

Univerzita Karlova

Filozofická fakulta

Katedra Blízkého východu

Diplomová práce

Bc. Matěj Denk

The Development of Shi'i Political Islam in Post-Şaddām

Ḥusayn Iraq

Vývoj politické ší'y v postsaddámovském Iráku

Praha 2019

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Ondřej Beránek, Ph.D.

The author would like to express his gratitude to Mgr. Ondřej Beránek, Ph.D. for his flexibility and valuable remarks which highly improved the quality of this work and to my parents for the material support and patience which they showed during my rather prolonged studies.

Prohlášení:

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci vypracoval samostatně, že jsem řádně citoval všechny použité prameny a literaturu a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

V Praze, dne 1. srpna 2019

Matěj Denk

Klíčová slova:

Islám; ší'itský islám; politický islám; milice; Irák

Key words:

Islam; Shi'i Islam; Political Islam; militias; Iraq

Abstrakt (česky):

Tato práce se zabývá vývojem irácké politické ší'ý po pádu vlády Šaddāma Ḥusayna. Jejím hlavním předmětem zájmu je srovnání vývoje tří ší'itských politických hnutí – strany Da'wa, Nejvyšší rady pro islámskou revoluci v Iráku a hnutí kolem osoby Muqtady aš-Šadra na pozadí širšího historického vývoje ší'itské komunity v Iráku. I když je práce psána v anglickém jazyce, vychází ze studia jak anglických, tak arabských zdrojů a literatury s příležitostným rozšířením o zdroje francouzské a perské. Práce se zabývá ideologickou transformací jednotlivých stran, formováním koalic, využíváním milic k politickým cílům a vztahy k USA a Íránu. Práce dochází k závěru, že ší'itská irácká politická scéna je velmi roztržena, podléhá značnému íránskému vlivu a jednotlivé strany jsou často nástroji osobních ambicí svých lídrů, což znemožňuje sjednocení ší'itské pozice a vytvoření silnější centrální irácké vlády.

Abstract (in English):

This thesis is preoccupied with the development of Iraqi political Shi'a after the fall of Šaddām Ḥusayn. Its main area of interest is the comparison of three Shi'i political movements – Da'wa Party, the Supreme Council for the Islamic revolution in Iraq and the movement of Muqtadā aš-Šadr on the background of broader historical development of Shi'i community in Iraq. Although this thesis is written in English, it uses both English and Arabic sources and literature with occasional excursions into French and Persian sources. The thesis deals with the ideological transformation of the parties, formation of alliances, utilization of militias for political goals and the relations with the USA and Iran. The conclusion of the thesis is that the Iraqi Shi'i political scene is deeply fragmented, strongly influenced by Iran and its parties are often vehicles for personal political ambitions of its leaders which effectively prevents any unification of Shi'i political position and creation of strong central Iraqi government.

Contents

Introduction	9
1 Formation and history of Iraqi Shi'i community	14
1.1 Defining Shi'ism	14
1.2 The role of of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib in Shi'i Islam	14
1.3 The aftermath of Muḥammad's death	15
1.4 The lives of latter Imāms and Iraqi Shi'a to the 10 th century	16
1.5 The Shi'i situation in Iraq up to the 20 th century	18
1.6 The Shi'is during the formation and early decades of Iraqi state	22
2 The role of the Daʿwa Party in modern Iraqi politics	25
2.1 Chapter introduction	25
2.2 Muḥammad Bāqir aṣ-Ṣadr and the origins of Daʿwa Party	25
2.3 Daʿwa under the rule of al-Baʿṯ Party	27
2.4 Daʿwa during the years of post-Ṣaddām reformation	29
2.5 Nūrī al-Mālikī and beyond	31
3 Supreme Council for the Islamic revolution in Iraq	37
3.1 Chapter introduction	37
3.2 The formation and early years of SCIRI	37
3.3 SCIRI after the Iraq-Iran war	40
3.4 First years at the forefront of Iraqi politics	41
3.5 The transformation under the new leadership	44
4 Muḥammad aṣ-Ṣadr and his movement's impact on Iraqi politics	47
4.1 Chapter introduction	47
4.2 The White Lion	47
4.3 The underdog of Iraqi politics	49
4.4 Muḥammad's position toward the Shi'i establishment	51
4.5 Bête noire of Iraqi politics	53
4.6 Turn to nationalism	56
Conclusion	60
Bibliography	63
Western sources	63
Arabic and Persian sources	67
Documentaries	68

List of Abbreviations:

CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
IAO	Islamic Action Organisation
IGC	Iraqi Governing Council
IIG	Iraqi Interim Government
IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
IS	Islamic State
ISCI	Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq
ITG	Iraqi Transitional Government
MP	Member of Parliament
NIA	National Iraqi Alliance
PM	Prime Minister
PMF	Popular Mobilisation Forces
SCIRI	Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq
UIA	United Iraqi Alliance
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America

Note to transliteration

To ensure the utmost precision in transliteration of Arabic this work uses the English edition of the Hans Wehr transliteration of Arabic, with following exceptions:

- For letter Ghayn (غ) it uses the standard Hans Wehr symbol **ġ** instead of **ġ̄** present in the English edition.
- The letter Hamza (ء), or the so-called glottal stop, is not represented at the beginning of the word as it is pronounced automatically.
- The letter °Ajn (ع), is represented as an index ° to distinguish it more clearly from the letter Hamza.
- The tā' marbūṭa (ة) is represented as **t** only in the first noun of the construct state (status constructus), otherwise only the preceding vowel **a** is represented.
- To clearly distinguish proper names, the capitalization in this transliteration occurs according to the grammatical rules of the English language.
- The definite article “**al-**“ is assimilated according to the grammatical rules of the so-called sun and moon consonants in Arabic.

For transliteration from Persian, this study uses the United Nations system of transliteration, the version approved in 2012, with following exceptions:

- The letter Kha (خ) is for its similarity to Arabic Khā' (خ) transliterated as **k** instead of **x**.
- Letters °Ajn and Hamza are transliterated uniformly as ° in accordance with pronunciation in Persian.
- The he havās (ه) is transliterated as **e** in accordance with Persian pronunciation.
- To clearly distinguish proper names, the capitalization in this transliteration occurs according to the grammatical rules of the English language.
- The grammatical tool **ezāfe** is transliterated as **-e/-ye** in accordance with Persian pronunciation.

This transliteration applies to all nouns and names of Arabic/Persian origin with following exceptions:

- Names of states, which follow standardized English transliteration, e.g. **Iraq** and not **al-°Irāq**
- The names of capitals, which the author feels are too enrooted in English language and their strict transliterations would seem unnatural, e.g. **Baghdad** and not **Baġdād**
- For overall lucidity, this text sticks to the versions **Shi'i** and **Shi'a** / **Sunni** and **Sunna** for describing the two main branches of Islam and their adherents, instead of applying strict rules of transliteration
- Names of dynasties, e.g. **Umayyads** and not **al-Umawīyūn**

Introduction

Any book or analysis on Iraqi politics necessarily starts with claiming that the Iraqi politics is basically a contest between three distinct ethno-sectarian groups of which the modern Iraqi state consists – Kurds, Sunni Arabs and Shi'i Arabs. Most of them would follow up stating that the 'grand' struggle for power is among these three groups, but that each of them is not united and is composed of several, often antagonistic internal streams which fight for dominance within the group. The first part of this rather simplistic definition of Iraqi politics is exactly the prism through which the US administration saw Iraq when the operation Iraqi Freedom was initiated in 2003. US deemed Iraqi society to be deeply sectarian and thus the plans for Iraqi future, albeit vaguely defined at that time, were based on the sectarian pattern, denying that any Iraqi nationalism had ever taken deep roots within the society.

The fall of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn brought a true shake-out on the political scene of Iraq. Not only was the brutal dictator and his associates deprived of any power, which they held for decades, but the end of the Ba'ṭist regime effectively meant, that the Sunni Arab population which was in some form ruling the country for centuries, was suddenly shorn of their privileged position and the Shi'i Arabs, who's strive for power could be traced to the very beginnings of Islam and who's ambitions were severely and bloodily crushed several times during Iraq's 20th century history, were the new decisive political power. Due to being the majority of the Iraqi society and permitted by the system of government introduced to Iraq by the USA which includes sectarian quotas in a somewhat similar manner as known in the Lebanese state system, Shi'i Arabs and their politicians have been crucial and determinative for the politics of the Iraq as a state. Yaḥyā al-Kabīsī describes the post-Ṣaddām political change as:

"لقد ضمّ الصراع في العراق بعد نيسان / أبريل 2003 طرفين؛ طرف 'المنتصرين' أو من يعتقدون أنهم منتصرون، ومن ثمّ فهذه هي اللحظة التاريخية التي لن تتكرّر لتثبيت مطالبهم القومية المذهبية، بل وحتىّ التاريخية (الشيعة والکرد)، وطرف 'المهزومين' الذين وجبت معاقبتهم لتماهيهم مع 'الدولة المنهارة' (السنة العرب). وقد كرّست طريقة تعامل الأميركية مع السنة بوصفهم 'أقلية'، شكل هذا الصراع ليتحوّل إلى أمرٍ واقع."¹

Thousands of pages have been covered with analyses of the political development of Iraq after the demise of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn's rule over Iraq. The purpose of this work is not

¹ يحيى الكبيسي، "العراق: الاحتجاجات وأزمة النظام السياسي"، سياسات عربية 2 (أيار / مايو 2013): 85.

to compete with or oppose what has been written. This work's aim is to provide an account of what happened in Iraq in last approximately sixteen years through the prism and perspective of one Iraqi community – the Iraqi Shi'is.

The paramount importance of Shi'i political actors in the current Iraqi state system practically gives the Shi'i political parties the fate of their country in their own hands. Nevertheless, despite being part of one ethno-sectarian group which automatically conveys certain attributes not only to the Western observer, the Shi'i political parties are far from being united and are in fact often deeply antagonistic. The purpose of this thesis is to track these complicated relations among main Shi'i parties and to describe their contradictory tendencies to contribute to the clarification of such a complicated issue as the Iraqi politics is.

The research into Iraqi Shi'ism is relatively new, as Shi'ism had been traditionally associated with Persian cultural and political sphere. Among the classical incursion into the subject, Nakash's *The Shi'is of Iraq* are the most praised, but the oeuvre describes the older history of Shi'i community. Momen's *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam* and Cole's *Sacred Space and Holy War* provide more general overview of Shi'i history and tradition. The history of Shi'i clergy and its transnational links are the main focus of French scholars Luizard, Hachem and especially Louër, but they do not discuss the practical political implications or only partially. The same goes for the newer volumes of Sayej and Corboz.

There are many books and articles about the American invasion and occupation of Iraq, some better than the other. Gordon and Trainor are probably the most comprehensive, Rayburn provides informative but strongly security-oriented view on Iraq during the US presence. Arguably the most insightful account of post-2003 Iraq is Cockburn's *Muqtada al-Sadr and The Battle For The Future of Iraq*, but this masterpiece is more than ten years old and does not cover the recent developments. An exhaustive depiction of post-American Iraq is yet to see the light of the day.

There are generally two axes of research within all the literature. First is the America-oriented / Iraq-oriented axis, the second is the politically-oriented / religiously-oriented axis. This thesis is certainly an Iraq-oriented description, even though it cannot do without some USA-related references, but when it comes to the latter axis, this thesis attempts to assess both the political and religious impacts and implications of the contemporary Iraqi affairs.

To fully describe the political evolution of a scene as varied as the Iraqi one is would require an analysis of a different dimension. The purpose of this thesis is neither to be in any way definitive and comprehensive list of Shi'i political actors nor all-embracing description of Iraqi political events after March 2003; it rather aims to outline the general trends of political participation of Iraqi Shi'is through historical analyses of main Shi'i political actors, their developments, relations and main bones of contention which characterizes the Iraqi politics of today.

To understand the amities and enmities which characterize Shi'i political scene of the last sixteen years, one has to necessarily uncover the roots of the parties and circumstances under which they had been formed. For many parties the years of repression under the Ṣaddām Ḥusayn's regime or their years in exile are formative cornerstones of their inner identity within the Shi'i political milieu. For this reason, short historical excursions into the days before the fall of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn are indispensable in order to grasp the post-2003 situation.

As one has to go deeper into the history to understand the current Shi'i developments, one also needs to go broader. Several forces which are external to our main point of focus arose within this thesis when it is unavoidable to mention them, for they have profound effect on the community. These forces may be domestic, as the Shi'i relation with Sunnis and Kurds and their political developments and especially the Sunni resentment toward Shi'i-oriented central government; or international, mainly in relation to two powers, one global and one regional, which are deeply intertwined with the Iraqi political situation, those being the USA and Iran.²

Thus, after the introduction, the first chapter serves the purpose of a historical outline of the Iraqi Shi'i community and its long strive for political recognition, to allow us to better understand the gravity of the change which came with the 2003 invasion. The chapter is by no means a definitive and comprehensive history of the Shi'i community and its politics in the area of today's Iraq through the past fourteen centuries. Its purpose is to seek and underline the main situations and developments which contributed to and ultimately resulted in the state of affairs in which Shi'is found themselves in the second half of the 20th century. It should point out the exasperation of Shi'i people in their struggle for political recognition and thus highlight the change of their status covered in subsequent

² Another regional power with its interests in Iraq is Turkey, but its role in Iraq is omitted in this thesis. For more detail see صاحب, خالد عدنان. "التنافس الإيراني التركي في العراق بعد 2003." الرسالة, جامعة النهدين, 2015.

chapters. This chapter also aspires to refute the somehow enrooted perception of Shi'i Islam being predominantly and overwhelmingly Persian (Iranian). Drawing the difference between Arab and Persian Shi'ism will further prove essential in recognizing the importance of Iraqi nationalism and in the varied relationships Shi'i parties have with Iran.

The second chapter is dedicated to the 'mother of all Shi'i parties' the Da'wa Party. The chapter uncovers the reasons of the Shi'i turn from traditional quietism to political participation, explores the national and international nature of the party, its relationship with Iran and stance toward Iranian revolution and years of repression under the Ba'ṭist regime. This historical perspective proves crucial not only in assessment of Da'wa's comeback to political spotlight, which it has enjoyed since its return to Iraq, but also in understanding the rivalry with other Shi'i parties. The last part of the chapter will describe the role of Da'wa's most successful politician Nūrī al-Mālikī in contemporary Iraq and what changes his replacement in the post of prime minister meant for Iraq and for the party.

The third chapter centers around the development and influence Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), later renamed to Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), had on its homeland. The story of SCIRI/ISCI will provide us with a different perspective on the nature of Shi'i political participation than the one provided by the case of Da'wa. The chapter will focus on the pivotal role of al-Ḥakīm family in the organization and will preoccupy itself with establishing the role Iran has played in SCIRI/ISCI's formation and success. It will demonstrate the importance of 'strongmen' in the Iraqi politics and in general the extent to which party leaders are connected to the party and how they sometimes constitute a political brand on their own. In the later part of the chapter, SCIRI/ISCI will provide us with the utmost example of Shi'i political fragmentation and political reorientation which is characteristic for the last approximately five years of Iraqi politics.

Finally, the fourth chapter explores the ventures of probably the most controversial but at the same time the most seasoned and artful Iraqi politician Muqtadā aṣ-Ṣadr and his followers. This chapter will provide an interesting comparison to the case of SCIRI/ISCI when it comes to assessing the roles of Shi'i political leadership, the centrality and cohesiveness of the political formations. Ṣadrism movement also presents a unique case by being in opposition to those parties which were 'born and raised' in exile during the years of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn's rule and how important fact does it play in Iraqi politics. Last but not

least, it will show us the invariance within the top ranks of Iraqi politics and the changing nature of alliances Iraqi politicians must be prepared to embrace if they want to stay at the top.

For the sake of clear arrangement, the Chicago Manual of Style is used as its citation norm. When quoting, the thesis follows the original language of the given text, otherwise English mutation or transliteration is adopted.

The newly created political system has favored Shi'is on the claim that they are the demographical majority and thus the Shi'i parties are the true powerbroker in post-2003 Iraq. To understand today's Iraqi politics, one has to understand the internal politics and dynamic of Iraqi Shi'ites. Apart from its sectarian nature, the current Iraqi political system has another characteristic and that is the overwhelming array of political parties. The number of parties even within the sectarian bounds is constantly changing and many of them are fairly unknown even to the general Iraqi public. The three parties, which this study follows, should thus be understood as being examples of broader political streams.

Such a system leads to coalition building process before any elections in which parties of varying size and impact join their forces to gain the upper hand in the upcoming elections. But even though the first two parliamentary elections saw a broad Shi'i coalition, "the different Shi'i parties are ideologically estranged from each other, with a number of strong and influential personalities moving in different directions, while at the same time attempting to maintain Shi'i predominance in Iraqi politics."³ To unravel the dynamics one must necessarily turn first to the history.

³ Sophie A. Edwards, "Sectarian friction and the struggle for power: party politics in Iraq post-2003," in *Political Parties in the Arab World: Continuity and Change*, ed. Francesco Cavatorta and Lise Storm (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 168.

1 Formation and history of Iraqi Shi'i community

1.1 Defining Shi'ism

According to The Encyclopaedia of Islam Shi'a "in the broad sense, refers to the movement upholding a privileged position of the Family of the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt [q.v.]*) in the political and religious leadership of the Muslim Community."⁴ What we now generally understand as Shi'i Islam is designation to one of two most prominent sects in nowadays Islam. But the term itself is misleading. It implies a single coherent movement. There is not one Sunni Islam and when it comes to the Shi'a this stands even more so. Shi'ism is a broad term which assembles a variety of movements of various strength and importance and whose only unifying element is belief, that after the death of prophet Muḥammad, his cousin and son-in-law ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib should have ascended to the leadership of Muslim community, which should be therefore based on the principle of kinship.

This perspective is countered by Sunnis who sought the leadership be given to the wisest and most pious. This schism is the cornerstone of Sunni-Shi'i competitive relationship. The importance of this tension cannot be exaggerated. Shi'a emerged as an opposition towards Sunnism and as such Shi'a always defined itself with respect to the Sunna which prevailed in the initial quarrel. This political perspective was the only leading difference between those two sects – all theological perspectives and dogmas were added to this initial political clash in later centuries as the differences, hatred and wrongdoings continued. These historical events are nevertheless taken very seriously by today's communities and especially Shi'is feel very much connected to their history even after many centuries, thus, an overview of the historical background is in place.

1.2 The role of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib in Shi'i Islam

All Muslims recognize ʿAlī as one of the leading figures of Islam but only Shi'is believe, that ʿAlī was designated by prophet Muḥammad as his successor. There is little doubt that those two men were close. Muḥammad was raised by his uncle and thus his cousin ʿAlī was more like a brother to him. Shi'i historiography stresses ʿAlī's early acceptance of

⁴ Wilferd Madelung, "Shi'a," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, vol. IX*, ed. C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W. P. Heinrichs and G. Lecomte (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 420.

Muḥammad teachings⁵ and his bravery during prophet's escape from al-Makka when he was pretending to be prophet himself to deceive his assassins. ʿAlī's right to succession is viewed as indisputable by Shi'is because of his designation as a future leader of umma⁶ by prophet himself on several occasions, first being as early as at ʿAlī's thirteenth year of age.⁷ Shi'is than stress the importance of ʿAlī's deeds and competences which were bestowed upon him by the prophet.

However, two events are seen crucial in linking ʿAlī to Muḥammad. First of them is the marriage with Muḥammad's daughter Fāṭima. Although Muḥammad had four daughters, some branches of Shi'i Islam argue that three of them were born to Ẓadīja before her marriage to Muḥammad and thus Fāṭima is his only daughter, a fact which would ever more strengthen the bond between those two men. What is undisputable is that ʿAlī and Fāṭima's marriage had given the prophet his only two grandsons who lived to the adult life – Ḥasan and Ḥusayn - whose importance in Shi'i history is crucial.

Second incident occurred in Ġadīr Ẓumm, where prophet stopped on his way from his last hijra and according to Shi'i interpretation pronounced ʿAlī his successor. Sunnis on the other hand claim, that this proclamation was purely an expression of prophet's will to have ʿAlī in high esteem and take him as a friend with no political connotations whatsoever.

1.3 The aftermath of Muḥammad's death

Assuming, that the birth of Shi'ism was a process and not a single moment we can nevertheless distinguish several turning points in history of nascent Shi'ism. First of those would be the death of prophet Muḥammad after which Abū Bakr, Muḥammad's father-in-law, and not ʿAlī was elected as *kalīfa* – the prophet's deputy on Earth. This situation was a result of ʿUmar ibn al-Ḳaṭṭāb's political prowess as he at certain point wistfully exploited the rupture between various Islamic tribes and pledged allegiance to Abū Bakr.⁸ ʿUmar than

⁵ ʿAlī was allegedly third Muslim – after Muḥammad and his wife Ẓadīja. Some Sunni sources claims Abū Bakr to be the third. This dispute is generally solved by stating that Abū Bakr was first adult male who accepted Muḥammad's teachings for ʿAlī was a mere child by that time.

⁶ Umma = the Muslim community.

⁷ أبو جعفر محمد بن جرير الطبري، تاريخ الطبري: تاريخ الرسل والملوك، الجزء الثاني (القاهرة: دار المعارف بمصر، 1968)، 320-321.

⁸ Classical work on this subject is Madelung, Wilferd. *The succession to Muḥammad: A study of the early Caliphate*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

secured for himself a chief position among Abū Bakr's advisors and the transition of power to his hands after the latter's death.

Umar's ten years rule was ended in 644 by his death. Before Umar passed away he put together a council of six to choose among themselves the next leader. Alī was one of those six chosen, but once again failed to secure the position for himself and Uṭmān ibn Affān, who was deemed to be weak and easily manipulated, became the third kalīfa. His twelve-years-long rule was ended by violence and the empire slid into civil war in which the main contestants for power were Alī and Uṭmān's relative Mu'āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān. The shifting outcome of the war was ended by the assassination of Alī in al-Kūfa by the hands of a renegade kārījī Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn Muljam. Alī was buried in nearby Najaf, which since then emerged as a pre-eminent Shi'i shrine. The death and burial of Alī on the Iraqi territory have an important implication for the Iraqi Shi'is identity.

According to the Shi'i principle of leadership being transferable by blood, Alī's eldest son Ḥasan (second Imām,⁹ first being Alī) was now the believed leader of umma, but his position within the society was weak and he was forced to submit to Mu'āwiya's claim who thus became the founder of the Umayyad dynasty which ruled the Islamic empire for next one hundred years. Because of his renouncement of the claim to the leadership, Ḥasan's right went to his younger brother (third Imām) Ḥusayn. Ḥusayn's fate was (as was his father's) sealed in Iraq when he led a rebellion against Mu'āwiya's son Yazīd and was surrounded and killed together with his companions at Karbalā' – moment of paramount importance to the Shi'i spirituality. The death of first and third Imām on the Iraqi soil is highly important symbolic sign. Iraq thus has become the foremost holy land of Shi'ism, the place of Shi'i woe.

1.4 The lives of latter Imāms and Iraqi Shi'a to the 10th century

The connection between Iraq and Shi'ism was strong from the very beginnings of Islamic history. Almost every Shi'i Imām is somehow connected to nowadays' Iraq and especially al-Kūfa was the traditional bastion of those in favor of Alī's cause. Two other Shi'i rebellions took place in this area after the death of Ḥusayn – one led by Sulaymān ibn Ṣurad and the other by al-Muḳtār at-Ṭaqafī, of which the second was temporarily successful, though paradoxically it supported the claim of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīya to Imāmate and

⁹ This work keeps the difference between Imām as describing the Shi'i spiritual leader and successor to prophet Muḥammad and imām as a leader of a prayer by mere capitalization in the former case.

not the orderly fourth Imām – °Alī Zayn al-°Ābidīn. The political disunity of Shi'is at the time of fourth, fifth and sixth Imām resulted in their almost nonexistent impact on state of affairs of their time, but that allowed them, especially the sixth Imām Ja°far aṣ-Ṣādiq, to distinguish Shi'a spiritually. Ja°far was summoned to al-Kūfa several times during his life but he resided in al-Ḥijāz. His son, the seventh Imām Mūsā al-Kāẓim was both imprisoned and subsequently killed in Iraq.

Brief hope for the Shi'i cause was alive during the reign of ḵalīfa al-Ma'mūn, who pronounced °Alī al-Riḍā, the eighth Imām, his successor, but this hope never materialized given the untimely and suspicious death of °Alī during al-Ma'mūn's life. His son, the ninth Imām, Muḥammad al-Jawād at-Taḳī, was also in al-Ma'mūn's favor and became his son-in-law but had never been given any political role. Generally, the Abbasids wanted to have Imāms under control, so they were forced to settle in Iraq under the watchful eyes of ḵulafā'. Tenth and eleventh Imāms, °Alī al-Hādī and Ḥasan al-°Askarī, lived all their lives in Iraq – in house arrest in Sāmarrā', then Abbasid capital. Whether the hidden sanctuary of twelfth Imām Muḥammad al-Mahdī after his occultation is located in Iraq is impossible to assess, but we can nevertheless successfully claim, that he was born there.

Apart from the personal history of Imāms, the history of Shi'i community is deeply intertwined with the area of nowadays' Iraq. To describe the history of Shi'is is, especially during the early stages of their development, an uneasy task given not only by the lack of sources but furthermore by the vagueness of the Shi'i community itself which split and divided at almost any possible and impossible occasion. The line of Imāms, as recognized by the Twelvers today, was not the most politically important back then and they themselves were often totally politically marginal. Pierre-Jean Luizard observes that: “C'est à partir de la disparition du troisième Imam, Husayn, que commencèrent à se multiplier les prétendants à l'imamat à chaque succession – quand l'Imam défunt n'était pas purement et simplement décrété mahdi et le dernier de la lignée. Les Imams chiites, notamment Zayn al-Abidīn, Muhammad al-Bâqir, Ja'far al-Sâdiq et Mûsa al-Kâzim, eurent parfois le plus grand mal à se faire reconnaître comme tels.”¹⁰

Nonetheless, the 'Shi'i' idea of leadership of umma being accessible and permissible only to (various!) relatives of prophet Muḥammad was very much alive. Both the Umayyads and Abbasids had to surpass many rebellions perpetrated in name of one or another 'Imām',

¹⁰ Pierre-Jean Luizard, *Histoire politique du clergé chiite* (Fayard, 2014), 19.

and we should not forget, that the Abbasid revolution was, at least in its beginnings, Shi'i in nature (or more precisely, Shi'i in words) hence the Abbasids claimed that the Imāmate was transferred to them from Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanaḥfiya's son Abū Hāšim °Abdullāh.

Very important figure of early Shi'ite history is al-Muḥtār aṭ-Ṭaqafī who was at his time much more politically important than the contemporary Imāms and who led the rebellion in Iraq.¹¹ Moojan Momen links the importance of Iraq for Shi'ism to the ever-present rivalry between Iraq and Syria.¹² When Sunni Umayyads chose Syria as their seat of power, Iraq logically upheld Shi'ism. There the Shi'ism encountered theological concepts of other religions which led to vivid disputes and creation of ḡulāt – religious groups or sects which blended Shi'ism with those non-Islamic concepts. The Abbasid revolution opposed this process and by making Iraq their seat of power, they brought it into the sphere of Sunni orthodoxy. This state of affairs continued, with a little hiatus, when al-Ma'mūn proclaimed succession of the eighth imam during the Abbasid civil war described above, to the 10th century. In this time the Shia was present in Iraq, but politically inactive.

1.5 The Shi'i situation in Iraq up to the 20th century

The change came with the Buyid dynasty. Although originally Zaydis turned to Twelver Shi'ism for political reasons¹³, and despite being officially subjected to the Abbasid *kuḷafā'*, these real rulers of Iraq from 945 onwards¹⁴, were, together with the Hamdanid dynasty in northern Iraq and later Mazyadids in south, part of a broader trend in Middle Eastern public affairs of that time – Shi'i dynasties were on the rise everywhere.¹⁵ This political change resulted in Shi'i emancipation – Shi'is could hold important and official positions, Shi'i festivities could be openly celebrated and because Shi'a was not persecuted, its theology could be openly debated. That is the reason, why was Iraq, and in this time mostly Baghdad, even though the city of Qom started to gain prominence from the second

¹¹ As mentioned earlier, in the name of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanaḥfiya and not °Alī Zaynu al-°Ābidīn.

¹² Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 66.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁴ And Luizard rightly observes that Buyids, were “les premiers souverains iraniens à professer le chiisme duodécimain, alors même que se poursuivait, sous leur patronage, l'élaboration doctrinale de l'imamisme.” in Luizard, *Histoire politique du clergé chiite*, 20.

¹⁵ But as Momen importantly reminds us that “Shi'i domination was only political during this time and Shi'ism, despite being given a free hand, was unable to make any substantial inroads on the Muslim masses.” in Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, 82.

half of eighth century, home of many Shi'i scholars who shaped distinctively the Shi'i ideology. We can name Šayḡu al-Mufīd, aš-Šarīf al-Murtaḡā (also known as ʿAlamu al-Hudā) or Šayḡu aṭ-Ṭā'ifa, the author of two out of four canonical collections of traditions of Imāms, as examples. Even though these theological heavyweights established the character of Twelver Shi'ism, Luizard claims that "jusqu'à la fin du XV^e siècle, cependant, la distinction entre ismaéliens, ghulāt et duodécimains resta difficile à établir."¹⁶

The Shi'i control over Iraq came to an end with the arrival of Seljuks and their subsequent conquest of Baghdad in 1055. Staunchly Sunni Seljuks strongly opposed anything Shi'i. Their perspectives on Shi'ism are best expressed by Nezām al-Mulk in his سیاستنامه:

"بقول دعوی مسلمانی کنند وبمعنی فعل کافران دارند وباطن ایشان لعنهم الله بخلاف ظاهر باشد وقول بخلاف عمل ودین محمد مصطفی را صلی الله علیه وسلم هیچ دشمن از ایشان شوم تر وبنفرین تر نیست و ملک خداوند عالم را هیچ خصمی از ایشان بتر نیست وکسانی که امروز در این دولت قوتی ندارند و دعوی شیعت میکنند از این قومند ودر سر کار ایشان می سازند وقوت می دهند ودعوت می کنند وخداوند عالم را برآن می دارند که خانه بنی العباس را بردارد."¹⁷

Nevertheless, in parts of Iraq where the power of Seljuks hadn't been felt Shi'i dynasties prospered, most prominently the Mazyadids in al-Ḥilla and Uqaylids who replaced Hamdanids. In the beginning of thirteenth century another invader changed the political reality of the Middle East. Mongols were impartial in their treating of Muslims, Sunni or Shi'i, so while Sunnis drew the short straw in this political change, Shi'i position relatively bettered. The political situation for Shi'is remained mostly the same when it comes to the ages after Timurid invasion. Al-Ḥilla remained the main Iraqi center of Shi'i theology harbouring such authorities in the field as al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī, or al-Muḡaqqiq al-Ḥillī who worked mostly on Shi'i jurisprudence; in Baghdad Persian Haydar Āmulī sought to interconnect Shi'ism with mysticism. At the end of Mongol-ruled empires, al-Ḥilla ceased to play the prominent role as Shi'i community in Lebanon grew in importance.

There is very little doubt about the gravity of the influence which the creation of Safavid empire in Persia at the beginning of the 16th century had over the history of Shi'i (political) Islam. Even though the Safavid Empire ruled over the area of contemporary Iraq only several decades, the proximity of great Shi'i state had a profound impact on Iraq. One of the most striking examples was the establishment of Shi'i educational centers, most importantly in Isfahān, where the scholars could be trained. Since then, scholars would often migrate from Iraq to Persia and vice versa and the Shi'i theological networks began to take

¹⁶ Luizard, *Histoire politique du clergé chiite*, 23.

¹⁷ ابو علی حسن بن علی خواجه نظام الملک, سیاستنامه (تهران: کتابفروشی زوار, 1965/1344), 210-211.

roots. The dynamic between Iraq and Persia played also an important role in the great theological dispute of the 17th and 18th century and that is the great Aḳbārī-Uṣūlī struggle. The clash of these two mutually exclusive approaches toward interpretation of the Shi'i laws in the absence of the hidden Imām was going to change the Twelver Shi'a forever. The main bone of contention in this dispute was the rightfulness of using reason in religious jurisprudence, seemingly theoretical question which nevertheless importantly influenced the position of Shi'i clergy in the society – according to Aḳbārīs the mujtahids could be only judges, the Uṣūlīs on the other hand allowed the clergy to take the role of rulers and collectors of alms.¹⁸

The Safavid empire's dissolution and the subsequent political instability in Persia which continued to the middle of the 18th century influenced the outcome of the great dispute when large numbers of Persian clergymen, predominantly Uṣūlī, fled to traditionally Aḳbārī Iraq, which resulted in so called neo-Aḳbārī dominance in Iraq¹⁹, mostly associated with its most vocal supporter Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī, who actively persecuted the Uṣūlīs. Nevertheless, it was also the instability in Persia, which caused that it was “à Karbala que s'installa Muhammad Bâqir Akmal Vâhid Behbahâni ... [qui] réussit à convaincre les religieux des villes saintes d'abandonner l'akhbârisme, école de pensée qui dominait le chiisme depuis le milieu de la période séfévide.”²⁰

“From the late eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth, the Shi'ite shrine cities of Najaf, Karbala and later Samarra emerged as key trainers of Shi'ite clergy for the whole world and as places where Iranian and Indian dissidents could go into exile.”²¹ Because of the weak decentralized Ottoman rule culminating in first decades of the 19th century, “the shrine city of Karbala began to evolve into a virtual city-state, ruled by a coalition of local notables, urban gangs, and ulema.”²² Since 1831 Ottomans were seeking to once again rule Iraq directly, which resulted in the siege and subsequent occupation of Karbalā' in 1843. Up to its occupation by the Ottoman troopers, during which the holy sites were transferred into military barracks, Karbalā' was the leading spiritual and schooling Shi'i center in Iraq.

¹⁸ For detailed and authoritative account see Heern, Zackery M. *The Emergence of Modern Shi'ism: Islamic Reform in Iraq and Iran*. London: Oneworld Publications, 2015.

¹⁹ Juan Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shi'ite Islam* (New York, London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), 66.

²⁰ Luizard, *Histoire politique du clergé chiite*, 29.

²¹ Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War*, 25.

²² *Ibid.*, 23.

However, this unique position was lost given the decimation and was further emphasized when “Muhammad Mahdi Tabâtabâ’i Burûdjerdi Bahr al-Ulûm ... transféra le centre de gravité religieux de Karbala à Najaf, où il s’installa.”²³ Since then, to reside in Karbalâ’ was “peut être une façon de s’écloigner de Najaf et d’indiquer qu’il entend brandir l’étendard de la révolte à l’instar de Husayn.”²⁴ This dichotomy is deeply embedded in the Shi’i spirituality and reflects the two approaches Shi’i Muslim can have towards involvement in society – restrain (the so-called Ḥasan way) or revolt (the so called Ḥusayn way) and will clearly demonstrate itself in the relationship between Da‘wa Party and Islamic Action Organisation.

In general, the Shi’is being a minority in the Ottoman empire faced several restrictions, both economic and political, from the hands of their Sunni overlords, but these restrictions were felt differently during the time. “Twelvers often benefited from times of Ottoman weakness and decentralization and felt greater restrictions during times of renewed Ottoman strength.”²⁵ The holy cities also benefited greatly from the pilgrimage and corps economy and received significant donations from many Shi’i rulers, especially from India.

The transfer of Shi’i power center to Najaf helped with another crucial process and that was the conversion of Iraqi tribes to Shi’ism. Nakash argues, that “there is no evidence that would suggest that the Shi’is were ever close to forming the majority of the population in Iraq before the nineteenth or even the twentieth century.”²⁶ But since the 19th century an intentional campaign of proselytization of Shi’i believe among the tribes of southern Iraq was launched. Nakash constitutes three main reasons. First was practical, Najaf, Karbalâ’ and for some time al-Ḥilla were as cities on the brink of the desert logical hubs of local commerce and thus of encountering between the sedentary population and the nomadic tribes. Logically, some cultural exchange occurred. Secondly, because of the rise of Wahhâbî extremism in the Arabian peninsula, whose adherents threatened Iraqi Shi’i cities, and even ransacked Karbalâ’ in 1802; the conversion of tribes to Shi’ism would establish a buffer zone which could function as an effective defense of the holy Shi’i sites. The third reason lays in the inner situation of the tribes, who were seeking after new identity since the forced sedentarization launched by the Ottomans as part of necessary reforms of their empire. Ottoman sultan was

²³ Luizard, *Histoire politique du clergé chiite*, 31.

²⁴ Ibid., 50.

²⁵ Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War*, 17.

²⁶ Yitzhak Nakash, *The Shi’is of Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 25.

the nominal head of Sunni Islam, conversion to Shi'ism would thus be an act of rebellion or defiance against the foreign power.²⁷

1.6 The Shi'is during the formation and early decades of Iraqi state

Such was the situation on the eve of the First World War. When speaking about this conflict many tend to focus on the European theater and won't go further to the east than to Gallipoli, but the First World War was truly a global conflict and Iraq was one of its battlefields. The Ottoman sultan aspired to unite all Muslims against the colonial powers by declaring jihād, which proved at least partially successful, when it comes to the Iraqi front. Pan-Islamic feelings were harboured in Iraq since the break of the century thanks to the great Islamic revisionist Jamāluddīn Afqānī, who attended seminar in Najaf and who advocated pan-Islamism as a vehicle for expulsion of foreign Western colonial powers from the lands of Islam, and whose ideas resonated among Islamic scholars in Iraq. The Shi'i clergymen in Iraq were thus familiar with the concept and once the jihād had been declared, the clergy called the Shi'i tribes into arms. Many Shi'i clerics, including future marāji^c Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm, šayḫu aš-Šarī^ca Fethullāh Isfahānī or sons of Muḥammad Taqī aš-Šīrāzī, actively participated. Turkish army was joined by Shi'i tribal warriors to counter the British advancement from occupied al-Bašra. "Toutefois, ce sont les appels des mujtahid qui furent la cause réelle de la mobilisation du monde tribal. De fait, les bataillons de mujāhidīn étaient une force essentiellement chiite et tribale, dirigée par les ulémas, les sayyid et les cheikhs."²⁸

The jihād initiative was nevertheless wasted due to the discord between Arab and Turkish units. Especially during the crucial battle at aš-Šu^cayba, the Arab tribes used to engage in combat according to the 'hit and run' tactics, which they had been using for centuries. When under pressure, they would withdraw into the desert to regroup. That proved problematic when combined with the tactics of the regular Turkish units, who were suddenly left without the protection on flanks. Turks saw the Arab inability to withstand pressure as cowardness, of which they accused the tribes. The old animosity erupted and led to series of reprisals which eventually turned Ottoman and Arab forces one against the other. British troops were thus allowed to advance and by 1918 the occupation of Iraq was completed.

²⁷ Ibid., 25-31.

²⁸ Luizard, *Histoire politique du clergé chiite*, 121.

One of the most important milestones in the history of Iraqi Shi'a in the 20th century is the 1920 revolt, the first in the series of uprising or unrests in which Iraqi Shi'a was trying to claim its right to political power in Iraq.²⁹ The 1920 revolution and the events that led to the establishment of the Iraqi monarchy in 1921 must be seen in the context of post-World War I Middle East and especially in the somewhat ambiguous relationship of Britain and France – two allies who hadn't trusted each other. The British administration in Iraq organized a referendum on the future of the land, but its tendential pro-British wording led to its absolute refusal by the majority of Shi'i clergy led by Muḥammad Taqī aš-Šīrāzī.³⁰ It was precisely aš-Šīrāzī who as marjī^c initiated the whole revolution when the promises made by the British were not fulfilled. British didn't want to set Iraq loose because French would see this step as an attempt to destabilize their newly acquired colony - Syria - and they would reciprocate by voting against the UK's control over strategically important Mosul and Palestine. British started to withdraw their troops from Iraq in search to limit the costs and to help the shattered after-war economy. Arnold Wilson, the highest representative of the Great Britain in Iraq, proved to be ineffective in dealing with the situation. The well-known British agent Gertrude Bell who was working in Iraq to advise Wilson was very alarmed especially after Sunnis and Shi'is reached an unseen consensus during the holy month of Ramaḍān. Bell always saw Shi'is with distrust, she deemed them to be more fanatic than Sunnis because according to her Sunnis were following reason, but the Shi'is were following their clergymen.³¹ When in June 1920 the revolt took place the British government tried to conceal the scope of the unrest from the public scrutiny but essentially the British army was losing the fight. Eventually, the revolt was suppressed but the cost for the British taxpayers was extensive and the public opinion was disinclined to further Iraqi adventures.³² Wilson had resigned shortly after the uprising and was succeeded by Percy Cox, who was ordered to offer Mesopotamia to Fayṣal ibn Ḥusayn al-Hāšimī who had just been deprived of his Syrian throne. Later it was decided that Fayṣal should be affirmed as a new king by the plebiscite. The support for the king-to-be had

²⁹ For detailed account see عبد الله فهد. دور الشيعة في تطور العراق السياسي الحديث. الكويت: مكتبة آفاق, 2012.

³⁰ The few Shi'i clergymen who were inclined to support British claims to domination were led by the great ayatollah Mohammed Kāzem Yazdī. This group was even more marginalized after Yazdī's demise on 29th April 1919.

³¹ Reported in James Barr, *A Line in The Sand: Britain, France, and the Struggle That Shaped The Middle East* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 125.

³² Ibid., 113.

to be created, task entrusted to Percy Cox and Gertrude Bell. James Barr enlists two main pretenders to Fayṣal's claim – one of them was promptly exiled to Ceylon and the other was talked out of the idea by the British proconsul, the main argument being the pretender's age.³³ On June 21, 1921 Fayṣal arrived in al-Baṣra as Fayṣal I., which started the era of Iraqī monarchy. This act would seal the aspirations of Shi'a clergy to create an Islamic state in Iraq, but the revolution clearly showed the political potential the clergy had.

At first, the Shi'i clergy in Najaf saw the new Iraqī king as an ally against the Wahhābī extremists, but for Fayṣal the clergy represented a dangerous internal power center which had to be dealt with. The Iraqī kingdom chose the path of secularization and actively opposed further conversions to Shi'ism. The split between the religion and the state was in place and the Shi'i establishment in Najaf became distanced from the common Shi'i followers. As a result, the relations between the state establishment and clergy deteriorated to the point when clergymen would rather prefer the British rule back.³⁴ Shortly after the death of Fayṣal another Shi'i-instigated revolt took place but was promptly suppressed. The only important Shi'i politician of Iraqī kingdom was the protégé and later rival of famous Nūrī as-Sa'īd, Ṣāliḥ Jabr, who became for a short time the first Shi'i prime minister of Iraq, but overall the Shi'i community was excluded from the political process which led to their disenchantment with the regime and tilt towards communism, which would have direct and serious consequences on the creation of the Da'wa Party.

³³ Ibid., 124-125.

³⁴ Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, 116.

2 The role of the Da^ʿwa Party in modern Iraqi politics

2.1 Chapter introduction

If we had to pick among all the Iraqi parties one, which we would proclaim to be the most influential over the course of last decades, we would most likely get to a conclusion, that حزب الدعوة الاسلامية (the Islamic Da^ʿwa Party) is what we are looking for. Being established as a vehicle for Shi'i political resurrection, it played important role during the years of the rule of al-Ba^ʿṭ Party and even more after its demise. For almost thirteen years, the Da^ʿwa Party has been the leading Iraqi policymaker with three of its members serving as prime ministers (PM) of Iraq out of five PMs which were in office after Ṣaddām Ḥusayn. Furthermore, Da^ʿwa represents a distinctive phenomenon within the Iraqi Shi'i politics when it comes to its relationship with the clergy establishment. As such, it presents a logical choice to begin with on the journey through the Iraqi politics.

2.2 Muḥammad Bāqir aṣ-Ṣadr and the origins of Da^ʿwa Party

The fall of the Iraqi monarchy, toppled by clique of army officers in 1958, brought to power as prime minister ʿAbd al-Karīm Qāsim who, afraid of contra-coup or contra-revolution from various sides started shortly after his accession to political ascendancy to rely on leftist elements of Iraqi society as his power base. The communist ideology with its strong secular element was spreading rapidly especially among the young.³⁵ Such a change was perceived by the Shi'i clergy residing in the holy cities of Iraq as a direct threat to the religious values they represented and cherished. Some response was taken by the highest possible ranks of Shi'i hierarchy, most notably represented by fatwā issued in 1960 by renowned āyatullāh and future marjī^ʿ Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm prohibiting membership in the Communist party to believers, but the response with the greatest and most significant impact on Iraqi society for decades was the creation of the Da^ʿwa Party³⁶, a society of younger clerics centered in Najaf around their leader, Islamic political thinker, Muḥammad Bāqir aṣ-Ṣadr.

³⁵ Louër attributed part of the popularity of the Communist party among Shi'is to the similarity between Arabic expressions شيعي (šīʿī = Shi'i) and شيوعي (šuyūʿī = communist). Louër, *Shiism and Politics in the Middle East*, 14.

³⁶ Officially established in 1957, but their rise in importance is connected to the Qāsim administration era.

Muḥammad Bāqir aṣ-Ṣadr, the author of widely circulated books *فلسفتنا* (Our Philosophy, 1959) and *اقتصادنا* (Our Economics, 1961), aspired to reform the Muslim society and unite the ideas of Islam with the modern state, an idea which was significant for the 20th century Islamic discourse. It is somewhat difficult to distinguish Muḥammad Bāqir aṣ-Ṣadr's cofounders of Da'wa from the mere sympathizers with the movement given the overall reluctance of many clergymen to be associated with any political movement or party, but we can assert that the inner circles around Muḥammad Bāqir aṣ-Ṣadr included his cousins Muḥammad Ṣādiq aṣ-Ṣadr and Mūsā aṣ-Ṣadr, the later spiritual leader of Lebanese Amal movement, Mahdī al-Ḥakīm, son of the great ayatollah Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm, and later Ḥizbu'llāh ideolog Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlu'llāh.

The organization they created was modeled upon Egyptian *جماعة الاخوان المسلمين* (Muslim Brotherhood) and was active both socially and politically, the latter being unseen among the older quietist generation of clergymen. Louër remarks that “the relationship of the clergy to the Da'wa party is indicative of the manner, in which the Shia ulama understood their connection with politics. The creation of the party was itself a clear demonstration of the clergy's acceptance of the principle of a religious party ... [but] as the clergy saw it, politics was often to be seen not as an end in itself, but as a means to shore up the religious institution.”³⁷ At first, Da'wa's appeal was pan-Islamic in nature and “sought to attract Sunni members as well as Shia ones,”³⁸ but progressively it shifted to the solely Shi'i movement. What gave the movement the impetus was the emphasis on social questions, characteristic of Shi'i Islam of that time³⁹, and the overall weakness of Iraqi regime which allowed “to develop a new religious and communal identity [...] and to strengthen Shi'i groups, like the Da'wa and the clergy”⁴⁰.

It is important to notice that Da'wa was by no means the only Shi'i movement which started to operate at this time. As a challenge to the Najafī-centered Da'wa and more generally Najaf as the prime center of Shi'i religious schooling of that time Muḥammad al-Ṣīrāzī

³⁷ Laurence Louër, *Shiism and Politics in the Middle East*, trans. John King (London: Hurst & Company, 2012), 16.

³⁸ Joel Rayburn, *Iraq after America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2014), 11.

³⁹ See Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2006), 105.

⁴⁰ Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2012), 136.

proclaimed himself marjī^c and thus the leading theologian in Karbalā', city which had been long overlooked in Shi'i matters and wanted to regain its former glory. His vision of clergy involvement in politics, the 'Council of scholars' which would assemble the marāji^c of the day, anticipated Khomeynī's Velāyat-e faqīh. Al-Šīrāzī criticized Da^cwa for being a political party of the Western style - not supervised by the clergy and thus prone to undesired changes and together with his kinsmen formed the backbone of an alternative – منظمة العمل الإسلامي (Islamic Action Organisation, IAO).⁴¹

2.3 Da^cwa under the rule of al-Ba^ct Party

Iraqi political milieu changed dramatically when another coup d'état in July 1968 brought to power حزب البعث العربي الاشتراكي (Arab Socialist al-Ba^ct Party). Since the very beginning of its rule, al-Ba^ct started to drastically consolidate the power and eliminate any opposition, including the one coming from the Shi'i clerical circles. Da^cwa was quickly outlawed and after series of arrests and executions in 1974 forced to move underground. In 1977 Da^cwa neglected the prohibition of ritual processions that had been issued earlier. This was seen as a provocation by the authorities and the situation escalated into armed clashes between Da^cwa supporters and state security forces.

The first years of 1980s also experienced Da^cwa's first grave internal schism, when the circle around 'Alī al-Kūrānī demanded a change of party officials' voting system. This so-called Baṣeri schism (named after the place of origin of malcontents) resulted in creating a split organization, with limited lifespan.⁴²

Another dramatic change was the Iranian revolution at the beginning of 1979, which shattered the whole Middle East. Connections between Iranian and Iraqi Shi'a were traditionally strong and any dramatic change in any of those states was sure to have severe impacts on both. At first, the Da^cwa was divided in its stance towards the revolution. Although Da^cwa's political views were in many aspects similar to those of Khomeynī, the shah's regime was very supportive of Da^cwa not only because it was undermining the authority of Iraqi government, a long-time rival of Iran, but also as a competition to the clergy in Qom, who had been always critical to shah's regime. This was the reason, why Khomeynī wasn't close to the Najaf's Da^cwa circles during his forced sojourn there in 1970s. Thus, after

⁴¹ Louër, *Shiism and Politics in the Middle East*, 18.

⁴² Detailed account of the schism and its outcome is provided in Laurence Louër, *Transnational Shia Politics: Religious and Political Networks in the Gulf* (London: Hurst & Company, 2008), 173-4.

the victory of revolutionaries, it was the followers of al-Šīrāzī and not the Da[‘]wa who was the main Iraqi ally of the new regime. Nevertheless, Da[‘]wa had to choose whether or not to support the expansion of the revolution also on Iraq⁴³. When Muḥammad Bāqir aṣ-Ṣadr showed his sympathies for Kōmeynī, there was no coming back.

Starting May 22 Najaf was the center of mass demonstrations, vowing allegiance to aṣ-Ṣadr. This direct threat to the regime was brutally suppressed – many were executed, and aṣ-Ṣadr temporarily arrested. The ruling al-Ba[‘]t Party was not united in its approach to the Shi’i question, the supporters of president Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr being more moderate than the side of his party deputy Ṣaddām Ḥusayn. Nevertheless, after series of bomb attacks in April 1980 attributed to Da[‘]wa, Ṣaddām Ḥusayn’s harsh approach won - the leaders of the party were executed or forced to flee, mostly to Iran. Muḥammad Bāqir aṣ-Ṣadr was reportedly killed by nails which were driven into his head after he had watched his sister being raped.⁴⁴ This tale of Muḥammad Bāqir aṣ-Ṣadr’s brutal killing is well embedded in the imagination of Iraqi Shi’is and is reproduced in numerous Western narratives of the events, but always well-informed Cockburn provides different narrative claiming that Muḥammad Bāqir aṣ-Ṣadr was hanged.⁴⁵

The crackdown on Da[‘]wa could have proven to be fatal if not for Da[‘]wa’s external links. Since its foundation, Da[‘]wa was balancing between two identities. On one hand, it was deeply intertwined with the Iraqi political situation and thus playing role of a solely Iraqi party, on the other hand, thanks to being centered in the heart of Shi’i theological schooling system, it functioned for a long time as an international organization with pan-Islamic message. Students from all around the Shi’i world came to Najaf for education and brought back with them the ideals of Da[‘]wa. Members of Da[‘]wa were to be found all over the Shi’i world - Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlullāh in Lebanon, ‘Alī al-Kūrānī and ‘Izzu’d-Dīn Salīm in Kuwait, and others in Bahrain and Iran. These relations proved to be crucial in accommodating exiles fleeing Iraq.

Arguably the largest community had taken roots in Iran, where it was involved for a while with the newly established Iranian-formed Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) led by Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ḥakīm, but the growing accumulation of power in

⁴³ Rayburn, *Iraq after America*, 15.

⁴⁴ Story reported in Anthony Shadid, *Night Draws Near: Iraq’s People in the Shadow of America’s War* (New York: Henry Holt, 2005), 164.

⁴⁵ Patrick Cockburn, *Muqtada al-Sadr and The Battle For The Future of Iraq* (New York: Scribner, 2008), 42.

the hands of al-Ḥakīm led to the split and rivalry between those two entities.⁴⁶ Militant wing of Daʿwa to carry out attacks and assassinations was formed as a response to Ṣaddām Ḥusayn’s starting the Iraq-Iran war. Louër reports that in this time Daʿwa was very active in Kuwait, including subversive operations.⁴⁷ Other favourite locations of exile included Damascus and London.

During the 1980s Daʿwa organized two unsuccessful attempts on Saddam’s life, but the Iraqi security services effectively marginalized Daʿwa and by 1990s it had no significant power. Joel Rayburn argues, that it had virtually no influence over the Shi’a uprising, which sparked after the First Gulf War in 1991 in southern Iraq.⁴⁸

2.4 Daʿwa during the years of post-Ṣaddām reformation

In post-Ṣaddām Iraq, the Daʿwa Party is primarily associated with the figure of Nūrī al-Mālikī, the longtime Prime Minister of Iraq. But before al-Mālikī came to power, at the beginnings of the post-war Iraqi political reconciliation, Daʿwa was only one of many political parties and factions which were constituting the post-Ṣaddām political milieu. In his list of important Shi’i factions published in 2006 Vali Nasr almost left out Daʿwa and mentions it only briefly as having “a religious orientation, but clerics did not run it [Daʿwa]”⁴⁹. So who were the main contestants for Shi’i votes and support in post-Ṣaddām Iraq? Nasr lists three main Shi’i political groups: SCIRI, Ṣadrists and Quietists.

Before we indulge in the detailed account of those streams of Iraqi politics in the following chapters, short description needs to be formulated for the comprehensibility of this chapter. After their breakup with Daʿwa, SCIRI and its military wing Badr Corps, being trained and sponsored by the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), took logically strongly pro-Iranian stand. SCIRI was fighting alongside Iranians against Ṣaddām Ḥusayn in Iran-Iraq War and after its end they constituted pool for operatives in Ṣaddām’s Iraq in 1990s. On the other hand, Muqtadā aṣ-Ṣadr, the son of Daʿwa’s founder Muḥammad Ṣādiq aṣ-Ṣadr gained his popularity in poor Shi’a neighborhoods by taking a strongly anti-American position. Many claim that his prestige is based on his kinship with renowned Shi’i leaders and not on his own theological skills. Nasr goes as far as to claim, that Muqtadā was

⁴⁶ For further details see Chapter Four.

⁴⁷ Louër, *Shiism and Politics in the Middle East*, 64.

⁴⁸ Rayburn, *Iraq after America*, 19.

⁴⁹ Nasr, *The Shia Revival*, 193.

manipulated by others, ranging from IRGC to Alī Sīstānī,⁵⁰ fact which is ardently opposed by Cockburn.⁵¹ The participation of the third group of Quietists, embodied in one of if not the most respected Shi'a clerics to these days Alī Sīstānī⁵², in politics may seem as an oxymoron, but the role of Sīstānī was more reconciliatory than power-seeking in nature. In Louër's words "he considered that it was obligatory for religious scholars to take a stand on the great issues of the day, especially in the event of serious political crisis."⁵³

The role of not only Shi'i political factions was intertwined with the process of gaining the control over the country by the Americans. On July 13, 2003 the head of Coalition Provisional Authority Paul Bremer formed Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) – an advisory body of 25 Iraqis of whom 13 were Shi'is. Ibrāhīm al-Ja'farī and 'Izzu'd-Dīn Salīm were members representing the Da'wa Party⁵⁴, and both served also as presidents of this council given the rotating presidency principle employed by the IGC. Da'wa was the only party which had two members in IGC, other parties were represented only by one member and 10 members were officially independent. On June 28, 2004 the IGC was replaced by the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) and Iyād 'Allāwī became the PM. Da'wa's leader Ibrāhīm al-Ja'farī became the vice president. IIG's role was to prepare the country for general elections which took place on January 30, 2005. Da'wa united itself with other major Shi'i parties including SCIRI in الائتلاف الوطني العراقي (National Iraqi Alliance, NIA) and with the silent support of Alī Sīstānī easily claimed the election victory. Nasr attributes this success to SCIRI's strategic building of positions in the south and especially al-Baṣra with the help of Iran and Ḥizbullāh.⁵⁵ What also strongly helped the Shi'i faction was the boycott of the elections by the Iraqi Sunnis who were reacting to the suppression of al-Fallūja uprising and overall feeling of not being represented. NIA formed together with the Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan the new Iraqi Transitional Government (ITG), in which Ibrāhīm al-Ja'farī gained the Prime Minister's seat. Shi'i-Kurdish government practically chased the Sunnis, who had

⁵⁰ Ibid., 191.

⁵¹ Cockburn, *Muqtada al-Sadr and The Battle For The Future of Iraq*, 13.

⁵² There is no hiding behind the fact, that the name of Alī Sīstānī constitutes quite a task for a researcher, who should necessarily hesitate between Arabic ('Alī as-Sīstānī) and Persian (Alī Sīstānī) transcription. This piece of work eventually prefers the Persian transcription given the ayatollah was born Persian.

⁵³ Louër, *Shiism and Politics in the Middle East*, 13.

⁵⁴ But it is necessary to point out that 'Izzu'd-Dīn Salīm, being a member of the Baṣeri split group, was more a SCIRI representative than Da'wa member.

⁵⁵ Nasr, *The Shia Revival*, 194.

only five MPs in the Parliament due to the boycott, from any power and thus divided the country. This abstention of Sunnis in decision-making process was crucial for the main task of ITG was to draw the new Iraqi constitution.⁵⁶

The constitution being approved in October 2005, Iraq was heading towards first regular general parliamentary elections in December 2005. This time the Sunni parties participated, nevertheless, the winner was the same as one year before – National Iraqi Alliance with the Da'wa Party at the forefront. By this time, the Americans became uneasy about Ibrāhīm al-Ja'farī holding the PM's seat for they deemed him too closely tied with Iranians and the Ṣadrīst movement and blocked him. Finding the successor was no easy task. US officials were looking for someone pragmatic, acceptable and hopefully someone who could unite the disturbed country. Finally, US ambassador in Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad suggested a second-tier official in the de-Ba'ṭification committee Nūrī al-Mālikī, who was himself, allegedly, very surprised by being even considered.⁵⁷ With American support al-Mālikī was able to achieve close win over 'Ādil 'Abd al-Mahdī from SCIRI.

2.5 Nūrī al-Mālikī and beyond

On May 20, 2006 new Iraqi government led by Nūrī al-Mālikī was inaugurated. Two main reasons contributed to al-Mālikī's success – the support of the USA and his apparent weakness. By 2006 the major Shi'i political actors were Ṣadrīsts and SCIRI, two fractions combating each other for the Shi'i political supremacy. None of them wanted to give the PM's seat to the other but at the same time was unable to achieve it for its candidate. Da'wa's second-tier official al-Mālikī seemed as a weak and feasible compromise. For the USA al-Mālikī represented a chance to stabilize the country. But the US administration feared al-Mālikī's lack of experience which led to series of videoconferences between him and US president George W. Bush who lectured al-Mālikī in politics. Thus, a personal bond between those two politicians was established which later proved to be crucial in continuation of US support to al-Mālikī. It is said, that al-Mālikī was saddened by Bush's replacement by Barack Obama and missed the former president.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ عقيل عباس، "الإسلام السياسي الشيعي في العراق والديمقراطية التوافقية: إشكاليات الخطاب وتحديات التنوع"، *سياسات عربية*، ع 29 (نوفمبر 2017): 38.

⁵⁷ *Losing Iraq*, directed by Michael Kirk (2014; <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/losing-iraq/>).

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Meanwhile the country's security situation was not getting any better, despite the fact that June witnessed the death of al-Qā'ida in Iraq's commander in chief Abū Muṣ'ab az-Zarqāwī. The unsatisfactory situation in Iraq affected the US mid-term elections in which Democrats gained the control over the Congress. The need for a new strategy in Iraq was apparent. Thus, on January 10, 2007 started 'The Surge', operation proposed and directed by David Petraeus, the new commanding general of Multi-National Force – Iraq. The Surge meant a U-turn of the strategy in Iraq. While under general Casey the army was secluded from the Iraqi population with the objection to minimize American casualties, Petraeus advocated full-scale presence with the aim to protect the Iraqi civilians. However, such an approach required massive reinforcements of 20 thousand fresh troops, later increased to 30 thousand. The Army was present in the Iraqi streets and engaged in heavy combats with both Sunni and Shi'i militias.

Enhanced American presence angered Muqtadā aṣ-Ṣadr who saw the government as weak and obedient towards Americans and as a reaction to the Surge, aṣ-Ṣadr withdraws his ministers from the cabinet with the aim to topple the government. To his surprise, the rest of the Iraqi parties tossed their support behind al-Mālikī and the Ṣadrists thus became politically isolated. Meanwhile David Petraeus's new initiative to appease the Sunni tribes and so undermine the al-Qā'ida powerbase started to bear fruit. What seemed to be the trouble was the growing sectarianism of al-Mālikī's government and his growing authoritarian tendencies which manifested in his reluctance to consult his steps with his coalition partners. By December 2007 SCIRI's 'Ādil 'Abd al-Mahdī and Kurdish PM Barzānī were ready to initiate the vote of no confidence, but US (or more precisely president Bush) refused to back the plan and the other important player in Iraqi politics – Iran – refused as well.

To further complicate the Iraqi situation, since summer 2007 the south was witnessing armed struggle for the dominance between the Shi'i fractions. At first the main participants were SCIRI and the Ṣadrists but by 2008 al-Mālikī was drawn into the struggle on SCIRI's side. جيش المهدي (Mahdi Army), Muqtadā aṣ-Ṣadr's military tool, was often attacking local governmental representatives, thus giving al-Mālikī, the chief representant of the state, little chance to stay neutral. In addition, aṣ-Ṣadr was joined by several Da'wa members, which were dissatisfied with al-Mālikī's dominance in the party. At this moment Iraq was practically battling two internal fronts. In the north, American coalition with the help of Sunni أبناء العراق

(Sons of Iraq)⁵⁹ were battling the remnants of al-Qā'ida in Iraq while in the south al-Mālikī's central government was waging Shi'i civil war against the Ṣadrists with the main prize of al-Baṣra on mind.

Al-Baṣra is economically crucial for any central Iraqi government and without its control, none can claim to hold the power over Iraq. Since 2003 al-Baṣra was governed by حزب الفضيلة الإسلامية (Islamic Virtue Party, Ṣadrists' spin off) and other local militias and dreamt its dream of gaining the same level of autonomy as Kurds in the north had. The fight between al-Mālikī's Da'wa and aṣ-Ṣadr's Mahdi Army gained its impetus when the Ṣadrists together with Iranian operatives tried in the very centre of Baghdad to capture or kill Muwaffaq ar-Rabī'ī, senior al-Mālikī's security advisor and man who personally executed the former dictator. By March 24, 2008 the 'Charge of the Knights' – offensive on al-Baṣra, Ṣadrists' stronghold, began. Former PM and Da'wa member Ibrāhīm al-Ja'farī tried to mitigate the conflict and break a deal between Da'wa and the Ṣadrists in his attempt to gain political credit at al-Mālikī's expense, but the situation was irreversibly set by al-Mālikī's claim to be personally commanding the charge on the city. Thanks to the US and Sunni help, al-Mālikī achieved military victory and by May 20 Ṣadrist forces capitulated in all their territories, including infamous Sadr City. By this victory, al-Mālikī and his Da'wa Party established themselves as the major political force in Iraq. "For Maliki, the military campaign had not just been a victory over the Sadrists; it had also been a victory over his rivals within Da'wa."⁶⁰ Since 2008 al-Mālikī emerged as the sole powercentre in Da'wa, outshining much more seasoned Da'wa officials like Ibrāhīm al-Ja'farī and Ḥaydar al-Abbādī. As al-Mālikī surpassed his Da'wa peers, the same way Da'wa surpassed other Shi'i factions in the Iraqi political scene - situation, which was even more affirmed by the results of 2009 provincial elections, in which Da'wa secured first place by a landslide while heading a new coalition ائتلاف دولة القانون (State of Law Coalition). By controlling the important provincial seats of power, Da'wa had enough posts and means to distribute among important local personalities to gain the upper hand in the parliamentary election the next year.

Al-Mālikī's second government, between 2010 and 2014 was facing yet another direct threat to the very existence of Iraq. The Sunni dissatisfaction with Maliki's pro-Shi'i policies culminated in the so-called Iraqi insurgency. When in spring 2011 talks between Iraqi and American governments about continued presence of US troops failed, on December 18, 2011

⁵⁹ Coalition of Sunni tribes allied to and paid by the US Army to fight al-Qā'ida.

⁶⁰ Rayburn, *Iraq after America*, 39.

the last US forces officially left Iraq. The day after the departure, al-Mālikī's government issued an arrest warrant for Ṭāriq al-Hāšimī, Sunni vice president of Iraq and al-Mālikī's political rival. Rāfi^c al-^cĪsāwī, Sunni Minister of Finance, soon suffered the same fate. Although al-Hāšimī eventually fled to Turkey, he was only the tip of an iceberg – with the clear aim to establish Shi'a-controlled state, Sunni leaders were being detained. It was exactly this authoritarian demeanour, marginalization of Sunna, Shi'ization of politics and purification of the state institutions from Sunnis (which drove many Sunnis employed by the state security apparatus to the street), which sparked Sunni outrage and ultimately led to the rise of militant Sunni groups like the so-called Islamic State (IS).

As the civil war in Syria provided the IS with resources, personnel and territory, the bolstered organization exploited the Sunni (legitimate) dissatisfaction with al-Mālikī and expanded its activities to Iraq. At first it was prison breaks, which gave the organization prestige and new followers, later they started to conquer territory. The fall of Mosul started exactly as a prison break, but when the IS fighters saw the Iraqi army fleeing from the city, they just decided to stay.⁶¹ As IS began to approach Baghdad and the Iraqi army proved to be inefficient, the situation was ripe for dramatic actions.

First of them was the fatwā issued by Alī Sīstānī through his high representative ^cAbd al-Mahdī al-Karbalā'ī on June 13, 2014⁶² which contained following words:

"إن العراق وشعبه يواجه تحديًا كبيرًا وخطرًا عظيمًا وإن الإرهابيين لا يهدفون إلى السيطرة على بعض المحافظات... ومن هنا فإن مسؤولية التصدي لهم ومقاتلتهم هي مسؤولية الجميع ولا يختص بطائفةٍ دون أخرى أو بطرفٍ دون آخر... إن دفاع أبنائنا في القوات المسلحة وسائر الأجهزة الامنية هو دفاع مقدس... ومن هنا فإن المواطنين الذين يتمكنون من حمل السلاح ومقاتلة الإرهابيين دفاعًا عن بلدهم وشعبهم ومقدساتهم عليهم التطوع للانخراط في القوات الأمنية."⁶³

Sayej comments the decision of otherwise restrained quietist to intervene: "After years of patience and calls for restraint, Sistani seemed to lose faith in the ability of the government to maintain security and refrain from inciting sectarianism within society... As he saw the

⁶¹ *The Rise of ISIS*, written and produced by Martin Smith (2014; <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/rise-of-isis/>).

⁶² The video of the sermon is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R7by5almGhA>.

⁶³ "ما ورد في خطبة الجمعة لِمَمْتَلِ المرعية الدينية العليا في كربلاء المقدسة الشيخ عبد المهدي الكربلائي في (14/شعبان/1435هـ) الموافق (13/6/2014م)", موقع مكتب سماحة المرجع الديني الأعلى السيد علي الحسيني السيستاني. تاريخ الوصول 23/7/2019م. <https://www.sistani.org/arabic/archive/24918/>

fighting on the ground morph and sectarianism take a new form in ISIS, Sistani recalibrated his discourse.”⁶⁴

The response to the fatwā was overwhelming. Ten times more volunteers were ready to join the fight than was the estimate or capability of the state to accommodate.⁶⁵ Thus the الحشد الشعبي (Popular Mobilization Forces, PMF), an umbrella organization of Shi'i militias of various size and creed was created. Officially, the deed was done by Nūrī al-Mālikī's executive order, but Iraq was already a sphere of activity of several pre-existing militias and those, naturally, rose the most quickly during the initial phase. “Long before the fall of Mosul or the Sistani fatwa, Maliki had begun relying on paramilitaries to stop protesters from rising up in Sunni townships.”⁶⁶ His network of collaborative militias reportedly included منظمة بدر (Badr Organisation), عصائب أهل الحق (League of the Righteous), كتائب حزب الله (Brigades of the Party of God), حركة حزب الله النجباء (The Movement of the Nobles of the Party of God), كتائب الإمام علي (Brigades of Imam Ali) and كتائب جند الإمام (Brigades of Imam's Army). Apart from these, many other militias were created, some of them with only regional or even local magnitude.

Second radical action was the forced resignation of Nūrī al-Mālikī on August 14, 2014. Although Americans claim, that it was of their doing,⁶⁷ most of the experts on Iraq conclude, that what really broke al-Mālikī's political neck was the call from Alī Sīstānī for his resignation. “Maliki lost the support of much of his Da'wa Party, but he would not withdraw his bid for a third term. When Da'wa Party leaders reached out to Sistani for advice on how they should proceed, he took action. He wrote a handwritten letter to Maliki, signed and stamped, which insisted on the selection of a new prime minister”⁶⁸ His swift replacement by

⁶⁴Caroleen Marji Sayej, *Patriotic Ayatollahs: Nationalism in Post-Saddam Iraq* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 2018), 145.

⁶⁵ Norman Cigar, *Iraq's Shia Warlords and Their Militias: Political and Security Challenges and Options* (U. S. Army War College Press, 2015), 6.

⁶⁶ Renad Mansour and Faleh A. Jabar, *The Popular Mobilization Forces and Iraq's Future* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2017), 9.

⁶⁷ Obama, despite being advised by his security staff to act against IS, refused to help the Iraqi régime while al-Mālikī, whom Obama deemed to be sectarian, pro-Iranian and source of many troubles, was still in office. Immediately after al-Mālikī's replacement by Ḥaydar al-Abbādī, Americans agreed to launch airstrikes to help the Iraqi forces.

⁶⁸ Sayej, *Patriotic Ayatollahs*, 82.

his party colleague Ḥaydar al-ʿAbbādī was even more bitter considering the landslide with which al-Mālikī won the elections four months earlier.

Ḥaydar al-ʿAbbādī remained as a PM of Iraq for one term, until 2018. Al-ʿAbbādī was seen by the West as a better alternative to al-Mālikī and he was given immediate backing against the power of IS and PMF in the country. During this time Daʿwa practically split into two currents – one supporting al-Mālikī and one supporting al-ʿAbbādī. Al-ʿAbbādī tried to deliver upon his promise to form more professional government, for which he allied himself with Muqtadā aṣ-Ṣadr. This initiative was strongly opposed by al-Mālikī and his militiamen allies. This split within Daʿwa resulted in a comic situation during the parliamentary elections in 2018 when despite being the members of the same party, al-Mālikī and al-ʿAbbādī were leading different lists in the election, al-ʿAbbādī leading ائتلاف النصر (Victory Alliance) and later allying himself with Muqtadā aṣ-Ṣadr and ʿAmmār al-Ḥakīm and al-Mālikī drawing support for his State of Law Coalition among The Fatah Coalition (PMF’s political wing led by Hādī al-ʿĀmirī). This fragmentation of the party resulted in independent (former SCIRI/ISCI member) ʿĀdil ʿAbd al-Mahdī being appointed the new PM in October 2018. Daʿwa thus lost the prime ministerial seat after thirteen consecutive years.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Harith Hasan, “From Radical to Rentier Islamism: The Case of Iraq’s Dawa Party,” *Carnegie Middle Eastern center*, April 16, 2019, <https://carnegie-mec.org/2019/04/16/from-radical-to-rentier-islamism-case-of-iraq-s-dawa-party-pub-78887>.

3 Supreme Council for the Islamic revolution in Iraq

3.1 Chapter introduction

Not only from the chronological point of view was Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq the second party of Iraqi Shi'is. Although created as an umbrella organization to bring together all the Iraqi exiled opposition, it in fact served as an Iranian tool. By comparing SCIRI and Da'wa we do not only get a clearer picture of Iraqi politics, but we understand better the international dynamics of the region and the influence Iran always had or at least aspired to have over Iraq. Finally, we can draw many conclusions from the role of clergy and their internal struggles and what effects it presents on the society when studying SCIRI.

3.2 The foundation and early years of SCIRI

The fear of the Ba'ṭist regime that the Iranian revolution could spark off similar process in Iraq and the massive Da'wa-organized protests which were ended by brutal repressions and eventually by execution of Muḥammad Bāqir aṣ-Ṣadr had yet another crucial impact. In September 1980 Ṣaddām Ḥusayn attacked Iran whose political structure he deemed to be fragile. The eight-year long Iraq-Iran war, which in total took 680 thousand lives, being by far the bloodiest conflict in the history of the Middle East⁷⁰, would have serious repercussions on the Iraqi Shi'i political scene.

During the first months of the war, Ṣaddām's army advanced into Iran, but his calculations, that the newly established Iranian regime would collapse when under pressure, were not materializing. By June 1982 Iran succeeded in chasing the Iraqis completely out of its territory and Ṣaddām offered peace to prevent further damage. Now it was the Iranian leadership's turn to overestimate their apparent military superiority and concluded that the advance into Iraqi territory could bring the fall of Ṣaddām's Ba'ṭist regime and export the revolution onto Iraq. This political analysis proved to be as mistaken as Ṣaddām's initial logic, but as the Iranian troops stepped on the Iraqi soil, Iranian regime needed to appear legitimate to the now-occupied Iraqis. To refuse the perception of being an invading force, Iranian leadership initiated the creation of the المجلس الأعلى للثورة الإسلامية في العراق (Supreme

⁷⁰ For detailed description and critical reconsideration of losses see Pierre Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*, trans. Nicholas Elliott (Cambridge, London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015), 471.

Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, SCIRI), an umbrella organization of Iraqi Shi'i opposition, which would eventually take over Iraq once Ṣaddām is defeated. Iranians hoped that such an organization would draw the support of Iraqi Shi'is which would rise against Ṣaddām or at least refuse to fight their co-religionists in the Iranian forces, seeing them as liberators in the name of SCIRI.

At the time of its creation, SCIRI included every major Shi'i opposition politician, cleric or political group, including Da'wa. Originally, Muḥammad al-Šīrāzī was considered as a leader of SCIRI,⁷¹ but his previously tight bond with Iranian regime rapidly deteriorated over his severe criticism of gradual deviation of the newly established Islamic republic from the Islamic values it claimed to represent and moreover because of his vocal criticism of Iran's prolongation of Iraq-Iran war. Thus, the regime turned to Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ḥakīm (one of the surviving sons of the late marji' Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm) whom the Iranians deemed to be less renowned and so more dependent on them. Nevertheless, Corboz notices that "Muhammad Baqir and [his brother] 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Hakim ... did not constitute their leadership in exile from scratch but had preexisting networks to exploit" for "the non-hereditary nature of the *marja'iyya* does not mean that the offspring of a source of emulation will fall into oblivion. There are leadership roles other than the *marja'iyya* which they can assume in contemporary Muslim societies, allowing families of religious scholars to maintain their status for generations."⁷² In addition," he was not affiliated with any existing political group, moreover, he was perhaps expected to be more amenable to serving Iranian interests in his conduct of oppositional politics than his counterparts in the Al-Da'wa Party and the Islamic Action Organisation."⁷³ Al-Ḥakīm had been trying to establish such an organization since 1980 – first it was جماعة المجاهدين في العراق (Society of Mujāhidīn in Iraq) and later مكتب للثورة الإسلامية في العراق (Bureau of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq), but none of these organizations proved viable enough.

The newly-established organization took undeniably Muḥammad Bāqir aṣ-Ṣadr as a spiritual father for it consisted mostly of his disciples. Its first مجلس الشورى (Consultative Assembly or Senate) contained many names which would eventually play critical role on the

⁷¹ أحمد الكاتب, المرجعية الدينية الشيعية ... وآفاق التطور, (بيروت: الدار العربية للعلوم ناشرون, 2007), الفصل الخامس, <https://ahmadalkatib.net/index.php/a-homepage-section/pdf/>

⁷² Elvire Corboz, *Guardians of Shi'ism: Sacred Authority and Transnational Family Networks*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 31.

⁷³ Ibid., 136.

post-Şaddām Iraqī political scene: Muḥammad Taqī al-Mudarrisī (the only person representing منظمة العمل الإسلامي - Šīrāzist Islamic Action Organization), Ibrāhīm al-Jaʿfarī (representing mainstream Daʿwa), ʿIzzuʿd-Dīn Salīm (under his moniker ʿAbd az-Zahrāʿ ʿUṭmān Muḥammad, representing Başeri branch of Daʿwa) or Kāzīm al-Ḥāʾirī (future marjīʿ of Muqtadā aṣ-Şadr), to name a few. Surprisingly enough, at this point SCIRI was officially led by Maḥmūd al-Hāşīmī (Şāhrūdī)⁷⁴ and not Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ḥakīm, but al-Ḥakīm’s internal behind-the-scenes politics resulted in pushing the more educated scholar aside and since 1986 Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ḥakīm claimed the chairmanship for him officially. The swap in the chairman’s seat was not the only change, which SCIRI witnessed in that year. Both Daʿwa and IAO (embodied by al-Mudarrisī) withdrew from SCIRI in protest of their marginalization within the organization’s structures. Louër comments the 1986 reshuffle that although it “can be read as a reflection of the pragmatic turn of Iran’s foreign policy, the fact that Mohammed Taqi al-Mudarrisi was not chosen as SAIRI’s [= SCIRI’s] leader from its inception probably reflected the will of the Iranian rulers to favour lesser autonomous and therefore more controllable figures. Mohammed Baqer al-Hakim ... rose to prominence not because he possessed a genuine basis in Iraq but because of Iranian patronage.”⁷⁵ The changes imposed in 1986 included also the creation of general assembly to encompass more streams of thinking into the organization.

The internal personal politics of SCIRI shows clearly the political talent of Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ḥakīm who often co-opted opponents by getting them positions in foreign delegations - an attractive appointment. Moreover, as the Iranians recruited many Iraqī emigrants and prisoners of war to switch the sides and fight against Şaddām, they were put (at least formally) under Iraqī command, thus فيلق بدر (the Badr Corps) were created for this purpose. Not only were they officially subordinated to SCIRI, but the Badr Corps were led by Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ḥakīm’s brother ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Ḥakīm. Nevertheless, the internal dominance of al-Ḥakīm family had its price. SCIRI was under the constant watchful eye of the Iranian Supreme Leader Rūhollāh Ḳomeynī who did not bother himself with consulting major political decisions concerning Iraq with al-Ḥakīm, but the unshakeable support from SCIRI was expected no matter what. It so happened that at first Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ḥakīm

⁷⁴ The Persian part of his name – Şāhrūdī – started Maḥmūd al-Hāşīmī using when disillusioned with Iraqī politics he turned instead to Iranian public affairs (he possessed double Iraqī-Iranian citizenship, as many Shiʿi scholars do) in which he achieved high ranks, being for many years member of the Assembly of Experts.

⁷⁵ Louër, *Transnational Shia Politics*, 192.

had to support Iranian decision to shell Iraqi cities – a highly controversial decision – and later had to accede to the peace agreement even though it meant that “Iraqi fighters had to leave the war fronts. The [Badr] Corps had to be content with the mere symbolic displays it could make of its capacity to fight, for instance by organizing parade resistance manoeuvres.”⁷⁶ Badr Corps had to stand aside and watch the 1991 uprising be doomed and subsequently bloodily suppressed without being allowed to intercede (for Iran was afraid of US reaction if Iranian-affiliated militia had participated in the uprising).

3.3 SCIRI after the Iraq-Iran war

As the prospect of the Iraq-Iran conflict ending in favour of Iran was more and more vanishing and the end of Ṣaddām’s grip on Iraq more and more distant, the relations that SCIRI had with the Iraqi refugees in Iran were increasingly important. SCIRI tried to pose as Iraqi refugees advocate and representative not only within Iran, where it achieved to be recognized as a proto-government, protecting the refugees especially during the restrictions imposed on them during the economic difficulties Iran was facing in the 1990s, but also internationally. At first, the international recognition SCIRI was seeking was hard to achieve. The office of foreign relations was established as early as 1984, but the only states which were ready to recognize SCIRI as legitimate representatives of Iraqi opposition were Syria and Libya, which nicely reflected the then realpolitik of the Middle East. Rapid change of affairs came with the First Gulf War which angered most of the Arab world. Kuwait after its liberation was a logical partner of any anti-Ṣaddām opposition, but ties were established also with Saudi Arabia and most importantly with the USA. Despite their closeness and reliance on Iran, SCIRI achieved to befriend USA to such an extent that it played a decisive role during the London conference of Iraqi opposition conducted shortly before the invasion in 2003 which consequently highly influenced the scope of the role SCIRI was playing in the post-war political reconstruction. Visser concludes that “SCIRI’s vehicles for success have more to do with political know-how than with military force: SCIRI has exploited the predilections of western governments for an ethno-sectarian reading of Iraqi society; it has displayed superior professionalism and diplomatic skills in its dealing with foreign powers and thereby managed to emerge as the undisputed go-between linking the West and the Iraqi Shi’ites; and through careful PR efforts it has succeeded in playing down its ties to Iran and

⁷⁶ Corboz, *Guardians of Shi’ism*, 137.

convincing the international media that it constitutes the most significant actor in Iraqi Shi'ite politics.”⁷⁷

The downplaying of the Iranian link was truly masterful for SCIRI has been since its creation vocal advocate of the *velāyat-e faqīh* concept which it sought not only to extend to Iraq, but essential part of its ideology was that the ultimate faqīh should be the same as in the Iranian case, e. g. Alī Kāmene’ī. But this aspect of SCIRI’s ideology was either unnoticed or overlooked by the western partners and thus, when manoeuvring skillfully the support of both Iran and USA, could have been preserved. The only true political problem was then the other Iraqi opposition groups, namely Da‘wa and secularists, and more importantly the Shi’i establishment in Iraq, specifically Muḥammad Šādiq aṣ-Šadr. The rivalry between the Šadrists and SCIRI which would shatter and to some extent define the post-Šaddām Iraq was long-term. Not only Muḥammad Šādiq aṣ-Šadr enjoyed overwhelming popularity among Iraqi Shi’is, but his claim to the leadership of Iraqi Shi’a posed a direct threat to the sole leadership of Alī Kāmene’ī, which SCIRI, being an Iranian client, couldn’t ignore. Thus, the critique of aṣ-Šadr as a governmental puppet entrenched feud between aṣ-Šadr and al-Ḥakīm families. “While suspicious that the ayatullah enjoyed government support had been propounded by some Shi’i circles for years, it was only when he eventually adopted a public stance against the Ba’th regime that SCIRI raised the question of his religious legitimacy. This is worth highlighting as an indication that the organization became worried by his claim to the *marja’iyya* only once it had turned political.”⁷⁸

3.4 First years at the forefront of Iraqi politics

Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ḥakīm returned to Iraq as a clear contender for political power, situation which he did not enjoy for long being assassinated on August 29, 2003 together with hundred others in Imām ‘Alī Mosque in Najaf by a bomb planted in two cars outside the shrine. The martyr death gave Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ḥakīm post-mortal title شهيد المحراب (Martyr of the Niche), fact, which was further emphasized by SCIRI during the years to come for “SCIRI turned al-Hakim martyrs⁷⁹ into political symbols ... To reinforce its message, SCIRI established a connection between the fate of the al-Hakim family and the personal

⁷⁷ Reidar Visser, “Taming the hegemonic power: SCIRI and the evolution of US policy in Iraq,” *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 2, no. 1 (May 2008): 32.

⁷⁸ Corboz, *Guardians of Shi’ism*, 153.

⁷⁹ The Ba‘tist regime has reportedly over fifty members of al-Ḥakīm family on its conscience.

tragedy experienced by ordinary Iraqis.”⁸⁰ The leadership of SCIRI thus passed to ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Ḥakīm, which cemented the role of al-Ḥakīm family as the center of the internal SCIRI orbit. Immediately after its return from exile, SCIRI’s militia the Badr Corps were swift to repay the favour they were provided with by their hosts during the long years in exile by hunting down members of Iranian opposition group Mojāhedīn-e ƙalq and even tracking down Iraqi pilots and murdering them as a revenge for the bombardment of Iranian cities during Iraq-Iran war.⁸¹ To further underline his dependency on Iran, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Ḥakīm expressed in December 2003 his wish to pay retribution for Iraq-Iran war to Teheran.

When the Shi’ite fractions formed the UIA (on Sīstānī’s insistence) to ensure the political dominance of Shi’a in the post-war Iraqi politics, SCIRI played an important part in the newly formed alliance. But that did not mean that it was in accordance with its political partners’ visions of the future of Iraq. On the contrary. Obedient to its direct sponsor Iran and in accordance with the conception of its direct ally USA whose (rather limited) understanding of Iraqi politics was sectarian, SCIRI advocated for federalization of Iraq using the ethnical-confessional pattern. SCIRI was a proponent of creation of southern Shi’a-dominated autonomous region, pretty much the same as Kurds in the north had, an idea, which was strongly opposed by almost everyone else⁸², for it would practically mean the end of Iraq as a state. The federalization would strengthen the role of SCIRI as a major Shi’i party though, for Baghdad would not be included in the ‘Shiastate’ as had this idea quickly become known, which would deprive the Ṣadrists, the main political rivals of SCIRI of a substantial portion of votes, as only the Sadr City district itself has around 2,5 million inhabitants who vote almost unanimously for aṣ-Ṣadr. Iran would be pleased given that “Iran’s foothold in Iraq is a result of the absence of a strong Iraqi central state, with its corollary of factional struggle for the control of resources and the absence of a monopoly over the exercise of force.”⁸³ SCIRI needed Iranian support. Being an organization created outside of Iraq, it lacked any social base of supporters within the state and lack the links with Iraqi people, both of which the Ṣadrists possessed.

⁸⁰ Corboz, *Guardians of Shi’ism*, 152.

⁸¹ Rayburn, *Iraq after America*, 75.

⁸² To get the Kurdish support for the creation of Shi’a autonomous region in the south, SCIRI was ready to cede Kirkūk to the Kurds in exchange.

⁸³ Louër, *Shiism and Politics in the Middle East*, 94.

The same reason applied in the case of the USA, whom SCIRI was trying to lure into supporting them – successfully, despite participating in sectarian violence. Although the sectarian-motivated attacks against Sunnis were a general problem, for which a single perpetrator should not be blamed, SCIRI actively participated namely by creating special death squads which they incorporated into the state system when in 2005 PM Ibrāhīm al-Jaʿfarī allowed hundreds of Badr Corps militiamen to join the Iraqi security forces overseen by the SCIRI interior minister Bāqir Jabar az-Zubaydī, often known under his warrior name Bayān Jabar Ṣūlāg. Jabar reportedly ran several special prisons, where his squads detained and tortured many Sunnis for participating in terrorist activities.⁸⁴ When these prisons were discovered by the Americans, PBS interviewed Bayān Jabar and confronted him with the evidence of torture, Jabar tried to hide his Freudian slip (for when under pressure he snapped affirmatively) behind pretending to misunderstand the question, while the then Advisor to the Ministry of the Interior Matt Sherman claims that Jabar admitted that some torture had taken place, but it had been only “a little torture.”⁸⁵

By November 2006 Jabar was transferred to the ministry of finance, and the ministry of Interior was taken over by independent Shiʿite Jawād al-Būlānī who introduced the process of ‘freezing’⁸⁶ meaning the process of promoting all the Shiʿi hardliners responsible for the death squads into positions of great prestige, but little actual power which effectively meant the end of the semi-state-sponsored persecution of Sunnis. Moreover, SCIRI showed the ability to adjust to the new political situation and it quietly eliminated its most radical elements not to anger its patrons (mainly USA in this case). For dealings with the opposition in the south they cleverly used Iranian proxies.⁸⁷ SCIRI’s tactics to play moderate payed off. USA now deemed the Ṣadrists to be the main sectarian troublemakers and concentrated their powers on them. Moreover, they proclaimed SCIRI to be ‘a strategic partner’ during ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Ḥakīm’s visit in the White House in December 2006. Visser mercilessly criticizes US Iraq policy as inconsistent given that it “emerges in haphazard manner, with professional

⁸⁴ Although some of them were undoubtedly guilty of that charge, it is questionable, whether it was the case of all of them.

⁸⁵ *Gangs of Iraq*, written by Marcela Gaviria & Martin Smith (2007; <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/gangsofiraq/>). The part about Jabar’s involvement starts in minute 33 approximately.

⁸⁶ Rayburn, *Iraq after America*, 90.

⁸⁷ Visser, “Taming the hegemonic power,” 40.

bureaucrats in the State Department, the Pentagon and the CIA largely on the sidelines, and with a few personalities in circles close to the President and Vice-President dictating policy – often on the basis of their strong views on the suitability of this or that Iraqi figure with whom they may have had occasion to meet personally at some point in the past, and with scant attention being paid to deeper ideological issues and matters related to the structure of the Shi’ite religious hierarchy.”⁸⁸

3.5 The transformation under the new leadership

If we were trying to create some periodization of the post-2003 Iraqi political development one of the turning points would be the year of 2007 for it witnessed several initiatives which resulted in the ebbing of the first wave of sectarian violence. Not only the Surge was announced but Rayburn lists three events⁸⁹ which undercut the sectarian divisions among Iraqi society and heralded the nationalist turn, Iraqi society would embrace.⁹⁰ SCIRI had to reflect these trends to survive politically. In May 2007 SCIRI officially changed its name to المجلس الأعلى الإسلامي العراقي (Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, ISCI), dropping the “R” for Revolution. The change was not just cosmetic. The change was aimed to demonstrate ISCI’s distancing from Iran and its Supreme Leader Alī Kāmene’ī. Instead, ISCI wanted to center its religious credibility around Alī Sīstānī, accepting his views of clergy’s limited engagement in politics stating that clergymen can participate in politics, but should refrain from the office of prime minister, reserved to a layman, which is in direct contradiction with velāyat-e faqīh. ISCI was hoping to appear as more pro-Iraqi and less pro-Iranian which Corboz sees as a political attack on Muqtadā aṣ-Ṣadr,⁹¹ who moved to Iran in the same year (see chapter 5 for details) in a never-ending struggle for not being seen as an Iranian puppet / to mark the political opponent as an Iranian puppet. This one-sided analysis is somehow challenged by Louër, who reminds, that not only Iraqi politics is full of internal political groups competing for power. “The change could not have been carried out without the

⁸⁸ Ibid., 47.

⁸⁹ The three reasons were: 1) success and popularity of Šaḍā Ḥasūn, Iraqi singer of unknown sectarian allegiance 2) Iraqi national football team success at the Asian cup, which they had won for the first time in history and 3) the footage of a gunfight between Šadrīst Mahdī Army and SCIRI’s Badr Corps in Karbalā’ which resulted in many pilgrims death and eventually drove aṣ-Ṣadr to freeze Mahdī Army’s activities.

⁹⁰ Rayburn, *Iraq after America*, 91.

⁹¹ Corboz, *Guardians of Shi’ism*, 157.

agreement of the Iranian regime, and by the same token, it cannot be interpreted as a total breach with Iran. ... It remains to be revealed, however, with which of the rival centres of power that make up the Iranian regime there may have been consultation. Clearly, the change in *marja'iyya* could not have been approved by Ali Khamenei himself, or only with reluctance. The implication of this is that negotiation must have taken place with non-clerical factions within the regime ... such actors were relatively unengaged with the contest for the *marja'iyya* and took a relatively pragmatic approach to external policy.”⁹²

Every action causes reaction. Thus, the political distancing of ISCI from Iran has resulted in its militia Badr Corps, which was always closely tied with Iran's IRGC, to distance itself from ISCI, a process finished in 2012 by complete split of those two entities. Badr Corps later renamed themselves to منظمة بدر (Badr Organisation), which was now full-fledged political party on its own and since 2014 gained massive popularity as a leading part of PMF. The split might have several reasons beside the relationship with Iran. It is said that the Badr Organisation leader Hādī al-°Āmirī was less than enthusiastic about the new leader of ISCI, °Ammār al-Ḥakīm,⁹³ who succeeded his father after his death of cancer in 2009. °Ammār was reportedly groomed for leadership already by Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ḥakīm, but his ascendancy to power was smooth only because ISCI did not want to show signs of internal dispute before the 2009 elections, not because there would be an overall support of °Ammār. Hādī al-°Āmirī, being a senior politician and renowned long-time commander of Badr Corps might have felt more suitable for the position than seventeen years junior °Ammār al-Ḥakīm. More to that, the growing threat of the so-called Islamic State emerged as a clear political opportunity for senior warrior such as al-°Āmirī to politically profit and rise within the state power structure.

The death of °Abd al-°Azīz al-Ḥakīm, even though long-anticipated, resulted in decline of ISCI's political power. The official power was firmly hold by Da°wa's Nūr al-Mālikī. This common enemy brought together the old rivals. Both being marginalized by the authoritarian state of al-Mālikī, Muqtadā aṣ-Ṣadr and °Ammār al-Ḥakīm teamed up to successfully counter his power in 2013 provincial elections.

Al-Ḥakīm and aṣ-Ṣadr wished to successfully oppose al-Mālikī's grip over power first by pushing the new provincial law through the parliament on June 23, 2013, which gave the

⁹² Louër, *Shiism and Politics in the Middle East*, 89-90.

⁹³ Michael Eisenstadt, Michael Knights and Ahmed Ali, "Iran's Influence in Iraq: Countering Tehran's Whole-of-Government Approach," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy's Policy Focus*, no. 111 (April 2011): 5.

provinces more powers contrary to al-Mālikī's wish to centralize and consolidate power in his hands. Al-Ḥakīm tried to portray ISCI as more moderate than before. "This was part of a strategy to expand its ranks to include those with liberal, secular and nonreligious proclivities, to reposition the group to the left of Maliki's coalition."⁹⁴ Nevertheless, ISCI restrained, contrary to Muqtadā aṣ-Ṣadr, in harsh critique of al-Mālikī, while courting Iran for support. The objective of gaining the prime minister's seat for one of their own suggests itself.

Notwithstanding, hopes for stronger position in parliament did not materialize as parliament elections in 2014 were again won by al-Mālikī's State of Law alliance which had over thirty seats more than the combine seats of al-Ḥakīm and aṣ-Ṣadr alliances. The incapability to oust Da'wa from power together with al-Ḥakīm's more and more moderate views did not play well with the senior structures of ISCI. During several months of 2017 Jalāl ad-Dīn al-Ṣagīr, Bāqir Jabar az-Zubaydī and °Adil °Abd al-Mahdī, all senior ranks within the party, left mostly in protest to the younger party structures being pushed up by °Ammār al-Ḥakīm.⁹⁵ The disintegration of the party was completed in July 2017 by the departure of al-Ḥakīm himself, who formed the new تيار الحكمة الوطني (National Wisdom Movement) with most of the party liberals joining him. ISCI under the new leader Humām Ḥamūdī participated in the 2018 parliamentary elections as part of ائتلاف الفتح (The Fatah Alliance) led by Hādī al-°Amirī with ISCI getting dismal two seats within the alliance which ended up being second strongest. After decades of being in forefront of the Iraqi politics, ISCI is no more.

⁹⁴ Harith al-Qarawee, "Hakim launches 'Citizen Coalition' in Iraqi elections," *Al-Monitor*, April 9, 2014, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/04/iraq-hakim-coalition-campaign-elections.html>.

⁹⁵ Omar Sattar, "Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq at risk of fragmentation," *Al-Monitor*, July 9, 2017, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/07/iraq-islamic-supreme-council-ammār-hakim.html>.

4 Muqtadā aṣ-Ṣadr and his movement's impact on Iraqi politics

4.1 Chapter introduction

Very few politicians showed the same kind of resilience Muqtadā aṣ-Ṣadr showed during his political career. Even though he never got to hold any important state office, and despite being constantly under pressure from his political foes his influence on the Iraqi politics and other Iraqi policymakers has been profound. Muqtadā aṣ-Ṣadr represents a highly interesting case study concerning coalition building flexibility, the power of populism and nationalism. His own political reorientation during the years tells us a lot about the changing nature of the internal power dynamics inside Iraq.

4.2 *The White Lion*

After suppression of the Shi'i revolt of 1991, Ṣaddām Ḥusayn was ruling in a divided country. Seeking to appease the Iraqi Shi'is, and to get their movement under control, Ṣaddām decided to create 'his' marji^c. For this role, he chose Muḥammad Ṣādiq aṣ-Ṣadr, cousin of the late Muḥammad Bāqir aṣ-Ṣadr. Ṣādiq aṣ-Ṣadr wanted to restore Shi'i spirit after the brutal suppression by the government, whose victims are difficult to count with estimates ranging between tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of dead. Ṣādiq aṣ-Ṣadr understood that he cannot fight the regime, so to preserve and protect the community, he needs to, at least temporarily, make truce with Ṣaddām. With this aim in mind he, according to Cockburn, let the Ba'ṭists clique believe that he was easily controlled and manipulated. Ṣādiq aṣ-Ṣadr sought a Shi'i cultural revolution through establishing a popular base of support, instead of the directly politically driven movement of his cousin.

Muḥammad Ṣādiq aṣ-Ṣadr was very experienced in handling of the Ba'ṭists. During the years of his involvement in Da'wa he was twice incarnated and tortured, so he understood the regime and its repressions well. He was interested in mysticism and was vocal against the practice of taqīya and passivity of the traditional clergy.⁹⁶ His well concealed hatred of the regime was combined with vocal anti-American stance, whom aṣ-Ṣadr blamed for the suffering of the Iraqi people under the severe sanctions imposed on Iraq after the First Gulf War. The impact of sanctions on the political stance of Shi'is is hard to overestimated,

⁹⁶ "الفرق بين الحوزة الناطقة وبين الساكنة يشرحها لكم السيد الشهيد محمد صادق الصدر رض", القناة الصدرية,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzNjFjZJxvg>

Cockburn argues that “for all the brutality and unpopularity of his [Şaddām Ḥusayn‘s] regime, more Iraqis were dying because of UN sanctions in the 1990s than were being shot, tortured, and imprisoned by the regime... The devastating impact of sanctions explains why Mohammed Sadiq’s open hostility to the United States and covert opposition to Saddam Hussein spoke straight to the heart of millions of Iraqi Shia.”⁹⁷ For several years government saw Şādiq aş-Şadr as their pawn. al-Baċt funded aş-Şadr’s activities, gave him the authority to grant Iraqi visas to foreign students (of Shi’i theology in the holy cities, a lucrative venture) and allowed him to use the former premises of Muḥammad Bāqir aş-Şadr.

To reach his followers on a regular basis, Şādiq aş-Şadr abolished an centuries old precedent and introduced the joint Friday prayer. Until then the Friday prayer was performed only by Sunnis for the Shi’i clergy felt that holding the prayer would recognized any current (Sunni) ruler as legitimate. To perform the prayers, aş-Şadr had to establish a network of prayer rooms under his oversight given that the traditional mosques were linked to quietists clergy around Alī Sīstānī, who saw the Şadrists’ activities with uneasiness. This network was put in place by emissaries which aş-Şadr dispatched all over the country to reach and preach to the common people. Emissaries were sent especially to poor neighborhoods and Shi’i tribes, the socioeconomic strata which would eventually form the basis of Muqtadā’s movement in years to come. Aş-Şadr appointed emissaries to posts that were preferably in the region of their origin to use their knowledge of local conditions and the trust they held among the local people. This closeness to the ordinary life and suffering of Iraqi Shi’is was in line with aş-Şadr’s believe that the clergy in the holy cities is too detached from the common people. This strategy resulted in his overwhelming popularity especially among young Shi’is.

In 1998 Şaddām’s uneasiness about Muḥammad Şādiq aş-Şadr’s influence on the vast segment of society which constituted the Iraqi Shi’is started to turn into open confrontation. Aş-Şadr’s popularity was steadily increasing, and his rhetoric took more and more openly anti-governmental stance. Moreover, aş-Şadr proclaimed himself the leader of Iraqi Shi’is, creating thus dangerous alternative to Şaddām’s leadership. The restrictions to get aş-Şadr in line were soon put in place but aş-Şadr didn’t give in. He started to wear a white cloth to signify he expected the martyrdom which gave him the nickname of اللبث الابيض - the white lion. When he refused to obey direct Saddam’s order to stop the Friday sermons, aş-Şadr’s fate was sealed. On February 19, 1999 while driving with his two sons Muştafā and

⁹⁷ Cockburn, *Muqtada al-Sadr and the Battle for the Future of Iraq*, 85-86.

Mu^cammar, Muḥammad Ṣādiq aṣ-Ṣadr was ambushed by a group of killers and all three were shot.⁹⁸ Cockburn relates that aṣ-Ṣadr wasn't actually killed during the ambush but was brought still alive to hospital, were the government forces refused to let anyone near him and let him bleed to death.⁹⁹

The killing sparked outrage. Many protests took place, mostly in Basra. The planned intifāḍa should have been backed by Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ḥakīm's Badr Corps but the militia was called off. This 'betrayal' and al-Ḥakīm's previous critique of Ṣādiq aṣ-Ṣadr as a government puppet earned him the indignation of the crowd attending aṣ-Ṣadr's commemoration ceremony in Qom and some shoes were hurled at him.

4.3 *The underdog of Iraqi politics*

Two out of Muḥammad Ṣādiq aṣ-Ṣadr's four sons survived their father, Muqtadā and Murtaḍā. There is not much known about Murtaḍā aṣ-Ṣadr except his alleged illness and dependency on his family. It was thus Muqtadā, the youngest, who became the main breadwinner for not only his family but also families of his murdered brothers. This feeling of responsibility left him no choice but to silence himself from any critique of the government and their role in his relatives' killing.¹⁰⁰ The government didn't want to take the credit for Ṣādiq aṣ-Ṣadr's death and that limited them in their operations against his surviving sons. Nevertheless, Muqtadā spend next four years (1999-2003) in home prison with absolutely no possibility to continue in his father's work.

Any observer of the immediate post-Ṣaddām Iraqi political milieu must have been surprised by the speed with which was Muqtadā aṣ-Ṣadr capable of reviving the network of his father and mobilizing his father's former followers after Ṣaddām's regime was toppled. This process wasn't smooth and there were contenders to Muqtadā's ascendancy within the Ṣadrist's network like senior coworker of Ṣādiq aṣ-Ṣadr's Muḥammad al-Ya^cqūbī who founded his own حزب الفضيلة الاسلامية (Islamic Virtue Party) which played an important role especially in al-Baṣra, but in general Muqtadā was capable to resume unrivaled political power within days. Harling and Nasser challenge the widely-accepted notion that Muqtadā aṣ-

⁹⁸ "اليوم الاخير", قناة العهد الفضائية, مؤسسة MD, 10:20, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=diG1lhycLR4>.

⁹⁹ Cockburn, *Muqtada al-Sadr and the Battle for the Future of Iraq*, 106.

¹⁰⁰ Officially the government quickly prosecuted several clergymen for taking part in a conspiracy (Ṣaddām's favourite expression) and for being responsible for aṣ-Ṣadr's death. The unfortunates were swiftly sentenced to death.

Şadr just adopted the network inherited from his father. They argue that “the continuity between Muhammad [Sadeq] al-Sadr and Muqtadā was in no way self-evident, given the son’s weak qualifications in terms of the traditional requirements for a leading religious role in the Shi’a world.” Muqtadā only used the same pool of disenchanting Shi’is because “there was no militant base [of his father’s movement] for the regime to eradicate; repercussions took the form of the decapitation of the movement and the dispersion of its supporters. The grass roots movement therefore remained intact.”¹⁰¹

Before invading Iraq, the USA sponsored an Iraqi opposition conference in London as an attempt to outline the future political development of Iraq. Although the conference hosted wide array of opposition leaders, it did not involve any Şadrist, for nobody was counting on it ever being a major political force again. The leaders were mostly seasoned Shi’i and Kurdish politicians, but they all had one serious disadvantage. They had been for shorter or longer period in exile and thus uprooted from the situation on ground and distant to the everyday problems of Iraqi people. When Şaddām’s regime was overthrown, none of them actually possessed any functioning political network on the ground and most of them were fairly unknown to the general public, or worse despised. Moreover, the USA themselves were divided as whom should they support. President Bush and Pentagon weren’t thinking much about the political implications of Şaddām’s fall and counted on the leader of Iraqi exile government Aḥmad al-Ĉalabī¹⁰² to quickly take the situation in his hands, but CIA and especially the Department of State considered al-Ĉalabī corrupt and unpopular among Iraqis, both politicians as well as (future) constituents.¹⁰³

On the other hand, Muqtadā aṣ-Şadr, who could claim to be descendant and heir of Muḥammad Bāqir aṣ-Şadr and Muḥammad Şādiq aṣ-Şadr - a fact he would further emphasize by stylizing himself and his rhetoric as was his father’s, was able to quickly gain unrivaled

¹⁰¹ Peter Harling and Hamid Yassin Nasser, “The Sadrist Trend: Class Struggle, Millenarianism and *fitna*,” in *The Shi’a Worlds and Iran*, ed. Sabrina Mervin (London: Saqi, 2010), 293.

¹⁰² The name of this renowned Iraqi opposition politician poses dilemma when it comes to transliteration. His name written in Modern Standard Arabic is Aḥmad al-Jalabī, but due to the specifics of Iraqi pronunciation of Arabic influenced by Persian, he is widely known as Aḥmad al-Ĉalabī. Bearing in mind the generally accepted precedent of respecting dialectical pronunciations of Arabic, as is best represented by the name of former president of Egypt Gamāl ‘Abd an-Nāṣir (and not strictly standardized Jamāl ‘Abd an-Nāṣir), this work follows the Iraqi pronunciation.

¹⁰³ Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Imperial Life in the Emerald City* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 32.

popularity especially among the lower-class Shi'is. Amīra aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī describes Muqtadā's followers and political situation that allowed his rise that:

"معظم أفراد هذا الجيش (المهدي) من الشباب العراقي ... العديد من أتباع مقتدى هم من ضحايا الجهل والفقر والفراغ السياسي في بلد صاحب حضارات قديمة وثروات طبيعية ويحفل مؤخرا بعشرات الأحزاب السياسية مثلما حفل تاريخه بتيارات سياسية وفكرية عدة لكن ميراث حقبة صدام لازال محددًا للأوضاع الاقتصادية والاجتماعية بالبلاد ومعرقلا للعمل السياسي الجاد والبناء ومن هنا وفي هذه المرحلة الحرجة من تاريخ العراق نفذ خطاب مقتدى لكن الأمر لن يستمر طويلا فلم يعد أحد يريده هنا."¹⁰⁴

Cockburn concludes on this matter that Muqtadā "was ideally placed to take advantage of the political vacuum in Iraq as the old regime collapsed on April 9 [2003]. The exiled parties were still out of Iraq, unfamiliar with their country after years abroad, and suspected by Iraqis of being pawns of the United States or Iran."¹⁰⁵ Thus, Muqtadā's call to pilgrimage to Karbalā', prohibited by Ṣaddām for years, was quickly answered by millions of Shi'is just after the collapse of the Ba'ṭist régime.

The Ṣadrīst movement had a loose structure from the very beginning. It consisted of several groups and followed several trends, often mutually antagonistic, linked by the bond of strong nationalism expressed through absolute refusal of US presence in Iraq, Shi'i identity and lower level social status. Crucial was "the element of activism ... offering a framework of remarkable flexibility to all those dissatisfied with the traditional system. The very fluidity of the movement proved an essential precondition for its overall cohesion and for the central position of Muqtadā, who remains a reference and an instrument of legitimization for many Sadrist who are otherwise reluctant to bow to his authority."¹⁰⁶

4.4 Muqtadā's position toward the Shi'i establishment

The disparity between aṣ-Ṣadr's activism and quietists' restraint was being felt in the Muqtadā's rivalry with Alī Sīstānī, also inherited from his father, whose first clear demonstration was the brutal killing of 'Abd al-Majīd al-Ḳū'ī, the son of the great teacher and predecessor of Sīstānī's Abū al-Qāsim Ḳō'ī.¹⁰⁷ 'Abd al-Majīd al-Ḳū'ī was vocally pro-

¹⁰⁴ أميرة الطحاوي, "مقتدى الصدر .. صنيعة الملالي وخليفة الطغاة", مجلة الديمقراطية 4, ع 15 (يوليو 2003): 98.

¹⁰⁵ Cockburn, *Muqtada al-Sadr and the Battle for the Future of Iraq*, 127.

¹⁰⁶ Harling and Nasser, "The Sadrist Trend: Class Struggle, Millenarianism and *fitna*," 295.

¹⁰⁷ The dissimilarity between father's and son's names are due to the fact, that the former, despite living in Iraq, was of Iranian origin, whether the latter was born in Iraq. Thus, the father's name is transliterated from Persian while the son's name from Arabic.

American and his presence in the holy shrine on the fateful day of April 10, 2003 with known Ba^ctist (custodian of the shrine) angered the mob of Muqtadā's supporters who eventually killed them both. Although there is a difference of opinion whether or not was the murder ordered directly by Muqtadā, it is nevertheless indisputable, that Muqtadā did not prevent it, even though the killing happened in the vicinity of his house.¹⁰⁸ The traditional clergy's inquiry declared Muqtadā responsible for the murder of al-Ḳū'ī and the result was sent to the coalition authority with no immediate effect.¹⁰⁹

The death of ^cAbd al-Majīd al-Ḳū'ī is significant not only as a demonstration of a clear rupture into Sīstānī-led quietist wing and aṣ-Ṣadr-led activist wing within the Shi'i clergy, but it also underlines an important characteristic of the Ṣadrīst movement. No matter how charismatic Muqtadā aṣ-Ṣadr was, the movement had never been fully under his control. The Ṣadrīsts, and especially their militia جيش المهدي - Mahdi Army, were connected only loosely, consisting of many local para-military and often criminal groups over whom Muqtadā had no direct control. The death of ^cAbd al-Majīd al-Ḳū'ī was only first of series of events in which some elements of the Ṣadrīst movement acted in direct opposition to their leader's wish. Sometimes Muqtadā was only trying to shape or limit currents which he couldn't stop as was the case of his fatwā allowing the looters of the government property to keep their booty if they pay the religious tax of one fifth (to aṣ-Ṣadr of course).

Muqtadā aṣ-Ṣadr started from the very beginning aiming his agenda at his leadership of Iraḳī Shi'is. During the first years after the fall of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, Muqtadā's main contestants were the traditional quietist clergy of Najaf, led by Alī Sīstānī and the Iranian-backed SCIRI/ISCI led by Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ḥakīm. After an unsuccessful attempt to break Sīstānī's power during which the marji^c's house was practically besieged and Sīstānī was left no choice but to summon over one thousand tribal warriors to protect himself and other clergymen, Muqtadā resorted to more traditional ways of political combat – severe critique of newly formed IGC, in which the traditional Shi'i parties (Da^cwa, SCIRI/ISCI) were playing the prominent role. Muqtadā countered the creation of IGC by his own government introduced on October 10, 2003, but this approach did not reverberate among the Shi'is and Muqtadā was temporarily forced to moderate his stance. Meanwhile the areas

¹⁰⁸ Cockburn describes, that injured ^cAbd al-Majīd al-Ḳū'ī was begging for protection in front of Muqtadā's house, but no help was provided which led to his imminent death.

¹⁰⁹ Pierre-Jean Luizard, "The Sadrist in Iraq: Challenging the United States, the *Marja'iyya* and Iran," in *The Shi'a Worlds and Iran*, ed. Sabrina Mervin (London: Saqi, 2010), 259.

under Muqtadā aṣ-Ṣadr's control, above all the so-called مدينة الصدر - Sadr City, a suburban district of Baghdad inhabited by millions of poor Shi'is and named in honour of Muqtadā's father and controlled by Mahdi Army, fell under the Ṣadrist interpretation of Islamic law, whose strictness varied over time.

4.5 *Bête noire of Iraqi politics*

The dramatic events concerning Muqtadā aṣ-Ṣadr started to take shape in 2004. As the US authority embodied by the US special representative Paul Bremer was falling behind their promises and proved to be unwilling or incapable to enforce the rule of law, the resentment toward the US presence in Iraq steadily grew. Muqtadā, the only major critic of American presence in the country started to gain more and more support. In addition, the lack of security 'justified' the existence of his Mahdi Army, who portrayed themselves as protectors of Shi'is, who were more and more targeted by radical Sunni elements. Bremer himself, given his well-known hatred of the Ṣadrists, paradoxically helped to strengthen Muqtadā's position. Despite the fact Bremer was facing rapidly deteriorating security situation in Sunni areas after the burning of American Blackwater contractors in al-Fallūja on March 31, 2004, Bremer's apprehension of known Ṣadrist Muṣṭafā al-Ya'qūbī for his alleged responsibility for the death of °Abd al-Majīd al-Ḳū'ī, sparked Shi'i uprising in the south of the country. An arrest warrant on Muqtadā issued few days later only added fuel to the resentment of Ṣadrists' supporters.

Fights, in which Muqtadā reportedly took part personally took place especially in Najaf and al-Kūfa. "The Ṣadrist base is strongly marked by a majority representation of the lowest social levels, as well as by strong local and regional identity. This explains why the intensity of the Ṣadrist insurrections ... considerably varied from one city to another."¹¹⁰ Mahdi Army, reportedly trained by Iranians¹¹¹, was fighting the US army on the outskirts of Najaf, with heavy fighting in the famous Shi'i Wādī as-Salām cemetery. Americans were reluctant to force their way into the holy city, but Alī Sīstānī sent them a clear message of

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 273.

¹¹¹ Even though the main Iranian instrument in Iraqi politics was the °Abd al-°Azīz al-Ḥakīm's SCIRI, Iranian politics in Iraq was to basically support everyone to ensure that whoever is in charge, he is friendly to the Iranian régime. As soon as in June 2003, during his visit in Iran (officially to seek guidance from his marji° Kāzīm al-Ḥā'irī) Muqtadā met both the Iranian Supreme Leader Alī Ḳāmene'ī and the infamous Quds Forces commander Qāsem Sulaymānī to receive funds for his Mahdi Army.

approval when he departed from the city 'to seek medical treatment in London.'¹¹² The fighting took heavy toll on both Mahdi Army and civilians which unsettled prime minister Ibrāhīm al-Ja^cfarī, who subsequently forced the Americans to negotiate with Muqtadā, which they had been refusing before. For once again the hawks among the Americans decisionmakers prevailed and the negotiations were planned to be a trap to kill or capture Muqtadā, who escaped only because of his renowned and well-developed paranoia - the remnants of the Ba^ctist years. The siege of Najaf thus had to be ended by Sīstānī's mediation upon his comeback from London.

Not only paranoia about his safety, but also other aspects of Muqtadā's political behavior could be traced to his experience of the brutality of Ṣaddām's regime. One thing he learned from his father and which he would periodically use during his political career was the ability to step back whenever the time is inconvenient or the political opponent too strong. To put it simply, Muqtadā doesn't like to fight battles he cannot win. Thus, after the unsuccessful campaign in Najaf, Muqtadā aṣ-Ṣadr withdrew from politics to regroup, consolidate and wait for more convenient political circumstances. Such a convenient situation was delivered by the December 2005 general elections, in which aṣ-Ṣadr took part in the UIA alliance to become its strongest faction and which inaugurated his more pragmatist political approach. In the new Shi'i government of Ibrāhīm al-Ja^cfarī, whom Ṣadrists helped to elect to prevent their main rival SCIRI's candidate °Ādil °Abd al-Mahdī to become the prime minister, aṣ-Ṣadr gained the strategic ministries of health, agriculture and transportation through which the movement could emphasize their social role. The Ṣadrists – Da^cwa collaboration continued unchanged when al-Ja^cfarī was replaced by his party colleague Nūrī al-Mālikī on May 20, 2006.

Meanwhile, the security situation in Iraq rapidly deteriorated. After the bloody attack on the shrine in Sāmarrā' on February 22, 2006 the sectarian violence reached an unseen level. Although Muqtadā aṣ-Ṣadr called for peace between Sunnis and Shi'is and spoke openly against Shi'i reprisals on Sunnis for the attacks and for the necessity to cooperate,¹¹³ his Mahdi Army once again proved to be only a loose organization and played crucial role in persecuting Sunnis. Many death squads included Mahdi Army members, some using the organization's name for their own criminal and sectarian goals. "Although Muqtada al-Sadr

¹¹² Cockburn, *Muqtada al-Sadr and the Battle for the Future of Iraq*, 154-5.

¹¹³ "إدانة واسعة للحادث ودعوات إلى التهدئة وعدم الانجرار إلى الفتنة ... والماكي يندد بـ "التكفيريين" و "الصدّامين" تفجير مرقد العسكريين في يامراء : الصدر يحمل "القوات الاحتلال" المسؤولية", *الحياة*, 14 يونيو 2007, <http://www.alhayat.com/article/1340487>

attempted to rein in control by getting rid of commanders who failed to take his direction, he was largely unable to clean up the militia and keep its members in check.”¹¹⁴

As the unprecedented level of violence threatened to tarnish the political legacy of George W. Bush as his second term in office was coming to an end, a new strategy of American involvement in the country was shaped and general David Petraeus was handpicked to lead The Surge. The Surge did not differentiate between Sunni and Shi’i fighters, its aim was the security of the civilians no matter the sectarian affiliation. Aṣ-Ṣadr was outraged by the elevated presence of ‘invaders’ in Iraq and in protest to the ‘government collaboration’ with the Americans withdrew his ministers from the government. But once again, aṣ-Ṣadr chose to rather temporarily step back than to be crushed permanently and ordered Mahdi Army not to involve in the fight against the Americans. Nevertheless, aṣ-Ṣadr and his movement were under attack.

The turf war between the Ṣadrists and SCIRI in the southern Shi’i-dominated part of Iraq was getting more and more vicious. The reasoning behind Ṣadrists’ uninterrupted fight with SCIRI was that “sooner or later, they [USA] would follow the British by drawing down their forces. It therefore made sense to avoid a military confrontation with them whatever the short-term provocations or losses through U.S. raids. But SIIC [=ISCI], Badr, and the al-Ḥakīm family were not going to leave Iraq.”¹¹⁵ The rivalry between aṣ-Ṣadr family and al-Ḥakīm family was long and bitter; Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ḥakīm’s critique of Muqtadā’s father as a Ṣaddām’s puppet was mentioned earlier. When the Ṣadrists started to perform attacks on governmental institutions and personas (many of them SCIRI-affiliated), the prime minister Nūrī al-Mālīkī used this as a pretext to get rid of aṣ-Ṣadr for which he was constantly pressured by the Americans.

For Muqtadā the situation began to complicate as the always loose organization of Mahdi Army began to seriously dissolve due to disaccord and personal ambitions of several Ṣadrists. “The development of these militias [joined in Mahdi Army] did not occur in a single moment, but instead emerged over time as the various segments’ allegiance to Muqtada al-Sadr shifted to varying degrees. Although initially all seemed to be overlapping groups, the more extreme members began to split off.”¹¹⁶ The most serious of these splits was that of those loyal to Qays al-Ḳazālī, who established his own radical عصائب أهل الحق (League of the

¹¹⁴ Leslie Bayless, “Who is Muqtada al-Sadr?,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 35, no. 2 (January 2012): 148.

¹¹⁵ Cockburn, *Muqtada al-Sadr and the Battle for the Future of Iraq*, 197.

¹¹⁶ Bayless, “Who is Muqtada al-Sadr?,” 148.

Righteous), whose activities were perceived as undesired by Muqtadā and since the spilt aṣ-Ṣadr continued to be seriously critical of them, often blaming them for all the atrocities the Mahdi Army perpetrated while they still were part of it.

The details of the governmental suppression of the unrest in the south is described in the third chapter. By the time of the governmental victory, Mahdi Army was officially dissolved by Muqtadā in consequence of Shi'i pilgrims' death during the crossfire caused by Mahdi Army in Karbalā' in August 2007. When Muqtadā saw the fight to be doomed and his political situation worsening he performed one of his political masterstrokes by unilaterally withdrawing from politics to finish his religious studies in Iran. The Ṣadrists movement, although nominally leaderless on the ground, was not weakened given the operational decentralization of the organization and when crushed, aṣ-Ṣadr wouldn't be affected by the defeat of the organization from which he distanced himself.

Al-Mālikī finalized his military success by conquering al-Baṣra (even though the help provided by the Americans was crucial) and by April 2008 the Ṣadrists were defeated. On May 20 they abandoned their positions even in their stronghold – Sadr City. By this time aṣ-Ṣadr seemed to be politically totally marginalized, fact further confirmed by his absence in Iraq and dissolution of Mahdi Army. Once again, Muqtadā showed his capabilities to withstand an apparent defeat and come back to the political sphere.

4.6 Turn to nationalism

When Muqtadā aṣ-Ṣadr escaped the Iraqi political stage after the defeat of the Ṣadrists in 2008 by the hand of government forces, he expected to be warmly welcomed in Iran as a freedom fighter and renowned anti-American warrior lord, but these anticipations were scarcely met. “Senior Iranian clergy and political elites viewed and treated him as a lower cleric. Sadr had difficulties meeting with senior officials, including Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.”¹¹⁷

“While the Sadrist security apparatus demonstrated its weakness in the middle term, the social care network linked to the Office of the Sadr Martyr remained the most important asset Muqtada al Sadr could count on and proved fundamental for his political career.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Michael David Clark and Renad Mansour, “Is Muqtada Al-Sadr Good For Iraq?,” Carnegie Middle East Center, May 2, 2016, <https://carnegie-mec.org/2016/05/02/is-muqtada-al-sadr-good-for-iraq-pub-63501>.

¹¹⁸ Andrea Plebani, “Muqtada al-Sadr and his February 2014 Declarations. Political Disengagement or Simple Repositioning?,” Italian Institute for International Political Studies Analysis no. 244 (April 2014): 5.

Precisely this emphasis on providing the social care allowed Muqtadā his political comeback. Even though the 2010 Iraqi parliament elections brought a victory of Nūrī al-Mālikī who ensured his second term as prime minister, Şadrists' gains were actually 40 seats (out of 70 for their alliance they created among others with SCIRI, a fact which beautifully demonstrates the changing nature of rivalry and alliance-making in Iraqi politics) which made them the third biggest party in the parliament.

By 2011 aş-Şadr found himself in an uneasy relationship with his bitter rival, a man, who caused his political and military defeat three years earlier, Nūrī al-Mālikī. Despite being parts of the same administration, aş-Şadr was trying to undermine al-Mālikī's grip over power. Being an aspiring authoritarian, al-Mālikī was essentially a centralist who sought to concentrate all possible might at the top of the pyramid of power, Şadrists on the other hand chose the opposite path, strengthening their mid-level base and nurturing the personal relations their MP had with the local officials and leaders. They chose the Maysān province as their powerbase from which they were seeking to expand their influence all over Iraq. To gain political leverage, the Şadrists relied on the same formula that caused aş-Şadr's popularity in the first place – social questions and supplying the functions of the government wheresoever they were insufficient. Al-Mālikī, aware of this trend, did his best to prevent any financial subsidies to go to the aş-Şadr-led ministries and aş-Şadr-controlled areas.¹¹⁹

But the hostility between al-Mālikī and aş-Şadr prevailed and occasionally showed itself, for example in 2012 when aş-Şadr joined his powers with Kurdish leader Bārzānī and Iyād °Allāwī in their unsuccessful attempt to topple al-Mālikī's government. Aş-Şadr was also increasingly vocal against al-Mālikī's sectarian politics which led to massive Sunni protests and eventually to the rise of the so-called Islamic state. After his return from the sojourn in Iran, aş-Şadr started to profile himself and his movement as non-sectarian, non-ethnic Iraqi-nationalist movement. When the threat from the so-called Islamic state became imminent, aş-Şadr created new militias called سرايا السلام (Peace Companies), which, although being predominantly Shi'i, were fighting alongside Sunnis and Christians against all foreign forces, the so-called Islamic state included. According to Harith Hasan this new aş-Şadr's nationalist trend which often contradicted Iranian interests has two main reasons. Firstly, aş-Şadr was angered by the Iranian support to al-Ḳaz'ālī's organization League of the Righteous which

¹¹⁹ Maria Fantappie, "Nouri Maliki's Uneasy Alliance With Muqtada Sadr's Movement," Carnegie Middle East Center, August 15, 2011, <https://carnegie-mec.org/2011/08/15/nouri-maliki-s-uneasy-alliance-with-muqtada-sadr-s-movement-pub-45356>.

was threatening to overtake his own power base and which aş-Şadr sees as defectors from his ranks. Secondly, aş-Şadr was disillusioned with the traditional Shi'i political parties, namely al-Mālikī's Da'wa but also SCIRI, which were ruling Iraq for many years with no progress done and which were all to varying extent connected to Teheran.¹²⁰

When 2014 saw al-Mālikī's replacement by his Da'wa colleague Ḥaydar al-Abbādī as the prime minister of Iraq, aş-Şadr whose relations with al-Abbādī were incomparably better than with al-Mālikī (due to al-Abbādī - al-Mālikī animosity which eventually split the Da'wa party, for more detail see chapter two) swiftly supported the Iraqi army role in the fight against the so-called Islamic state and hinted the future possibility of merging Peace Companies with official Iraqi security forces (given they are effective and impartial). Aş-Şadr's alliance with al-Abbādī against their common enemy (al-Mālikī) proved even more visible during the parliamentary crisis in 2016, when aş-Şadr was pushing for the cabinet reshuffle proposed by al-Abbādī and blocked several times by al-Mālikī which resulted in pro-Şadrists protesters sweeping the Green Zone. Marwa Waḥīd sees Muqtadā's participation in the demonstrations as very strategic:

"محاولة مقتدى الصدر استخدام ورقة التظاهرات كخطوة لإعادة إحياء شعبية التيار الصدري ولواء عائلة الصدر، وظهوره كزعيم شيعي عربي، حيث طلب من أتباعه رفع الشعارات الوطنية، وألا يتورطوا في أي اشتباكات أو يحملوا أسلحة أو يشاركوا في قطع الطرق، حتى يضمن مباركة السيستاني له ولموقفه الداعي للتغيير، لكن مع الحفاظ على استقرار الحكومة، وبذلك يستعيد الصدر جزءاً مهماً من شعبيته التي فقدها..."¹²¹

Pollack on the other hand argues, that "Muqtada al-Sadr is ... staging regular public demonstrations demanding that the prime minister make good on his pledges – which Sadr's people continue to block behind the scenes."¹²² Be it as it may, the striking difference between the 'new' and 'old' aş-Şadr's approach was that the protests in 2016 were peaceful in nature. Indeed, aş-Şadr's insistence on reservation from violence is a new ingredient in his political potion. Maybe this is the way Iraqi people would like to follow, tired after years of violence and fighting. The results of 2018 parliamentary elections, in which aş-Şadr's coalition سائرون (Marching forward) claimed the victory, certainly back up this hypothesis. In

¹²⁰ Harith Hasan and Michael Young, "Does Muqtada al-Sadr Pose a Threat to Iran's Influence in Iraq?," Carnegie Middle East Center, June 14, 2018, <https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/76573>.

¹²¹ مروة وحيد، "الأزمة السياسية في العراق ما بين تصعيد الصدر ومحاولات العبادي للحل"، *أفاق سياسية* 29 (مايو 2016): 58.

¹²² Kenneth M. Pollack, "Iraq Situation Report, Part II: Political and economic developments," *The Brookings Institution*, March 29, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2016/03/29/iraq-situation-report-part-ii-political-and-economic-developments/>.

any event, aṣ-Ṣadr's voice in the post-election negotiations was certainly heard and there is no reason to believe that it will cease to be so.

Conclusion

In the previous chapters we have traced the political fate of Iraqi Shi'is through the development of three main Shi'i political parties which gained the power and prominence after the fall of Ṣaddām's regime. Several conclusions can be drawn from these examples.

First, even though the parties' luck varied through the last 16 years, not only the number of players contending for the top spots within the system is stable, but so are their names. Nūrī al-Mālikī, Ḥaydar al-°Abbādī, Muqtadā aṣ-Ṣadr, °Ādil °Abd al-Mahdī are just a few examples of politicians of various political background and of various political affiliations which are present in the political contest from the demise of Ṣaddām's rule and often way before. Even though SCIRI/ISCI witnessed four leaders in the post-Ṣaddām period, three of them belonged to the same family and two departures from the political stage were caused by death. The only change within the circle of leaders was caused by fragmentation of existing parties connected especially with the phenomena of Popular Mobilization Forces, but those new leaders were very often the top members of the existing parties before the fissure and thus present in the top ranks of Iraqi politics; for example Hādī al-°Āmirī or Qays al-Ḳaz°alī to name a few. The players within the game are thus almost the same as were 16 years ago.

Because of the limited number of players in place, Iraqi politicians need to be very flexible when it comes to coalitions and alliances building. During the observed period many had changed their political allies according to present days necessities. The most flexible in this respect proved Muqtadā aṣ-Ṣadr who at some point joined forces with almost everyone. The changing alliances are also the result of fissures which every major Shi'i political party has witnessed. SCIRI and Ṣadrists lost some of their militias, Da°wa split to al-Mālikī and al-°Abbādī wing. These divisions are caused by the changing nature of Iraqi politics, often represented by a personal stance of strongmen in the forefront of their parties.

Albeit similar in some respects when it comes to the gravity of party leaders for their parties, the three presented cases nicely illustrate three different modes of inner party functioning. In this respect, Da°wa could be perceived as the most western-type political party. It is run by laymen not clergymen and is not connected to one singular religious family or authority. It is true that Alī Sīstānī holds vast influence over the party as the exchange of prime ministers in 2014 clearly showed, but this influence is indirect and it is not exercised over Da°wa only, but it applies to the Shi'i society as a whole (as the call to form PMF was

answered by Shi'is of all political inclinations). On the other hand, the SCIRI/ISCI was until its practical dissolution a vehicle for the power ambitions of al-Ḥakīm family, which gained its credibility by the religious status of its leaders. The religious legitimacy was also what sealed Muqtadā aṣ-Ṣadr's claim to power, but in his case, the socio-economic factors played also a crucial role. His movement was also more centered around his personality, that was the case of SCIRI/ISCI, but that could just be the effect of the untimely death of Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ḥakīm. If he had been given the chance to play the Iraqi political chess for a longer period of time, the situation would have in all probability been quite different.

Another great difference between the Ṣadrists and the Ḥakīmists is the question of relations with Iran and in both cases the policy changed with time. SCIRI/ISCI became upon its arrival to Iraq a trojan horse of Iran in Baghdad. The al-Ḥakīm family owed the Iranians for everything and their Badr Corps were closely connected to IRGC. Nevertheless, after the death of ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Ḥakīm, who was still one of the older Iran-oriented generation of anti-Ṣaddām fighters, younger ʿAmmār al-Ḥakīm, even though he was raised in Iran, cut the ties with it and reoriented his religious allegiance toward Alī Sīstānī which lost him at first the Badr Corps, second the seasoned politicians who were close to his father and finally it cost him the party itself. Muqtadā on the other hand started as a domestic political force and was seeking to appeal the Iranians for the practical political reasons of the support for his militias and to undermine the position of his (then) main rival SCIRI. He was never really close to Iranians ideologically, nor he ever took Alī Kāmene'ī as his marjīʿ. After his 'forced' exile he returned to Iraq to further emphasize the nationalistic tone of his politics. Although his position is never openly anti-Iranian, he conjoined his forces with those seeking to loosen the ties with Tehran. Daʿwa, being laic in its core, has never had any ideological quarrel or sympathy for Iran and their ties with Iran are purely strategic and in the case of Nūrī al-Mālikī emerged as a necessity. After the Americans lost their interest in Iraq with the Obama administration and further upon their withdrawal from the country, the power vacuum was to much extent filled with Iranians. Al-Mālikī understood that he needs Iranian approval to stay in power, which he very much intended. Al-Mālikī's ties to Iran even strengthened after his forced resignation, when he joined the various pro-Iranian militias or militias turned political parties to exercise his influence over the Iraqi state of affairs with hope to return one day to the prime ministerial seat.

Another line of analysis is exactly the parties' relation towards the Iraqi militias. SCIRI/ISCI entered the scene with the most impressive force – Iranian equipped and trained

Badr Corps, militia with strong chain of command. On the other hand, Muqtadā aṣ-Ṣadr was able to quickly assemble wide masses of supporters, but his forces were decentralized, badly equipped and trained and often ignorant of the command's orders. Aṣ-Ṣadr thus had to dissolve his initial militia to later create a new one, better structured and without the 'radicals' who created their own League of the Righteous. The case of Da'wa could be easily misinterpreted as an example of a party without any para-military backing. Although it is true, that Da'wa doesn't possess any militia on its own, it is necessary to realize, that for the overwhelming majority of post-Ṣaddām Iraq history, it was the Da'wa who was yielding the power. Since Ibrāhīm al-Ja'farī, but mostly visible under the authoritarian second term of Nūrī al-Mālikī, Da'wa essentially used the state security forces as its militia. More to that, even before the official creation of PMF, al-Mālikī collaborated with the Badr Organization and other splinter groups to maintain the power and continues to do so after Ḥaydar al-Abbādī took his place. The creation of PMF established a new political situation for the traditional Shi'i political parties. If previously the commanding mechanism was that most of the parties have militias to assert their power, after the creation of PMF it was more the case of militias having their political parties to assert their power. The recent integration of PMF into the Iraqi security system is intended to swerve the power back to the political representation.

As the concluding remarks clearly showed, that situation in Iraq today is as diverse as any time before. With the growing tension between the USA and Iran and the ongoing cold war between Saudi Arabia and Iran, Iraq can easily turn once more into the battlefield and its political parties to instruments exercising to various extent the will of others. It is thus of paramount importance to understand the underlying conditions within the Shi'i community, the amities and enmities, nature of coalition building and role of militias to even hope to clarify the picture of Iraqi politics a little more.

Bibliography:

Western sources:

Barr, James. *A Line in The Sand: Britain, France, and the Struggle That Shaped The Middle East*. London: Simon & Schuster, 2012.

Bayless, Leslie. "Who is Muqtada al-Sadr?." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 35, no. 2 (January 2012): 135-55.

Chandrasekaran, Rajiv. *Imperial Life in the Emerald City*. New York: Vintage Books, 2006.

Cigar, Norman. *Iraq's Shia Warlords and Their Militias: Political and Security Challenges and Options*. U. S. Army War College Press, 2015.

Clark, Michael David, and Renad Mansour. "Is Muqtada Al-Sadr Good For Iraq?." Carnegie Middle East Center, May 2, 2016. <https://carnegie-mec.org/2016/05/02/is-muqtada-al-sadr-good-for-iraq-pub-63501>.

Cockburn, Patrick. *Muqtada al-Sadr and The Battle For The Future of Iraq*. New York: Scribner, 2008.

Cole, Juan. *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shi'ite Islam*. New York, London: I. B. Tauris, 2002.

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

Edwards, Sophie A. "Sectarian friction and the struggle for power: party politics in Iraq post-2003." In *Political Parties in the Arab World: Continuity and Change*, edited Francesco Cavatorta and Lise Storm, 164-183. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018.

Eisenstadt, Michael, and Michael Knights and Ahmed Ali. "Iran's Influence in Iraq: Countering Tehran's Whole-of-Government Approach." *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy's Policy Focus*, no. 111. April 2011.

Fantappie, Maria. "Nouri Maliki's Uneasy Alliance With Muqtada Sadr's Movement." Carnegie Middle East Center, August 15, 2011. <https://carnegie-mec.org/2011/08/15/nouri-maliki-s-uneasy-alliance-with-muqtada-sadr-s-movement-pub-45356>.

Gordon, Michael R., and Bernard E. Trainor. *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama*. New York: Vintage Books, 2013.

Hachem, Constance Arminjon. *Chiisme et État: Les clercs à l'épreuve de la modernité*. Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2013.

Harling, Peter, and Hamid Yassin Nasser. "The Sadrist Trend: Class Struggle, Millenarianism and *fitna*." In *The Shi'a Worlds and Iran*. Edited by Sabrina Mervin. London: Saqi, 2010.

Hasan, Harith. "From Radical to Rentier Islamism: The Case of Iraq's Dawa Party." *Carnegie Middle Eastern center*. April 16, 2019. <https://carnegie-mec.org/2019/04/16/from-radical-to-rentier-islamism-case-of-iraq-s-dawa-party-pub-78887>.

Hasan, Harith, and Michael Young, "Does Muqtada al-Sadr Pose a Threat to Iran's Influence in Iraq?." Carnegie Middle East Center, June 14, 2018. <https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/76573>.

Heern, Zackery M. *The Emergence of Modern Shi'ism: Islamic Reform in Iraq and Iran*. London: Oneworld Publications, 2015.

Louër, Laurence. *Shiism and Politics in the Middle East*. Translated by John King. London: Hurst & Company, 2012.

Louër, Laurence. *Transnational Shia Politics: Religious and Political Networks in the Gulf*. London: Hurst & Company, 2008.

Luizard, Pierre-Jean. *Histoire politique du clergé chiite*. Fayard, 2014.

Luizard, Pierre-Jean. "The Sadrists in Iraq: Challenging the United States, the *Marja'iyya* and Iran." In *The Shi'a Worlds and Iran*. Edited by Sabrina Mervin. London: Saqi, 2010.

Madelung, Wilferd. "Shī'a." In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, vol. IX*, edited by C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W. P. Heinrichs and G. Lecomte, 420-4. Leiden: Brill, 1997.

Madelung, Wilferd. *The succession to Muḥammad: A study of the early Caliphate*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Mansour, Renad, and Faleh A. Jabar. *The Popular Mobilization Forces and Iraq's Future*. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2017.

Marr, Phebe. *The Modern History of Iraq*. Boulder: Westview Press, 2012.

Momen, Moojan. *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

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

Nasr, Vali. *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2006.

Plebani, Andrea. "Muqtada al-Sadr and his February 2014 Declarations. Political Disengagement or Simple Repositioning?." Italian Institute for International Political Studies Analysis no. 244 (April 2014): 1-11.

Pollack, Kenneth M. „Iraq Situation Report, Part II: Political and economic developments.“ *The Brookings Institution*, March 29, 2016. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2016/03/29/iraq-situation-report-part-ii-political-and-economic-developments/>.

al-Qarawee, Harith. "Hakim launches 'Citizen Coalition' in Iraqi elections." *Al-Monitor*, April 9, 2014. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/04/iraq-hakim-coalition-campaign-elections.html>.

Rayburn, Joel. *Iraq after America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2014.

Razoux, Pierre. *The Iran-Iraq War*. Translated by Nicholas Elliott. Cambridge, London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015.

Sattar, Omar. "Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq at risk of fragmentation." *Al-Monitor*, July 9, 2017. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/07/iraq-islamic-supreme-council-ammar-hakim.html>.

Sayej, Caroleen Marji. *Patriotic Ayatollahs: Nationalism in Post-Saddam Iraq*. Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 2018.

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

Visser, Reidar. "Taming the hegemonic power: SCIRI and the evolution of US policy in Iraq." *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 2, no. 1 (May 2008): 31-51.

Arabic and Persian sources:

الحياة. "إدانة واسعة للحادث ودعوات إلى التهدئة وعدم الانجرار إلى الفتنة ... والمالكي يندد بـ "التكفيريين" و "الصداميين" تفجير مرقد العسكريين في يامراء : الصدر يحمل "القوات الاحتلال" المسؤولية". 14 يونيو 2007.

<http://www.alhayat.com/article/1340487>

صاحب, خالد عدنان. "التنافس الإيراني التركي في العراق بعد 2003". الرسالة, جامعة النهدين, 2015.

الطبري, أبو جعفر محمد بن جرير. تاريخ الطبري: تاريخ الرسل والملوك, الجزء الثاني. القاهرة: دار المعارف بمصر, 1968.

الطحاوي, أميرة. "مقتدى الصدر .. صنيعه المالبي وخليفة الطغاة". مجلة الديمقراطية 4, ع 15 (يوليو 2003): 102-97.

عباس, عقيل. "الإسلام السياسي الشيعي في العراق والديمقراطية التوافقية: إشكاليات الخطاب وتحديات التنوع". سياسات عربية, ع 29 (نوفمبر 2017): 38.

القناة الصديري. "الفرق بين الحوزة الناطقة وبين الساكنة يشرحها لكم السيد الشهيد محمد صادق الصدر رض".

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzNjFjZJxvg>

قناة العهد الفضائية. "اليوم الاخير". مؤسسة MD, 10:20

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=diG1lhycLR4>.

الكاتب, أحمد. المرجعية الدينية الشيعية ... وآفاق التطور. بيروت: الدار العربية للعلوم ناشرون, 2007. الفصل

<https://ahmadalkatib.net/index.php/a-homepage-section/pdf/>. الخامس.

الكبيسي, يحيى. "العراق: الاحتجاجات وأزمة النظام السياسي". سياسات عربية 2 (أيار / مايو 2013): 83-99.

موقع مكتب سماحة المرجع الديني الأعلى السيد علي الحسيني السيستاني. "ما ورد في خطبة الجمعة لممثل

المرجعية الدينية العليا في كربلاء المقدسة الشيخ عبد المهدي الكربلائي في (14/شعبان 1435هـ) الموافق

(2014/6/13م)". تاريخ الوصول 23/7/2019. <https://www.sistani.org/arabic/archive/24918/>.

نظام الملك, ابو على حسن بن على خواجه. سياستنامه تهران: كتابفروشي زوار, 1965/1344.

النفيسي, عبد الله فهد. دور الشيعة في تطور العراق السياسي الحديث. الكويت: مكتبة آفاق, 2012.

وحيد, مروة. "الأزمة السياسية في العراق ما بين تصعيد الصدر ومحاولات العبادي للحل". آفاق سياسية 29

(مايو 2016): 55-60.

Documentaries :

PBS. “*Losing Iraq.*” Directed by Michael Kirk. 2014.
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/losing-iraq/>.

PBS. “*Gangs of Iraq.*” Written by Marcela Gaviria & Martin Smith. 2007.
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/gangsofiraq/>.

PBS. “*The Rise of ISIS.*” Written and produced by Martin Smith. 2014.
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/rise-of-isis/>.