed a 65 member Follow-Up and Arrangement Committee, in which the Shiites constituted about half of its members.

The importance of the London conference lies in its acknowledgement of the Shiite majority status and the "sectarian" nature of Saddam's Sunni regime. The conferences statement issued at this time stated the following; "throughout the past history of Iraq and especially under the current regime, we in Iraq, as other sections of Iraqi community, have been subjected to oppression; violence; repression; discrimination; and denial of civil, political, national, cultural and social rights. This has destroyed the social balance in the country and greatly jeopardized national unity and the spirit of tolerance and forgiveness, and has led to the predominance of repression, special institutions and the use of deception and falsehood to impose power on the Iraqi society with all its peoples and colors, and its Shi'i majority"[66]. Without doubt, the London conference set a precedent for the Iraqi opposition's unified work, which became in this case fully under the auspices of the American administration, even though it was said to be by proxy at this stage. In January/February 2004, the delegates selected a committee of seven, which included two Kurds, two Sunnis and 3 Shiites was formed to represent the opposition in post war Iraq. The committee's role in decision-making was very limited due to the American's tight grip of power after the demise of Saddam's regime.

[65] The Congree kept its name as it is in English while the Arabic name was amended.
[66] "Political statement of the Iraqi Opposition Conference in London, 14-16 December 2002", 07 January 2003, http://www.kurdmedia.com/reports.asp?id=1219

THE DISPROPORTIONAL DIVISION OF POWER UNDER SADDAM

The Shiite parties' insistence upon a Shiite majority in all representative bodies was a result of the sect's narrow share of power during the Baath regime, whereby the composition of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) and different bodies of power including the powerful army and intelligence under Saddam Hussein reflected the shear exclusion of Shiites from the highest ranks in government. This reflected the tribal factor, which was a prerequisite for loyalty, as being the highest priority when selecting officials.

As shown in Diagram 2, the percentage of Shiite participation in the RCC vis a vis the rest of Iraqi sects, during the last period of Saddam's regime was 1 to 9. Although the percentage of Shiites remains a matter of dispute, it is widely acknowledged that they constitute 60-65 % of the whole Iraqi population (including Kurds)[67]. These numbers, if compared with the minimal representation of Shiites in powerful bodies under Saddam's regime, reflect clearly their disproportional representation. Although the autocracy of the Iraqi regime required the extreme loyalty of Shiite representatives, especially after the war against Iran and the insurgency in 1991, such a role was represented by Mr. Mohammad Hamza al-Zubaidi, the only Shiite on RCC, who was well known for his ruthlessness among Shiites and was branded by the American administration as Saddam's Shiite thug[68].

---

[67] Naccash Yitzhak, "The Shi'ites and the Future of Iraq", Foreign Affairs, July/August 2003.
[68] Labbé, Theola "Iraq's New Military Taking Shape", The Washington Post, 16th of September 2003

DIAGRAM 2

Saddam Hussein Majid	President	Sunni Arab
Izzat Ibrahim Aldoury	Vice President	Sunni Arab
Ali Hassan Almajeed	Member	Sunni Arab
Kamel Yaseen Altakreety	Member	Sunni Arab
Taha Yaseen Ramadan Aljazoury	Member	Sunni Kurd (Turkey)
Taha Muheiddine Maarouf	Member	Sunni Kurd
Tarek Azeez	Member	Christian /Chaldean
Mohammad Hamza Alzubaidi	Member	Shiite – Arab
Sultan Hashem	Member	Sunni Arab

The exclusion of Shiites in power was clear from the beginning of the second Baath regime from 1968. Whether the reason was a historical one, or whether it was enforced during Saddam's rule and directly related to his distrust towards Shiites, the fair representation of Shiites became one of the priorities for Shiite groups. This priority was manifested in the insistence of Shiite groups (especially at the London conference) for representing the Shiites in proportions which fairly reflect their size as a population (60 %).

VI. The Ascendancy of Mohammad Mohammad Sadeq Al-Sadr.

The Sadrite movement has played a significant role in strengthening the sectarian identity of Iraqi Shiites and has remains one of the most popular movements among impoverished Shiites. In relation to this, after crushing the Shiite uprising in 1991, the Baathist regime asked the leading member of the Shiite Kelidar family in Najaf to recommend, as the family had done for generations, an official head of the Shiite community. Rather than consult the sources or their close associates, the Kelidar family member put forward a list of clergymen considered to be politically pliant and of strong Arab identity. Ayatollah Mohammed Sadiq al-Sadr, a remote cousin of Mohammed Baqir al-Sadr, was among the clerics chosen for this position. Sadiq, then an apolitical and independent figure, was devout and had written on morality and the history of Shiism especially that of Imam Hussein[69]. In the 1960s he joined the editorial staff of the journal *Al-Awa* and by the end of the decade had written two books: *Al-Islam wal-Mithaq al-Alimiyah lil-Huquq al-Insan* (Islam and the International Covenant on Human Rights) and *Ma Wara al-Fiqh* (What is behind Jurisprudence?). Unlike Baqer al-Sadr, Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr had not openly opposed the regime in the late 1970s and 1980s.

The origins of what would became known later as "The Sadrist movement" lies in al-Sadr's success in balancing between three forces in the Iraqi society; the Iraqi regime, the urbanized Shiite tribes

---

[69] Roy Parviz Mottahedeh, "History, religion, power: understanding Iraqi Shiites", THE DAILY STAR (Beirut), 8 August 2003.

and the missionary activism of Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr[70]. Al-Sadr further benefited from Saddam's regime policy of co-opting and privileging Shiite tribes, in the aftermath of the Shiite uprising.

Historically, relations between Shiite tribes and the Shiite clerical establishment in Iraq have been unfriendly and the regime thought that by promoting tribal identities, radical Shiite challenges would be undermined and it is partly for this reason that the government sponsored Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr's appointment. In line with his controversial book *Fiqh al-Asha'ir* (Tribal Jurisprudence), al-Sadr had sought to reconcile tribal customs with Sharia law and granted tribal leaders the right to administer religious law in their regions. The regime granted such a move and also allowed al-Sadr to appoint Friday prayer leaders in hundreds of towns and cities[71].

Al-Sadr's influence was greatest in Saddam's City, to the east of Baghdad, which was unofficially known by its original name, *Madinat al-Thawra* (City of the Revolution). While *Madinat al-Thawra* was originally built in the 1960s for the purpose of absorbing mostly-Shiite immigrants from the south, the 20 square kilometre district's self-enclosed economy and its psychological, cultural and geographic separation from the rest of Baghdad had the effect of reinforcing the tribal identities of its inhabitants, who numbered over two million by the 1990s.

Through a process of tribal mergers and the distribution of patronage, the Baathist regime turned the urbanized tribes into real centers of power. Simultaneously, al-Sadr gained a mass following and became a focal point for opposition to the regime and it was after a 1997 fatwa mandating the holding of Friday prayers in *Madinat al-Thawra*, that al-Sadr began asserting his independence from Saddam's autocratic rule. His "pastoral" ability gained him increasing favor among ordinary Shiites and he was accepted as a *marjeh*, a source of Shiite law. Through this, al-Sadr exploited his official

---

[70] Roy Parviz Mottahedeh, "History, religion, power: understanding Iraqi Shiites", THE DAILY STAR (Beirut), 8 August 2003.
[71] Al- Harriri, Mohammad, representative of SCIRI in Lebanon & Syria, personal interview, Damascus January 2003

acceptance and promoted himself as a new popular leader of Shiites. Additionally, the Shiite prelate also exploited the regime's weakness and the absence of other Shiite forces active inside the country, in order to strengthen his popularity locally. The tools he used included appointing numerous representatives (wekalaa), who he was accused of assigning hundreds of without enough inspection of their backgrounds, as well as the resumption of Friday prayers, a mass obligatory prayer which had been halted for centuries in Iraq and among other Shiite communities all over the world. Taking into consideration the official ban of non-Baathist political organizations and gatherings, the comeback of Shiite Friday prayers was of sizeable political significance.

This sudden and powerful rise of al-Sadr threatened the position of other Shiite religious figures, especially that of Mohammad Baqer Al-Hakim, the leader of the SCIRI. In turn, Sadredine Qabbanjy, the head of Al-Hakim's office, accused al-Sadr in the mid-nineties of collaboration with Saddam's regime[72] and in the opinion of the SCIRI, al-Sadr's suspicious "behavior allowed Saddam's intelligence to plant agents in his religious apparatus"[73]. Al-Sadr, according to his Shiite rivals, wanted an Iraqi version of the Iranian welayat fakih, the supreme Islamic leadership, rather than following the Iranian appointed leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei[74].

Eventually al-Sadr's piety and pastoralism led him to voice the desires of his flock, he became his own man to an extent intolerable to Saddam's regime. He effectively became a wanted man, or as Iraqis say "a coffined man", when he publicly demanded the release of 106 Islamic scholars jailed since the March 1991 uprising in southern Iraq[75]. In 1999, regime agents assassinated Ayatollah al-Sadr along with two of his sons in Kufa city after Friday prayers, in which he had appeared wearing

---

[72] Al- Harriri, Mohammad, representative of SCIRI in Lebanon & Syria, personal interview, Damascus January 2003.
[73] Ibid
[74] Other Shiite organizations like the Iraqi Hezbollah and SCIRI follow the Iranian model of leadership.
[75] Al- Harriri, Mohammad, representative of SCIRI in Lebanon & Syria, personal interview, Damascus January 2003.

a white death robe in a symbolic act resembling his prior knowledge and readiness for death[76]. Al-Sadr has represented to many of his followers a Shiite spiritual and political leader, similar in many ways to Imam Khomeini, an aspiration that has also been held by the followers of his son, Muqtada.

Muqtada, who was spared death, became a prominent Shiite leader after the demise of Saddam Hussein's regime. His furious speeches directed against the coalition found a lot of support among young unemployed and poor Shiites, who were also still conscious of his father's recent sacrifice, through this his stronghold became the Shiite al-Sadr's city in Baghdad, which was named in tribute to his father, after the Saddam regime collapsed. Along with the allegiance of many of his father's followers, Muqtada also inherited a network of schools and charities built by the elder al-Sadr[77]. Since he lacked the decades-long religious training required of the highest-ranking Shiite authorities, Muqtada based his claim to authority on his leadership of the Shiite rebellion against the occupation, and his movement's popular support among impoverished Shiites. Guy Raz, CNN's correspondent in Najaf during the clashes with the American forces noticed that "many of the killed pro al-Sadr militiamen were not circumcised, which said something about the extremely poor conditions they grew up in"[78]. Without doubt, al-Sadr's aggressively anti-US stance tapped into a vein of anger and frustration among young and impoverished Iraqi Shiites, many of whom live in al-Sadr City[79]and he also enjoys strong support in Najaf, the holy city where the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammed, Imam Ali, is buried. This city is also considered to be one of the holiest Shiite places in the world. Al-Sadr's followers have also been active in Basra and other majority Shiite towns, including Kut, Nasiriya, Karbala and Kufa, where he regularly preaches and leads the Friday prayers.

---

[76] Roy Parviz Mottahedeh, "History, religion, power: understanding Iraqi Shiites", THE DAILY STAR (Beirut), 8 August 2003.

[77] IRAQ, "Muqtada al-Sadr", http://www.cfr.org/background/background_iraq_alsadr.php#, 1st of September 2004.

[78] Raz, Guy, CNN's correspondent in Najaf during the fight against al-Sadr, personal interview, September 2004.
[79] IRAQ, "Muqtada al-Sadr", http://www.cfr.org/background/background_iraq_alsadr.php#, 1st of September 2004.

Muqtada, like his father, has set himself up in opposition to senior Iraqi Shiite clerics, led by Ayatollah Sistani, the 75-year-old cleric who has been active in shaping Iraq's new political system and is one of the strongest supporters of national elections scheduled for January 2005. Experts say Sistani maintains the allegiance of most of Iraq's 14 million Shiites, but al-Sadr's growing support has also made him a serious player on the national stage. Al-Sadr has fewer supporters than Sistani, but they are far more fanatical since the latter's followers represent the Shiite merchant class (similar in many ways to the Bazaar in Iran). Furthermore, Ahmad Chalabi, the former pro-American Shiite politician has been working closely with al-Sadr in order to forge a political alliance, which he claims will represent deprived Shiites (the *Mahroomeen*), a term which was used to launch the first Lebanese Shiite group prior to the civil war in Lebanon.

THE FIRST SHIITE CLASH WITH THE AMERICANS

Al-Sadr's nascent Mehdi Army, whose man power is estimated to be in the region of ten thousand, launched an uprising in Najaf and Karbala on April 4th 2004 after US forces closed *Al Hawza*, al-Sadr's newspaper, detained one of his top aides, and announced that al-Sadr was wanted for Khoei's murder[80]. The Americans also accused al-Sadr's supporters of involvement in the death of another cleric and political leader, Ayatollah Mohammed Baqer al-Hakim, in September 2003[81]. Fierce clashes between the Mehdi Army and US forces lasted until al-Sadr declared a cease-fire on June 16th and in the agreement that followed called for his followers to lay down their arms while he formed a political party in the hope that he would enter the national political system and participate in the general elections of January 30th 2005.

---

[80] IRAQ, "Muqtada al-Sadr", http://www.cfr.org/background/background_iraq_alsadr.php#, 1st of September 2004.

[81] Dibble, philo, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, personal interview, Washington, May 2004.

The June peace deal lasted until August 5th, when al-Sadr supporters attacked a Najaf police station, which in turn set off intense clashes between Mehdi Army fighters and US forces. Al-Sadr's supporters used the city's revered sites, primarily Imam Ali's shrine and its adjacent ancient cemetery, to launch their attacks, as some 3,000 US troops and hundreds of Iraqi security forces were deployed to Najaf to try to crush the uprising. Fighting stopped periodically to allow negotiations between the Mehdi Army's leadership and the Interim Iraqi Government, but al-Sadr refused to meet a delegation from the Iraqi National Conference on August 17th, and the standoff continued until Sistani returned from London on August 25th and negotiated a cease-fire agreement that left Sistani's supporters in charge of Imam Ali's mosque.

Despite this outcome, al-Sadr's wide popularity still poses a threat to American efforts to achieve stability in Iraq. Experts say he commands the loyalty of some 3 million to 5 million very poor Shiites across the country and that his stature grows with this group after each confrontation with the United States[82]. However, his popularity in the wider Shiite community is more limited, as mainstream Shiites see him as a young upstart who has endangered holy places for his own gain[83]. Additionally, during the clashes, al-Sadr enjoyed support of the Iranian regime and Hezbollah, its protégé in Lebanon.

The nature of al-Sadr's relations with Iran has been a subject of controversy since the fall of the Saddam regime in 2003. Iran's new Shiite ally has drawn accusations of Iranian double standards, taking into consideration that the SCIRI, an Iranian affiliated group, has been a partner of the American backed political process. In addition to that, al-Sadr has attacked the pro-Iranian Badr

---

[82] IRAQ, "Muqtada al-Sadr", http://www.cfr.org/background/background iraq alsadr.php#, 1st of September 2004.

[83] IRAQ, "Muqtada al-Sadr", http://www.cfr.org/background/background iraq alsadr.php#, 1st of September 2004.

corps on several occasions[84]. The first Sadrite display of affiliation with Iran was embodied in the proliferation of pictures of the late Ayatollah Khomeini in Sadr City and pro-Iranian figures in the movement have been given positions of authority[85]. Al-Sadr himself later visited Iran to attend the fourteenth anniversary of Ayatollah Khomeini's death on June 4th 2003 and spent a week meeting with top Iranian officials, including the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and the head of the judiciary, Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi, a student of Seyyed al-Sadr and a friend of Muqtada's father. There were also reports of a secret meeting held with Qasim Suleimani, the commander of the notorious al-Qods Brigade, an intelligence group within the revolutionary guards[86]. SCIRI's representative in Lebanon and Syria Mohamad al-Hariri have accused Iran of supplying al-Sadr with seven million dollars for logistical purposes[87].

Undoubtedly, al-Sadr's clashes with the American forces and his revolutionary-style speeches have turned him into a popular leader. Since he decided on January 10th 2005 to participate in the general elections of the same month, he is expected to be operating closely with the Shiite coalition led by Abdul-Aziz al-Hakim, the leader of the Supreme council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI)[88]. Al-Sadr's participation in the political process, which is supported by the United States, is going to be crucial in determining the identity of Shiite political inclinations.

---

[84] Shiite Contender Eyes Iraq's Big Prize, Time, 3 May 2003.
[85] For example, Ali al-Baydani, who spent many years in the Qom seminaries, is reported to be a top commander in the Jaish al-Mahdi.
[86] Corriere della Sera (Italy), 25 June 2003.
[87] Al-Hariri, Mohammad; SCIRI's representative in Syria and Lebanon, personal interview, August 2003, Damascus.
[88] "Washington Tadros Al-Insihab Min al-Iraq", Al-Hayat Newspaper, London 11 January 2005: Front page.

VII. The Governing Council and the prospects of Shiite participation in the future of Iraq

On April 9th, the regime of Saddam Hussein collapsed, an event epitomized by the removal of the long time dictator's statue in Alferdaws Square in Baghdad, a symbolic display that reached millions of observers worldwide. The obvious Shiite reaction was first seen in the Athawra City (named Saddam's city under his rule), a populous suburb of Baghdad, where Shiite demonstrators quickly and in exuberance changed the name of their area into al-Sadr City, after Mohammad Mohammad Sadeq Al-Sadr. Although the Americans reiterated clearly prior to the war that they would replace Saddam's dictatorship by a democracy, there was no real plan for the transfer of authority to Iraqis. The Americans intended as any other occupation to keep power and authority as much as possible[89], whilst the British forces controlled southern cities including Al-Basra and Al-Ammara. The American occupiers whose numbers reached 150,000 controlled the rest of Iraq and then distributed control over several Iraqi areas on their allies. In the following months, several brigades from various nationalities (especially eastern Europeans) replaced American troops, in a gesture aimed at reducing US losses. Turkey's offer to send troops was deeply opposed by the Kurds and then rebuffed by the American-led coalition.

The Return of Shiite Exiles

The American-led coalition was accompanied by Iraqi exile opposition figures and some of them, like Chalabi, stormed in Iraqi cities and occupied former regime posts. Abdel-Majeed al-Khouei, the son of the late Great Ayatollah Abol-Qassem, was the first high profile Shiite cleric to return from

---

[89] Seyyed Mohammad al-Haidary, a member of the central shura in SCIRI, phone interview, Baghdad September 2003.

exile and al-Khouei accompanied the occupying forces, Americans in this case, to Najaf, the spiritual capital of Shiite Islam. Al-Khouei, the head of the *Al-Khouei* foundation, which is valued at hundreds of millions of dollars in assets and cash, described his role as one constricted to the humanitarian needs of his people. However, the moderate Shiite cleric, who had lived in the UK since the uprising in 1991, was brutally murdered in the holy shrine of Imam Ali by thugs who were suspected of being Moqtada al-Sadr's loyalists, giving a clear warning to all newcomers to strengthen their security.

Abdel-Aziz al-Hakim, the leader of the *badr* corps and the brother of Mohammad Baqer, the SCIRI president, was the first of the party leaders to return to Iraq. He and his brother later on received a populous welcome with tens of thousands of sympathizers in every southern Shiite city they came across. Chalabi, the leader of the INC, also returned to Nasseriya, in southern Iraq, along with a few hundred of his military force formed and trained in northern Iraq under the Kurdish autonomy. Iyad Allawi, a secular Shiite and the head of the INA who is the incumbent interim Prime Minister, also returned to Iraq and inaugurated several offices for his party in Baghdad and other major cities across the country.

THE GOVERNING COUNCIL: A SHIITE HISTORICAL PRECEDENT

The Americans appointed an Iraqi governing council after discussions held by the Salahuddine conference's supreme committee and consultations with the United Nations special envoy Sergio de Millo, who later died in an attack against the UN headquarters in Baghdad. The governing council with its Shiite majority (13 out of 25) was unprecedented in Iraqi history. The insistence on confirming the majority status that the Islamic Shiite forces showed in opposition conferences

during the 1990s was preserved in the political process after the demise of Saddam's regime. Additionally to this, taking into consideration the rising Sunni insurgency in Western Iraq, the Americans were not ready to face a Shiite uprising and al-Sistani's consent had become an important condition for any major political step the American led provisional authority in Iraq planned to take. A Shiite majority also appeared in the appointed government in similar proportions. The SCIRI lost the large share (24 seats) it gained in the London Conference to other local Shiite leaders, many of them tribesmen. Consequently, they were granted only one member (their leader Abd El-Aziz al-Hakim) in the governing council and the same ratio was applied to the government.

The majority of Shiite members were independents (9 out of 13). Whilst the Ministries of Oil, interior, construction and planning were given to Shiite members, none of the governing council members participated in the cabinet and each of them had the right to choose one minister. The result of this was a cabinet that reflected the same sectarian proportions and thus a Shiite majority.

The American occupation considered the governing council and its chosen cabinet, an interim authority to which it cannot offer full sovereignty and this was clearly manifested in appointing powerful American counselors in each ministry, who played a major role in daily matters and especially in appointing private contractors[90]. Its ethnic and religious makeup is far more representative than any previous Iraqi government, and the Shiite majority, for the first time in Iraqi history, had a leading voice in politics. The council also included representatives out of the American circle, including a communist and at least one Shiite representative from SCIRI. Returned Iraqi exiles were disproportionately represented, and there is limited representation of tribal leaders, who constitute a potent force in traditional Iraqi society.

---

[90] Oberg Jan , "Do you want to know who the Americans running Iraq really are?", http://www.opednews.com, 24 May 2003.

Name	Religion or sect / ethnicity / sex	Political affiliation
Ibrahim al-Ja'fari (Ibrahim al-Ushayqir)	Shiite, Arab, male	Da'wa
Ahmad Chalabi	Shiite, Arab, male	Iraqi National Congress
Muhammad Bahr al-'Ulum	Shiite, Arab, male	Ahl al-Bayt
'Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim	Shiite, Arab, male	SCIRI
Jalal Talabani	Sunni, Kurd, male	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
Mas'ud Barzani	Sunni, Kurd, male	Kurdistan Democratic Party
Iyad 'Allawi	Shiite, Arab, male	Iraqi National Accord
Adnan Bajaji (Adnan Pachachi)	Sunni, Arab, male	Independent Democrats Movement
Muhsin 'Abd al-Hamid	Sunni, Arab, male	Iraqi Islamic Party
Ahmad Shya'a al-Barak Al Bu Sultan	Shiite, Arab, male	Iraqi Lawyers' Union
Nasir Kamil al-Jadurji	Sunni, Arab, male	National Democratic Party
Aqila al-Hashimi[91]	Shiite, Arab, female	
Raja' Habib al-Khuza'i	Shiite, Arab, female	
Hamid Majid Musa	Shiite, Arab, male	Iraqi Communist Party
Ghazi Mashal Ajil al-Yawir	Sunni, Arab, male	
Samir Shakir Mahmud	Sunni, Arab, male	
Mahmud Ali Uthman	Sunni, Kurd, male	Kurdistan Socialist Party
Salah al-Din Muhammad Baha' al-Din	Sunni, Kurd, male	Kurdistan Islamic Union
Younadem Yusif Kana	Assyrian Christian, male	Assyrian Democratic Movement
Muwafaq al-Rubiy'i	Shiite, Arab, male	Former Da'wa member
Dara Nur al-Zin	Sunni, Kurd, male	
Songhul Chapouk	Turkoman, female	Iraqi Women's Organization
Wael Abd al-Latif	Shiite, Arab, male	
Abd al-Karim Mahmud al-Muhammadawi	Shiite, Arab, male	Hezbollah (Iraqi)
Abd al-Zahra Uthman Muhammad (Izz al-Din Salim)[92]	Shiite, Arab, male	Islamic Da'wa of Basra

---

[91] Died on 25 September 2003 after an assassination attempt, which left her seriously injured. Replaced on the council by Salma al-Khufaji.

[92] Assassinated in a bomb explosion at the entrance to the CPA headquarters on 17 May 2004.

THE TLA

The Transitional Administrative Law (TLA) was a product of an agreement signed by the IGC and CPA on the 15th of November 2003. The law itself was signed on March 8th 2004, after objections from what had become known as "the Shiite house" were appeased. The TLA stated that sovereign powers for governing Iraq would be handed over to the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) by June 30th 2004. From then on the IIG would govern until democratic elections for a Transitional National Assembly (TNA) had take place, which would be by January 31st 2005 at the latest[93]. The TNA would select the Iraqi Transitional Government which would then steer the country through the formation of a Constitution, to be ratified by a referendum in October 2005, until elections for a constitutional government are held in December 2005.

The TLA was closely scrutinized by the Shiites, who led by Grand Ayatollah Sistani, the Shiite highest prelate, had confused observers who had initially argued that the diverse nature of Shiism and Shiite society would lead to difficulties in finding a unified political agenda. Instead a relatively cohesive position has been established, with agreement reached on principal requirements, among which was that the Shiites should no longer be forced into a subservient position under Sunni Arabs. Sistani also emerged as the unifying element in the Shiite political spectrum, forcing most Shiite members except those belonging to secular parties, into backing his position. These movements facilitated the functions of the "Shiite house", the largest Shiite umbrella group in Iraq.

---

[93] Sharon Otterman, "IRAQ, The Transitional Administrative law", http://www.cfr.org/background/background_iraq_inc.php#, August 17, 2004.

THE INTERIM IRAQI NATIONAL COUNCIL

In a gathering of some 1,100 prominent Iraqis held in Baghdad, the members of a 100-seat National Council were selected in a tense meeting overshadowed by American hostilities in Najaf[94]. The council was formed to serve as Iraq's interim legislature until elections in January 2005. About half the seats of the conference were filled by selection committees in each of Iraq's 18 provinces and these committees reviewed applications and nominations and submitted their choices to the commission. The main function of the council is to serve as a check on the executive branch's power and as a forum for Iraqis to discuss the problems facing the country and to make suggestions to Allawi, the incumbent prime minister[95].

While it will not be able to pass laws, it; oversees the work of the interim government and question ministers about their performance; is authorized to veto prime ministerial executive orders with a two-thirds majority; has the authority to replace the president and two vice presidents in the event of their resignation or death; and has to approve the 2005 budget[96]. Within it, nineteen of the 100 seats went to former IGC members who are not currently serving in the interim government, according to the terms of the Transitional Administrative Law.

THE "SUNNI" RESISTANCE OR INSURGENCY

Another factor that played a role in strengthening the sectarian identity of Iraqi Shiites versus their national identity was the Sunni reaction to the fall of Saddam's regime, namely the current

---

[94] Sharon Otterman, "IRAQ, The National Conference", http://www.cfr.org/background/background_iraq_inc.php#, August 17, 2004
[95] Ibid
[96] ibid

insurgency. Since April 2003, thousands of bombings, shootings and shelling incidents have occurred throughout Iraq whose primary victims are Iraqi civilians and policemen most of whom are Shiites. After the demise of Saddam's regime, the insurgency first appeared in the al-Anbar province, a vast and dry area in western Iraq, whilst also operating in parts of Salahaddin and Diyala provinces, both north of Baghdad. The region, a traditional stronghold for Saddam Hussein, was the last to fall to US forces, with relatively little fighting and was where secular Baath Party officials and Iraqi military elites blended into the population, and Sunni Islamist fundamentalists began to assert authority.

At least two key cities in al-Anbar; Falluja with 300,000 residents and Ramadi with a population of 400,000, were, until November 2004, mostly controlled by insurgents, while in Samarra, a city of 150,000 in Salahaddin province, power is shifting back and forth between the insurgents and American forces. The concentration of operations against the occupants in this triangle has been caused by three factors. The first is that the prime beneficiaries of the Saddam regime came from these tribal regions and the collapse of that regime has meant the termination of their privileges. The second is that the majority of the remaining Arab volunteers in Iraq found refuge in these regions and it is from there that they are launching their operations. The third and last factor is that the Arab nationalist ideology of the former regime still finds sympathizers in those regions, regions which did not experience much of the malpractices of the Saddam Era.

Insurgent activity is not limited to the Sunni triangle, since Sunni insurgents have also claimed responsibility for a string of deadly bombings in Baghdad, as well as dozens of other bombings that have resulted in scores of deaths across Iraq. They are also attacking oil pipelines and other vital infrastructure, which has severely disrupted the nation's economy. Whilst the insurgency is now driven mainly by extreme Islamists, despite the existence of hundreds and maybe thousands of

foreign fighters, the core of the insurgency remains local, constituted specifically of Iraqi Islamists mirroring the tactics of al-Qaeda and other Islamic terrorist organizations.

The Islamic insurgents were the most brutal and sectarian of all these factions and it has been al-Zarqawi's group, the Islamic Army of Iraq and the Ansar al-Sunna Army, which has kidnapped and beheaded Americans, Iraqis, and foreigners working with them. Additionally, they have also detonated suicide car bombs and set off roadside explosives, targeting Iraqi police men and soldiers ,most of whom are southern Shiites. In the areas controlled by the insurgents, like Falluja, a "Taliban-like rule", according to *The New York Times*, was instituted[97]. Reports have appeared of beheadings and public punishment being enforced according to primitive Islamic law.

Overall, the Sunni insurgency appears to be growing in strength and resourcefulness, while the Iraqi government struggles to enforce its rule through training large numbers of police, national guards and a new army. Even the Americans have came to acknowledge the insurgents growing strength and effectiveness, and General Richard Myers, commander of the joint chiefs of staff, at a press briefing on September 7th 2004 noted that "'the enemy is becoming more sophisticated in his efforts to destabilize the country'". Several attacks have also been carried out against various nationalities in the American-led coalition, with the "Iraqi Resistance" targeting British, Spanish, Italian, Japanese and South Koreans military and civilian personnel[98].

Alongside the broad mix of fighters who resent the presence of US forces in Iraq, Pamela Hess, reporting for United Press International from Ramadi, wrote that among the insurgents were

---

[97] John F. Burns and Erik Eckholm, "In Western Iraq, Fundamentalists Hold U.S. at Bay," New York Times, 29 August 2004

[98] United States Department of Defense, Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld and Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Richard Myers, 7 September 2004, http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/2004/tr20040907-secdef1281.html

"'smugglers whose economic lines are getting severed by coalition patrols; tribal sheiks angry over their loss of power with the ouster of their patron Saddam Hussein; jihadists of various nationalities who flock to Ramadi 'to get their war on'; nationalists who resent the occupation; citizens who lost friends or relatives in the war or post-war and are seeking revenge; and mercenaries - desperately poor Iraqis who have no hope of jobs in the shattered economy who get paid $50 or $100 to shoot at Americans."[99]

In addition to the regular guerilla warfare tactics, a new and powerful tool has emerged in Iraq; kidnappings and executing hostages. The Islamic insurgents used the powerful tactic of posting videos of gruesome beheadings of western and Arab hostages to terrorize foreigners and Iraqis working for the Coalition or the Iraqi government. Al-Qaeda affiliated foreign militants claimed responsibility for most of the beheadings. Several Islamic websites posted videos of Arab suicide bombers, where they state the reasons behind their participation in deadly operations against the "American infidels and Iraqi collaborators". A part of the executions was carried out against Shiite workers and truck drivers; an act which further aggravated the sectarian tension in Iraq. Although the American-led coalition and the Iraqi government announced on several occasions that they held al-Qaeda affiliated foreign militants and senior aids to notorious al-Qaeda leader in Iraq Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, attacks carried out by extremist militants continued.

A wave of attacks against Shiite masses, symbols and holly sites in Iraq has furthermore reflected the hardcore sectarian identity of the insurgency. In August 2003, Seyyed Mohammad Baqer al-Hakim was assassinated in a double car bombing in which more than 100 people died during Friday prayers at the shrine of Imam Ali in Najaf. The *Badr* corps was instantly mobilized and Mohammad al-

---

[99] Hess Pamela, "Ramadi 'exploding' with violence", United Press International, 11 October 2004

Hariri, the ex-representative of SCIRI in Syria and Lebanon said that the *Badr* forces captured three Saudis, one of whom had bought a house in Najaf before the attack. According to al-Hariri, the Saudi's house turned out to be full of TNT.

On March 2nd 2004, a few months after the blasts at Imam Ali's shrine, several attacks, some of them caused by suicide bombers and mortar shelling killed more than 140 people commemorating *Ashoura*, the climax of Imam Hussein's death after days of sufferings, in the cities of Karbala and Baghdad. As a result of this, another 400 Shiite pilgrims were injured in a scene of horror.

US spokesman Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt said Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian accused by the US of having links to Osama Bin Laden's al-Qaeda, was "a prime suspect, if not the prime suspect" in the planning of what he called "sophisticated" and "well co-ordinated" attacks[100]. The Americans were already warning of the dangers of a civil war, especially after they claimed that they had intercepted a letter written by al-Zarqawi, in which he exposed his hatred towards Shiites and his aim of igniting a civil war among Iraqis.

On October 24th 2004, the bodies of unarmed 45 Shiite recruits in the Iraqi National Guards were found near the village of Mandali, south of the Eastern city of Baquba and a website often used by Islamic militants affiliated with al-Qaeda, published a statement attributed to al-Zarqawi's group in which it claimed to have carried out the army recruits massacre[101]. Massacres in the ranks of the Iraqi National Guards and the police have continued to occur and the new recruits to these forces

---

[100] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/3524589.stm
[101] "Massacre of Iraqi army recruits", Sunday, 24 October, 2004,
http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/3948675.stm.

e mostly Shiites from impoverished classes and members of Shiite tribes who have a long tradition

vengeance and settling scores in a gangster style.

October 2004, a Shiite clergyman accused of "collaborating with the American infidels" was

eaded on a video tape posted on a website affiliated with Sunni extremists. This, along with

nerous other incidents in which Shiite recruits are executed, have shown a rising trend of

arianism in Iraqi cities and towns. In conjunction with this, a new group of media outlets have

launched, which reflect the deep sectarian divisions within Iraqi society. The *al-Rabita, al-*

ar, albasrah, ebaa and many other Sunni and Shiite websites often present news using aliases for

hiite supreme cleric Ayatollah Ali Sistani. This wide spread sectarianism in Iraqi society will be

ical factor in the future of the Iraqi people and especially Shiites who are eager for a share in

r after decades of deprivation.

VIII. FINAL SCENARIOS

After stating the preceding facts about Iraq's post war political process and the widespread sectarianism in Iraqi society, three scenarios for the future of Iraqi Shiites are now probable.

The first scenario is the establishment of a loose form of co-federalism. Although regionally it is not a probable scenario, because of sectarian (Shiite) and Kurdish elements, the current sectarian divisions in Iraqi society does make it a "last resort solution". Taking into consideration the historically difficult position of the Sunnis, the traditional rulers and privileged group, a likely solution is the division of the country effectively into three regions loosely connected to a weak central government. Fragmentation also allays the concerns of neighboring countries who fear the re-emergence of a strong Iraqi which could pose a serious threat to their interests. Such a scenario would also be probable as a solution after the Iraqi elections which will more than likely reflect the Shiite majority and deprive the Sunnis of their historical position of predominance in modern Iraq.

Under this scenario, a small scale civil war would erupt between armed, well trained but outnumbered Sunni militiamen and Shiite groups driven by a sense of revenge for past atrocities. Sunnis, who enjoy the support of neighboring countries on both governmental and public levels, would be in a better position to retain some of their lost power, but the Shiites, who the new situation would strengthen through their alliance with Iran, would be in a difficult position on the regional and international levels, which would drive them to accept the new geopolitical reality in America's absence. The only solution in this case would be dividing the country along ethnic (Kurdish) and sectarian lines, while distributing oil revenues among the three new regions. From the Sunni side, this would secure the prevention of a possible Shiite retribution to past atrocities

committed during Saddam's rule. The southern part of Iraq which is rich in oil and holy Shiite shrines, visited annually by thousands of pilgrims, would most probably be ruled by a middle class religious government with ties to Tehran and Washington, while power in the Sunni part would be shared between the former regime's elements and fundamentalists. The Shiite government would be formed according to this equation because a pro-Iranian government in the South is impossible due to regional-Sunni factors. At the same time, an anti-Iranian government would be unstable due to the influence Tehran has among Islamic groups such as the SCIRI and the Sadrites.

The second scenario would come about with re-assigning current prime minister Iyad Allawi, who could play an active role in convincing Sunni parties and groups to participate in writing the constitution and forming the new government. This would represent the culmination of American efforts to stabilize the country through the formation of a moderate government and the rebuilding of the armed Iraqi forces. A secular government similar to Allawi's, which can calm down Sunni fears over the Shiite's growing power, in addition to dealing with Kurdish ambitions in the north, will be a requirement for such a phase.

On the regional level, after the reelection of president George Bush for a second term in the White House, regional powers like Jordan and Saudi Arabia would most probably back such a government, while the Syrian and Iranian's position would still seek an American failure in post war Iraq. The new Iraqi government, in this case, would maintain its alliance with the American administration and would also gain popular support through announcing a schedule for the American led coalition's withdrawal from the country, as demanded by the Sunni factions. Shiites would remain in power and would have a share in power proportional to their majority status.

The third scenario would result out of an American decision to withdraw prematurely relying on a weak central government and miscalculations of its preparedness. The American government has announced on several occasions that it intends to gradually cut down its forces after the Iraqi elections. Such a scenario would pave the way for the return of local militias and tribal leaders, who still enjoy their powerful post-war status. Tribes and political groups who represent both Shiites and Sunnis would impose quotas on the central government while strengthening their military positions versus their rivals. However, clashes between Shiite and Sunni groups would be imminent and would come as a result of mutual backlash and recriminations. Such a chaotic situation would last for a long period and would affect the whole region, widening the gap between Sunnis and Shiites. After the Americans were gone, many Sunnis in the region would consider this withdrawal a victory to the fundamentalist form of Sunni Islam. The hatred of this radical line of Islam and hatred for America is rivaled only by its hostility to Shiism, a concept which has become clear after the string of attacks against Shiite worshipers in Iraq[102].

The third scenario remains highly probable, especially after taking into consideration the big gap between the Bush administration's vision of a new Iraq and the expectations of the Shiites. Whereas some members of the administration have envisaged a Western-style democratic Iraq led by a secular pro-US government, Shiites seem to prefer an independent Iraq with a system of government that reflects their own culture and traditions and that does not serve as an American base in the Gulf[103].

---

[102] Nakash Yitzhak, "The Shi'ites and the Future of Iraq", Foreign Affairs, July/August 2003.

[103] Nakash Yitzhak, "The Shi'ites and the Future of Iraq", Foreign Affairs, July/August 2003.

IX. CONCLUSION

Saddam's rule strengthened the sectarian identity of Iraqi Shiites through repression, massacres and deprivation at both the economic and political levels. At the same time, the rise of Shiite fundamentalism as a strong opposition force and as a potential alternative to the Baath regime crystallized this identity *vis a vis* Arab and Iraqi nationalism. The Shiite fundamentalist's long history of sacrifice and repression alienated the Shiites from Saddam's regime whose agents used merciless collective ways to oppress the majority of the Iraqi population.

Attempt's by Saddam regime to face up to the dissident clergymen by creating a loyal religious leadership failed, and instead of creating a loyal bloc of religious Shiites allied with tribal leaders, Saddam's regime produced an underground popular movement, particularly after the assassination of Ayatollah Mohammad Sadeq al-Sadr. Through this, the regime only succeeded in further alienating the Shiite population.

Although the Shiite political map was ambiguous before the war on Iraq, the Shiite population's sectarian identity and affiliation were definitely clear after the regime's collapse. The Al-Da'wa party, the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, the Sadrite movement and above all Ayatollah Ali Sistani, the highest Shiite prelate in Najaf, have all emerged as the most popular representatives of Iraqi Shiites; a fact resembled through the popular participation in demonstrations organized by al-Sadr and SCIRI, in addition to the mass commemoration of Imam Hussein's death. The Shiite political groups' alliance in the next elections, which is supported by Ayatollah Sistani, and al-Sadr's anticipated participation in the political process, reflects a persistence towards institutionalizing the Shiite majority status in Iraq.

After the results of the Afghan elections in 2004, in which the pro-American President Hamid Karzai won with a clear majority, it became clear that the American administration is more concerned about the symbolism of the process rather than its integrity. The neoconservative democratization approach to the region was and is challenged by the traditions of the local inhabitants and their political inclinations. The Afghan elections' expected results were an outcome of the limited choice voters had, especially because the strong candidates were from the sides formed in the civil war before the emergence of the Taliban.

In Iraq, the elections' outcome in January limited the choice of the Shiite voters to a broad coalition "blessed" by their spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, who has made it clear that his primary goal is to institutionalize the Shiite majority in all future Iraqi political bodies. The American presence and influence in Iraq will most probably barter the Iraqi Shiite majority for a stable government that is non-hostile to American interests in the region and which would eventually guarantee Washington a minimal, but much needed, success. In essence, the fall of Saddam's regime and the return of Shiite exiles and their militias marked the end of an era where the Shiite majority was not a partner in power.

X. BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS

A. Jabar, Faleh (2003) The Shi'ite Movement In Iraq (London: Saqi Books).

Abu Jaber, Kemal (1966). The Arab Baath Socialist Party. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Al-Chemrani, Ali. (2003). Siraa' Al-Addad. London: DAR ALHIKMA

Al-Khalil, Samir. (1989). Republic of Fear: The Inside Story of Saddam's Iraq. Chicago: Pantheon Books.

Al-Khirsan, Salah. (2001). Al-Tiyyarat Alsiyasiyah fi Kurdistan Al Iraq. Beirut: Albalagh Publishers.

Al- Nafisi Abdullah (1973), "The Role of Shiites Towards Iraq's Modern Political Evolution", Beirut: Al-Tayyar Publishing House.

Batatu, Hanna. (1978). The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq, Book III. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Chemran, Al-Ojaily. (2000). Al-Kharitah Al-Siyasiyah Lil-Moaaradah Al-Iraqiyah. London: DAR ALHIKMA

Chomsky, Noam (1999). Acts of aggression : policing "rogue states". New York : Seven Stories.

Clark, General Wesley K. (2003) Winning Modern Wars: Iraq, Terrorism, and the American Empire. New York: Public Affairs.

Cockburn, Andrew (1999). Out of the ashes : the resurrection of Saddam Hussein. New York, N.Y.: HarperCollins Publishers.

Cole R.I., Juan and Nicki R. Keddie (1986). Shi'ism and Social Protest. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Cordesman, Anthony H., & Hashim, Ahmed S. (1997). IRAQ: Sanctions and Beyond. Colorado: Westview Press.

Crawford, Harriet E. (1991) W. Sumer and the Sumerians. New York : Cambridge University Press.

Dalley, Stephanie (1998). The legacy of Mesopotamia. New York : Oxford University Press.

Dann, Uriel (1969). Iraq Under Qassem 1958-63. New York: Praeger.

Devlin, John (1976). The Baath Party: A History from Its Origins to 1966. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.

Fernea, Robert A. (1970) Shaykh and Effendi: Changing Patterns of Authority among the Shabana of Southern Iraq.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Gallman, Waldemar (1964). Iraq Under General Nuri. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Ghareeb, Edmund (1981). The Kurdish Question in Iraq. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Graham-Brown, Sarah (1999). Sanctioning Saddam : the politics of intervention in Iraq. London ; New York : I.B. Tauris in association with MERIP.

Graham-Brown, Sarah (2002). Why another war? : a backgrounder on the Iraq crisis. Washington, DC : Middle East Research & Information Project.

Grummond, Stephen (1982). The Iran-Iraq War: Islam Embattled. New York: Praeger.

Halm, Heinz (1991). Shi'ism. Trans. Janet Watson. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Helms, Christine Moss (1984). Iraq, Eastern Flank of the Arab World. Washington: Brookings Institution.

Hiro, Dilip (2002). Iraq : in the eye of the storm. New York : Thunder's Mouth Press ; Nation Books.

Hiro, Dilip. (2001). Neighbours, Not Friends: Iraq and Iran After The Gulf Wars. London: Routledge.

Hitti, Philip K. (1968) Makers of Arab History. New York: Harper and Row.

How to build a new Iraq after Saddam / Patrick Clawson, editor. Washington, DC : Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2002.

Husseini, Jaafar. (2003). Ala Hafat al-Hawiya. London: Dar al-Hikma.

Ireland, Philip (1938). Iraq: A Study in Political Development. New York: Macmillan.

Kelidar, Abbas (1979). The Integration of Modern Iraq. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Kerr, Malcolm (1971). The Arab Cold War. London: Oxford University Press.

Khadduri, Majid (1969). Republican Iraq. London: Oxford University Press.

Krasno, Jean E. (2003). The United Nations and Iraq : defanging the viper. Westport, Conn. : Praeger.

Longrigg, Stephen Hemsley (1925). Four Centuries of Modern Iraq. London: Oxford University Press.

Mackey, Sandra (2002). The reckoning : Iraq and the legacy of Saddam Hussein. New York : Norton.

Nakash Yitzhak (2003), The Shi'is of Iraq, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Niblock, Tim (1982). Iraq: The Contemporary State. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Pollack, Kenneth M. (2002). The threatening storm : the case for invading Iraq. New York : Random House.

Raouf, Adel. (2002). Iraq Bila Qiyada. Damascus: Derasat Iraqiyah.

Record, Jeffrey (2004). Dark Victory: America's Second War Against Iraq. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press.

Simon, Reeva (1986). Iraq Between the Two World Wars. New York: Columbia University Press.

Woodward, Bob (2004). Plan of Attack. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Wiley, Joyce N. (1992). The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc

Thesiger, Wilfred (1964). The Marsh Arabs. New York: Dutton.

Tripp, Charles (2002). A history of Iraq. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

"Political statement of the Iraqi Opposition Conference in London, 14-16 December 2002", 07 January 2003, http://www.kurdmedia.com/reports.asp?id=1219

Rangwala Glen, "IRAQ'S MAJOR POLITICAL GROUPINGS", 1 October 2002, http://www.iraqwatch.org/perspectives/rangwala-100102.htm.

Roy Parviz Mottahedeh, "History, religion, power: understanding Iraqi Shiites", THE DAILY STAR (Beirut), 8 August 2003.

Shiite Contender Eyes Iraq's Big Prize, Time, 3 May 2003.

"The Iraqi Marshlands: A Pre-War Perspective", The Crimes of War Project, 7th March 2003, http://www.crimesofwar.org/special/Iraq/news-marshArabs.html.

United States, Congress report, Iraq: U.S. Regime Change Efforts and Post-Saddam Governance (Washington: August 25, 2004).

United States Department of Defense, Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld and Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Richard Myers, 7 September 2004, http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/2004/tr20040907-secdef1281.htm

Wright, Claudia. "Iraq: New Power in the Middle East,"Foreign Affairs, 58, Winter 1979-1980, 257-77.

EDITORIALS

Al-Hayat Newspaper (Arabic), 10 November 2003.

Corriere della Sera (Italy), 25 June 2003.

INTERVIEWS

Mr. Fakhri Kareem, a prominent figure in The Iraqi Communist Party. (15-01-2003).

Dr. Farouk Abdallah, the secretary general of the Iraqi Turkmen Front, personal interview, Ankara 22nd of November 2003.

Mr. Jawad al-Maliki, spokesman of the Islamic Da'wa Party; Mr. Bayan Jabor and Mohamad Harriri representatives of the Supreme Council of The Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI).

Dr. Laith Kuba, an Iraqi opposition figure, phone interview, Washington DC., 12 July 2004.
Hazelton, Fran (Ed). (1994). IRAQ SINCE THE GULF WAR: Prospects for Democracy. United Kingdom: Zed Books Ltd.

Raz, Guy, CNN's correspondent in Najaf during the fight against al-Sadr, personal interview, London September 2004.