The Role of Tribalism and Sectarianism in Defining the Iraqi National Identity

The Harvard community has made this article openly available. Please share how this access benefits you. Your story matters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citable link</td>
<td><a href="https://nrs.harvard.edu/URN-3:HUL.INSTREPOS:37365053">https://nrs.harvard.edu/URN-3:HUL.INSTREPOS:37365053</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terms of Use</td>
<td>This article was downloaded from Harvard University’s DASH repository, and is made available under the terms and conditions applicable to Other Posted Material, as set forth at <a href="http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:dash.current.terms-of-use#LAA">http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:dash.current.terms-of-use#LAA</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Role of Tribalism and Sectarianism in Defining the Iraqi National Identity

Saleh Ayman Abdallat

A Thesis in the Field of Middle Eastern Studies
for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

Harvard University
May 2020
Abstract

In this thesis, I examine the roots that aggravated the Iraqi national identity to devolve into sectarianism. The thesis covers 603 years of historical events that coincided during the time the Ottoman ruled Mesopotamia, until the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003. The thesis is divided into four chapters, in which I address the factors that aggravated to deteriorate the Iraqi national unity. The historical events include the Ottoman-Persian rivalry that lasted for more than three centuries, and the outcomes that precipitated the Iraqi national identity to devolve into sectarianism.

Furthermore, the thesis covers the modern history of Iraq during the period that Britain invaded Iraq and appointed the Hashemite to act on their behalf. The thesis covers the impacts of the British policies to create an Iraq that would only serve the British interests, and the policies that the Hashemites were forced to implement to preserve their regime survival. Throughout these facts, I examine the factors that were aggravated by the British policies that undermined the national unity in Iraq.

The thesis involves the historical events that happened after the Hashemite collapsed in 1958, and the factors that aggravated the Iraqi national identity to devolve into sectarianism at the time that the Nationalists and the Nasserists ascended to power. The thesis examines the ideological clashes that departed from the Baathists and the Nasserists, which undermined the national unity in Iraq. Finally, the thesis accentuates the aggravating factors that instigated to undermine the Iraqi national unity between the period 1979-2003, which was during the period that Saddam ruled Iraq. Overall, the Persian-Ottoman rivalry, the British creation of a
dysfunctional state in Iraq, King Faysal’s distrust of the Kurds and the Shias, the presidential competing visions that were not focused on unifying the Iraqis after the 1958 revolution, and Saddam’s extensive use of totalitarian power against the Shias, entirely resulted in the devolvement of the Iraqi national identity into sectarianism. The significance of this thesis helps to understand the aggravating factors that instigated the current anarchy in Iraq, the emergence of ISIS, the omnipresence of corruption and proxy wars to emerge in the political arena that from which entirely contributed to turn Iraq into a warfare-sectarian territory.
Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my sincere dearest friend, my grandfather, Saleh Salam al-Abdallat, who died on August 11, 2019. May his soul rest in peace. I also dedicate my work to my sweet Mother, Faridah Muhammad al-Dahabi, who constantly supported and galvanized me on my work. Furthermore, I dedicate this work to my wonderful father, Ayman Saleh al-Abdallat, who invested so much in me and supported me since the beginning. Finally, I dedicate this work to my uncle, Amjad Saleh al-Abdallat (AJ), who supported and encouraged me since the beginning.
Acknowledgments

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to my thesis director, Professor Payam Mohseni, the Director of the Project on Shiism and Global Affairs at Harvard University’s Weather Head Center for International Affairs. I would also like to acknowledge Professor Mohseni’s knowledge and support that were priceless experience to me. I would also like to acknowledge the help, support and suggestions that I received from Professor Mohammad Sagha, whose support helped me quite much with my work. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the help and knowledge that I received from Professor Donald Ostrowski.
Table of Contents

Dedication................................................................................................................................... vii
Acknowledgments..................................................................................................................vii
List of Tables..........................................................................................................................xiii
Introduction..............................................................................................................................1
Chapter I. The Ottoman-Persian Rivalry................................................................................. 3
   Introduction............................................................................................................................3
   Historical Background ..........................................................................................................4
      • The Ottoman Desires in the Mediterranean World......................................................4
      • The Ottomans Executing the Plan............................................................................5
      • The Safavids’ Resistance Against the Ottoman Encroachment.................................6
      • The Treaty of Amasya..............................................................................................7
      • The Safavid Restoration of Tabriz.............................................................................8
      • The Treaty of Zuhab.................................................................................................8
      • Ottomans’ Decentralization Rule in Mesopotamia......................................................9
      • The Ottoman Centralized Power in the Nineteenth Century........................................10
Aggravating Factors during the Period 1501-1750.............................................................11
   • The ideologies of the Twelver Shias as an Existential Threat.................................11
   • The Qizilbash Alliance with the Iranian Shah.............................................................12
Aggravating Factors during the Period 1751-1830.............................................................13
● The Tributary System.................................................................13
● The Transnational Shrine Cities Were an Ottoman Burden..........14
● The Wahhabi Sack of Karbala.................................................15
● The Ottoman Penetration of the Shrine Cities.........................17
Aggravating Factors during the Years 1831-1914..........................18
● The Resumption of the Ottoman Centralized Power...............19
● The Ottoman Invasion of Karbala...........................................20
Conclusion.................................................................................21

Chapter 2. The British Creation of Modern Iraq........................................24

Introduction..................................................................................24

Historical Background .....................................................................24
● The Ambitions of the European Powers in World War-I..............25
● The Impact of the Treaties before and after World War-I...........26
● The U.S. Hegemony and the Initiation of the New World Order.....27
● The British Mandate.....................................................................29
● The Monarchy Rule in Iraq..........................................................30
● King Ghazi’s Ascend to Power....................................................31
● Iraq during World War II.............................................................32
● Iraq during the 1950s..................................................................33
Aggravating Factors during the Years 1914-1932....................34
● British Tribal Policies.................................................................35
● British Religious Policies.............................................................36
● British Harsh Policies against the 1920 Shia Revolt..................37
Aggravating Factors during the Years 1932-1958………………………………………39

- The Iraqis’ Perspectives of King Faysal-I………………………………………40
- The King’s Discernment of the Twelver Shias………………………………40
- The King’s Oligarchies…………………………………………………………41
- The Emergence of the Two Schools of Thought……………………………42

Conclusion………………………………………………………………………………42

Chapter 3. The Clash of Identities in Iraq’s Republic……………………………………46

Introduction……………………………………………………………………………46

Historical Background ……………………………………………………………………46

- Initiation of the Free Officers’ Movement………………………………………47
- The 1958 Revolution…………………………………………………………………48
- The Rivalry over Power……………………………………………………………49
- The Empowerment of the Communists during Qassim’s Rule………………50
- The Declining of the Communist Power………………………………………52
- Abdel Salam Arif Ascends to Power………………………………………………53
- The Ba’ath Regime Era………………………………………………………………55

Aggravating Factors during the Years 1958-1968…………………………………..57

- The Clash of the Shia Identity throughout the Communist’s Coalition
  with Qassii………………………………………………………………………57
- The Shia’s Marginalization in al-Thawra Town………………………………59

Aggravating Factors during the Period 1968-1979………………………………..61

- The Fear of Political Islam…………………………………………………………61
- The Ba’ath Harsh Rule toward the Twelver Shias……………………………62
• The 1979 Iranian Revolution ......................................................... 65
• Conclusion ..................................................................................... 65

Chapter 4. Iraq Under Saddam’s Totalitarian Rule ................................. 68

Introduction .......................................................................................... 68

Historical Background ........................................................................... 68

• An Introduction of the Iran-Iraq War ................................................. 69
• After the Islamic Revolution .............................................................. 70
• Iraq’s Pretext for the War ................................................................. 70
• The 1980 Iraq’s Invasion of Iran ....................................................... 71
• The War during 1981 ......................................................................... 72
• The Period 1982-1983 ...................................................................... 73
• The War Event during 1984-1985 .................................................... 75
• The Period 1986-1987 ...................................................................... 76
• The War during 1988 ......................................................................... 77
• Before the Invasion of Kuwait .......................................................... 78
• The Operation of the Desert Storm ................................................... 78
• The Aftermath of the Persian Gulf War ............................................. 79
• Iraq during the Period of 1992-1998 ............................................... 80
• The 1999 Shia Revolt ....................................................................... 81
• Iraq’s Destiny after the Horrific Attack of 9/11 .............................. 82

Aggravating Factors during the period 1979-2003 ............................. 83

• The Assassination of Shia Senior Clergymen .................................... 83
• The 1991 Shia Uprising .................................................................... 87
- The 1999 Shia Intifada.................................................................90
  
Conclusion.........................................................................................92
  
The Conclusion of the Thesis...............................................................95
  
What Aggravated the Iraqi National Identity to Devolve into Sectarianism …95
  
Predicaments for Further Research.....................................................101
  
Bibliography.........................................................................................102
List of Tables

Table 1. Table Title.................................................................60

Table 2. Table Title.................................................................85
Introduction

Nowadays, Iraq suffers from the consequences of sectarianism, terrorism, corruption and proxy wars that contribute to turn a rich state like Iraq into a warfare-sectarian territory. Many inquired about the factors that instigated the Shias to marginalize the Sunnis after the 2003 U.S invasion of Iraq, the emergence of ISIS, and the exploitation of the Muhassas System (political quote) to temporarily resolve the demographic conflicts between the entire spectrums of the Iraqi people.

Chapter 1 includes the period of the Ottoman-Persian rivalry that lasted for more than three centuries, the factors that aggravated the rivalry to break out and the impacts of the rivalry that instigated the Iraqi national identity to devolve into sectarianism. Each chapter includes an introduction, a historical background of particular events and the aggravating factors that prompted the Iraqi national identity to devolve into sectarianism. Chapter 1 covers the events during the time that the Ottoman ruled in Mesopotamia, which consists of three periods. The first period (1501-1914), the period of the conflict between the Ottoman and the Safavids. The second period (1722-1831) contains the period that discusses the fall of the Safavid empire, the appointment of the Mamluks to rule Mesopotamia on behalf of the Ottomans and the 1801 Wahhabi sack of Karbala. The third period (1831-1914), the resumption of the Ottoman’s direct rule in Mesopotamia, the Ottoman’s annexation of the Shias shrine cities, the Ottoman collapse and the British Invasion of Iraq in 1914.

Chapter 2 discusses the 1914 British Invasion of Iraq, the European desires in the Middle East, Iraq during World War I, the emergence of the New World Order, the 1920 British mandate and the British installment of the Hashemite rule of Iraq. Chapter 2 encapsulates two
periods during the time that Iraq was under the British tutelage. The first period (1913-1932) contains the time when Britain invaded Iraq, Britain mandated Iraq, the British sought to evade the international pressures by appointing King Faysal as a king of Iraq, the British exploited anti-Shia policies and the League of Nations recognized Iraq as a constitutional monarchy in 1932.

The second period (1932-1958) includes the period of King Faysal’s ascends to power, King Faysal’s death and King Ghazi’s ascends to power, the emergence of the two schools of thought in the political arena, Iraq during World War II, the outbreak of the 1948 Wathbah uprising, the eruption of the 1952 uprising, Iraq’s affiliation of the 1955 Baghdad pact and the toppling of King Faysal-II in 1958.

Chapter 3 includes the period when Abdel Kareem Qassim ascended to power, Qassim coalesced with the communists and alienated the Nasserists and the Baathists, Abdel Salam Arif arose to power, Arif died in a helicopter crash and the military committee appointed Abdel Rahman Arif (Abdel Salam’s brother) to rule Iraq, and the Baath ascended to power. Chapter 3 incorporates two periods: the first period entails (1958-1968), the time that the Nasserists and the nationalists ruled in Iraq. The second period (1968-1979) entails the period when the Ba’athist came to power, until Saddam’s regime collapsed in 2003 by the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Chapter 4 covers the period when Saddam ruled Iraq, the 1979 Iranian revolution succeeded, the Iran-Iraq War broke out, Iraq invaded Kuwait, the U.S. expelled the Iraqi forces from Kuwait after the Persian Gulf War, Saddam supported the terrorist organizations against U.S. targets, the regime killed Ayatollah Sadr in 1999, and the U.S. toppled Saddam Hussein from power. Overall, throughout these four chapters I examine the factors that aggravated the Iraqi national identity to devolve into sectarianism, and that deteriorated the national unity in Iraq.
Chapter 1

The Ottoman-Persian rivalry

The Ottoman-Persian rivalry left serious consequences among the inhabitants of Mesopotamia, which is an extension of a compounded dilemma that we see today in Iraq. Chapter one shows the outcomes of the disputes between the Turks and the Persians, and the harsh Sunni Ottoman rule against the Twelver Shias during the period 1501-1914. In this chapter, I discuss the roots that aggravated the Iraqi national identity to incline to sectarianism. I examine the historical literature of the Ottoman rule in Mesopotamia and decipher if the wars that broke out between the Ottomans and the Persians for almost three centuries had an impact on the inclination of the Iraqi national identity to sectarianism. I ask whether the rivalry contributed to the harsh Sunni Ottoman rule toward the Arab Shia. Finally, I examine how the checks and balances that the Ottomans exploited to advocate religious legitimacy and maintain national security in the empire impacted the mentioned dilemma.

Herein, I search for the roots that aggravated the sectarian character of the Iraqi national identity through three separate periods of the Ottoman rule in Mesopotamia. In the first period (1501-1750), I discuss the historical affairs that accompanied a harsh Sunni Ottoman rule toward the Shia. In the second period (1750-1830), I write at a time when the Shia local elites came to the fore of the decentralization in the Ottoman domain. In the third period (1831-1914), I explore the rest of the Ottoman centralization era in the late nineteenth century. Overall, I argue that the Ottoman-Persian rivalry that lasted for more than three centuries contributed to the Ottoman
animosity against the Twelver Shias, which resulted in them providing their prerogatives to those other than the Arab Shias.

Historical Background

The historical background in this chapter discusses the conflict events that coincided between the Ottomans and the Persians. These events explain the Ottomans’ desire in the Mediterranean World; the plans that the Ottomans sought to perform to claim Ottoman-Islamic legitimacy; the Safavids resistance to the Ottoman encroachment; the Treaty of Amasya; the Safavids restoration of Tabriz; the Treaty of Zuhab; the Ottoman’s decentralization rule in Mesopotamia; the Ottoman centralized power in the late nineteenth century. Overall, the literature in this part gives a historical brief of the Ottoman-Persian conflict, which is important to understand the factors that aggravated the Iraqi national identity to devolve into sectarianism in the section that follows.

The Ottomans’ Desire in the Mediterranean World

According to Kenneth W. Hurl, “the Ottomans sought to define a plan that would help them entrench their essential power in the Mediterranean World cope with a powerful Iranian foe for domination of the Middle East.” The plan concentrated on two crucial steps to maintain Ottoman influence and eliminate the Iranian encroachment in the Mediterranean World. First, it focused on subduing the Turkic nomadic tribes (e.g., Azery and Qizilbash) that were in association with the Iranian Shah, entrenching its powers onto areas of Eastern Anatolia to North Western Iran. Second, the plot aimed at seizing and recuperating Baghdad to the Sunni Muslim World, to Claim Ottoman arbitrary over the Eastern and Western Islamic World. For the aim that
the sultan can claim what his fellow predecessors emblemed themselves in the past, the successors of the prophet and the Shadows of God on earth.¹

The Ottomans Executing the Plan

These two crucial steps were, however, controversial to the Sultan. The desired areas were remnants of the Timurid Empire that the Shah had an influence over the tribes dwelling there.² The Shah’s ascendency to power in 1501, and his power alliance with the Egyptian Mamluk, forced the Sultan to take necessary actions toward the Safavid Empire.³ In 1514, Selim-I dictated the Janissaries infantry to march from Constantinople toward the lake of Van, which is today in Eastern Turkey, to clash with the Turkish horse archers on the battle of Chaldiran, where they defeated them.⁴ On September 5, his militant troops continued marching toward the Safavid capital city, Tabriz, and snatched the town from the Shah. But, the troops could not remain there for a longer period due to its bad weather and remote distance from the Ottoman logistic bases.

Although this dilemma exhausted the Ottoman military power, the Sultan kept insisting on toppling the Safavids and overthrowing any states that were in collaboration with the Iranian Shah. In his next expedition, he ordered his troops to march from Tabriz to Egypt, and on their

¹ Baghdad had been the capital city of the Abbasid Caliphate (r.750-1258).
² In 1501, Shah Ismail founded the Safavid state, and had deferred his entitlement from the Sassanid Shah who had ruled Iran before the arrival of Islam.
³ The Timurid Empire declined rapidly during the second half of the fifteenth century and lost control of most territories in 1505.
⁴ The Azery and the Qizilbash tribes revered the Iran Shah as a saint.
journey, the Ottomans annexed Mesopotamia, Syria, and then overthrew the Egyptian Mamluks in 1517.⁵

When the Shah received the news of the collapse of the Mamluk Dynasty, he abruptly ordered his appointed government to announce Isfahan as the new State Capital. Mainly, four strategic reasons were behind the scene of shifting the City Capital into Isfahan:- First, the Qizilbash losses in the Battle of Chaldiran alarmed the Shah because of the dangerous extent of the Ottoman threats to his throne. Second, Isfahan was more difficult for the Ottomans to seize because of its remote distances from the latter’s military bases. Third, the Ottomans annexation of Baghdad in 1534, and most of the Arab lands on the littoral of the Persian Gulf in 1538, forced the Shah to take this decision to keep his capital away from the Ottoman troops. Fourth, making Isfahan the State Capital was envisioned to help transform the Safavid Empire into an effective bureaucratic nation that could uphold the Shia ideology.⁶

The Safavids’ Resistance against the Ottoman Encroachment

However, converting the state into a bureaucratic nation had not been the only thing that the Shah desired; he was aimed at eliminating the Ottoman existential threat in the Mediterranean World. Through his exploitation of a new, successful strategy against his neighbor foe, he was capable of distracting the Ottomans and exhausting its military powers, involving them in guerrilla warfare through the Qizilbash Tribes.⁷ The Sultan, in turn, noticed

---


⁶ Hurl, *Ottoman-Safavid Wars and the Aftermath of Their Wars*.

⁷ Shah Tashmasp, through learning from his father’s defeats became aware of the tactics that would harm the Ottomans, engaging them in guerilla warfare and ravaging its commute highways.
how difficult it was to sweep the Safavid troops into the Battlefield, and therefore realized how important it was to make a peace treaty with the Shah of Iran.⁸

The Treaty of Amasya

In May 1555, the two empires agreed on signing a treaty, the Treaty of Amasya, that would define the frontiers between the two states.⁹ On the one hand, the Ottomans conceded the Safavid sovereignty over the surrounding areas near the Caspian Sea and the land properties of North Western Iran. On the other hand, the Safavids accepted the Ottoman suzerainty on the lands of Eastern Anatolia, and the territories of which are today Armenia and Georgia. The Safavids, as well, agreed to recognize the Ottoman sovereignty over the Black Sea and Baghdad, with the condition that the Ottomans would provide protection to the Shia pilgrims in Mecca and Medina. Whereas the Safavids, in response, would pledge to drop off their ritual cursing against the righteous caliphs.¹⁰

Following the death of Shah Tashmasp in 1566, the Ottomans perceived the existing ruling crisis in Iran as a golden opportunity to abrogate the treaty of Amasya. Consequently, the Ottoman grand vizier, Mustafa Lulu, led a military campaign to the strategic lands near the Caspian Sea. And in his campaign, he annexed Tabriz and the strategic lands in North Western Iran that exposed to the outlets of the Caspian Sea. In 1585, Abbas the Great succeeded his father, and was inspired during his reign to rebuild his military power and restore the occupied

---


⁹ The convened treaty deferred to where it was signed, the city of Amasya.

¹⁰ Hurl, Ottoman-Safavid Wars and the Aftermath of Their Wars.
lands from the Ottomans. In his association with an English lieutenant, Robert Shirley, and a
group of British veterans, he was introduced to the most advanced artillery during that period.\textsuperscript{11}

The Safavids Restoration of Tabriz

In 1603, the Safavids retaliated against the Ottomans, exploited the artillery and
bombarded the city of Tabriz. Through their perpetual bombing, the Safavids restored the
occupied lands from the Ottomans and announced sovereignty over them. The Turks, since then,
tried reoccupying these lands, but without achieving any goals; the main issue was due to the
eruption of the Challah revolt in the Ottoman Eastern provinces.\textsuperscript{12} The promulgated uprisings in
Bitlis and Baghdad in 1624 urged the garrison commanders to call the Iranian Shah to occupy
these cities. As he received the calls, the Shah fulfilled their desires and annexed the holy towns.
The Safavids remained in control for almost 35 years before the Sultan, Murad IV (r. 1623-
1640), successfully restored it in 1638.

The Treaty of Zuhab

In 1639, the Persians and the Ottomans signed a new agreement, the Treaty of Zuhab, that
disclosed similar inscriptions to the Treaty of Amasya in 1555. After signing the treaty, the two
empires experienced several skirmishes, but no major wars were to be held between both states.
In the year 1722, the Safavid empire was exposed to an Afghani invasion by the Zands, by which

\textsuperscript{11} Constance A. Johnson, \textit{Iraq: Legal History and Traditions} (The Legal Law of Congress; Legal Global
Research Center, 2004). 7-10.

\textsuperscript{12} The roots of erupting the Challah revolt was due to the extravagant expenditure on financing these
campaigns against the Safavids.
provoked the collapse of the Safavid State and the mobilization of thousands of Iranian refugees to Karbala and Najaf.¹³

Ottomans’ Decentralization Rule in Mesopotamia

After the collapse of the Safavids dynasty, the Ottomans because of their perpetual wars with the Safavids declined in power. Therefore, they saw the importance to expand the empire boundaries to Eastern Europe, knowing that their neighbor nemesis would not expose threats to their domains. The Ottomans financial deficits due to their engagement in wars in Eastern Europe urged them to appoint the Mamluks to govern Mesopotamia.

The year 1750-1830, the Mamluk governors ruled Mesopotamia through a tributary system. The system permitted the government to coalesce with the Arab tribes in the state to collect taxes. Through their alliance with the Shia tribal confederation, the Muntafiq, the Mamluks were maintained to collect taxes from the rural Shias.

Although after the Shia Qajar restored power in Iran, the Wahhabi marauders sacked the city of Karbala in 1801. This urged the Kirmanshah governor to invade the central cities in Mesopotamia, retaliating against the Mamluks dereliction of the Wahhabi sack of Karbala. Before his troops reached the city of Baghdad a plague spread in the surrounding suburbs of Baghdad, which forced the governor to withdraw his forces from the occupied cities in Mesopotamia.

After the Iranian temporarily invaded different cities in the state, the Ottomans were determined to replace the Mamluk arbiters with men from Istanbul that the Sultan trusted. When

---

www.uokufa.edu.iq › staff › lectures › tawasoa-othmani.
those men arrived in Mesopotamia, the head Mamluk governor, Daoud Pasha, ordered for their execution, which forced the Sultan to dispatch his Janissaries infantry to destroy the Mamluks. Although this era that the Mamluks governed provided social stability in the state, their tributary system contributed to divide the Mesopotamian community into divisions of tribal and religious groups.14

The Ottoman Centralized Power in the Late Nineteenth Century

During the rest of the nineteenth century, the Ottomans restored its centralized power in Mesopotamia and installed new policies for administering the state: the Tanzimat. With the rise of the European power globally, as well as the booming of the capitalist world market, the Ottomans recognized the potentiality to centralize their rule to resist the attempts of European powers to move into its territories; such as the rebellion of the Ottoman-Egyptian governor, Mohammad Ali Pasha, who was supported by the British to declare Egypt as a separate state and expropriated the lands of Greater Syria for almost a year.15 By the year 1911, the Ottomans had lost most of their lands in Eastern Europe in the Italo-Turkish War and lost their sovereignty over the Balkans in 1912. On November 6, 1914, the British forces occupied most of the lands in Mesopotamia and forced the Ottomans to sign an armistice treaty, the Armistice of Mudros, on October 31, 1918. By the year 1920, the Treaty of Sevres gave the rights to the Allies Coalition to compensate for their war losses in World War-I, dividing the Ottoman domains into states of interests.16 The series of developments detailed in this section reveals the Ottoman desires to

15 Cole, Sacred Space, 22-23.
dominate the Mediterranean World, to claim religious legitimacy over the eastern and the western Islamic world. In the sections that follow, I will argue that these Ottoman desires, aggravated by mitigating the Persian existential threats and occupying Baghdad, exposed the minority Shias in Mesopotamia to disenfranchisement and grievance, which contributed to the Iraqi national identity to devolve into sectarianism.

Aggravating Factors during the Period 1501-1705.

In this section, I highlight the period of the harsh Sunni Ottoman rule toward the Arab Shia and write the two roots that aggravated the Ottomans to discriminate against the Twelver Shias: First, I illustrate how the Ottoman recognized the Shia ideology as an existential threat to its national security. Second, I accentuate the reasons that prompted the Ottomans to perceive the Twelver Shia as a pro-Iranian fifth column in its domains.

The Ideologies of the Twelver Shia as an Existential threat.

Due to the perpetual Ottoman-Safavid war for almost three centuries, the Twelver Shias were exposed to social segregation, conflicts, economic exploitation, demographic change, and disenfranchisement from all basic rights of citizenry. To the Ottomans, the reverberated chants of the Twelver Shias during the ceremonial Ashura on October tenth of each year was to be deemed as a camouflaged operation to infuse the public inhabitants against the city government. As a result, the Ottoman banned the ceremonial event of Ashura and incarcerated the religious clerics who preached during these congregations.\(^{17}\)

\(^{17}\) Cole, *Sacred Space*, 17-20.
In the early 1570, Suleiman ordered the execution of the religious scholars who took stipends from Shah Tashmasp for reciting the Quran in the holy shrine cities to the family members of the Safavid monarchy. He also dictated the arrest of the Shia individuals who were in oath of allegiance with the Shah. The Ottomans denied the recognition of the Shia School of jurisprudence as one of the Islamic schools of thought, and portrayed them as a minority sect (taife) who rebelled against the prophet’s teachings.\textsuperscript{18} That being said, the Sunni pupils received stipends from the government, whereas the Shia students were excluded from retrieving the same incentives.\textsuperscript{19} Ultimately, this discrimination had not been the only dilemma that the Shias experienced. They also feared that they would be conflated with the Qizilbash tribes since the Ottoman’s reactions to them were quite severe.

The Qizilbash Alliance with the Shah of Iran

In 1514, the government relocated 30,000 Shia to Europe and executed more than 40,000 Anatolian Qizilbash. The Ottoman jurisconsult of Baghdad, Ibn Kemal Pasha, addressed them as a sect whose men should be killed and whose women and wealth should be permissibly possessed by any Sunni wishing to usurp them. During the Ottomans’ reoccupation of Baghdad in 1638, the governor, Hasan Pasha, had ordered for the maintenance of Abdel Qadir al-Gilani’s shrine from the confiscated lands of the Twelver Shia, as well as to the general slaughtering of


the entire Persian descents. They expropriated the Shia land properties and denied them access to Mecca and Medina since the Ottoman conceived them as Iranian ethnic (Acem).20

Aggravating Factors during the Period 1750-1831.

By the year 1750-1831, the Mamluk governors ruled Mesopotamia through a tributary system. In their alliance with the other Arab tribes like the Shia tribal confederation of the Muntäfiq, their partnership eased to increase the government’s dividends from the collected taxes.21 Despite this era being the period of the politics of the noble local Shias, the urban Shias nevertheless were exposed to plethora detrimental affairs.22 Herein, I discuss the reason why the Mamluks neglected to harass the Arab Shias, the cues of the Wahhabi sack of Karbala and the attacks’ outcomes to galvanize the sectarian animosity among the Mesopotamian people. I show the factors that aggravated the Twelver Shi’a to forge underground movements against the Mamluk government, the roots that led the Sultan to extract the Mamluks from power and the reasons that forced the Ottomans to reimpose their centralized power in Mesopotamia.

The Tributary System

The Ottomans’ engagement in wars in Eastern Europe contributed to replace the garrison commanders with Mamluk arbiters to act on their behalf in Mesopotamia. The latter exploited a distinctive modus operandi in ruling the state, they appointed the tribal chieftains to be charged

20 Cole, Sacred Space, 18-19.

21 The Arab Tribal confederations of al-Muntäfiq are the tribes of Khazali, Zubaid, Banu Lam, Shammar, and Fatlah.

22 Albert Hourani characterized this period as one of the politics of the noble Shia.
with collecting taxes in their tribal peripheries. Despite how the tributary system maintained
domestic certainty in different places in the nation state, it nevertheless contributed to divide the
public community into religious and tribal groups.23

The Transnational Shrine Cities Were an Ottoman Burden

The transnational shrine cities were a serious dilemma for the Ottoman government. The
‘Atabat al- Muqaddasa became the center of education for learning and scholarship to the Shia
students abroad.24 Thousands of students came to the ‘Atabat to master the laws of the Jafari
School of thought that the government considered heterodox and hazardous to the state’s
religious legitimacy. Large numbers of the Persian immigrants dwelling in the shrine cities were
perceived by the Ottomans as an Iranian empowerment in the Ottoman domain.25

Indeed, the Ottoman-Qajar rivalry led the predicament to increase more Ottoman
skepticism against the Arab Shias. The central government envisaged their obstinacy of paying
taxes, and the Shias’ derogatory slogans that were chanted during their ceremonial rituals against
the Ottoman Caliphs as signs of being a pro-Iranian fifth column in the Ottoman State. This
explains why the Mamluks neglected the Arab Shias during the Wahhabi sack of Karbala in
1801.

Many Shias believed that the Mamluks neglected to protect them during the Wahhabi
sack of Karbala because of their often accusation that the Arab Shias sought to exploit the

23 Tripp, A History of Iraq, 10.

24 ‘Atabat al-Muqadassa refers to the collective name given to Najaf, Karbala, Kazimiyah, and Samarra.

www.iranicaonline.org/articles/karbala.
remitted money that was dispatched by the Awadh Family for conspiratorial plans against the Mamluks. It is worth mentioning that the Awadh family remitted R.500,000 to the Usuli scholars in 1786, and dispatched other donations to build a dam in the city of Najaf. But, the Ottomans perceived these philanthropies as a foreign infringement to their sovereignty.\(^\text{26}\)

The Wahhabi Sack of Karbala

The Wahhabi sack of Karbala deteriorated the relationships between the Sunnis and the Shias. Their attack that claimed religious and ideological reformation against heretical practices increased the severity of religious hatred between the two sects, to be a black spot in the Islamic history that contributed to the animosity and raged among the coming generations in both sects. On April 18, 1801, a group of Wahhabi Marauders under the commands of Abdel Aziz Saud sacked the city of Karbala during the Shias ceremony for Ghadir Komm’s anniversary.\(^\text{27}\) The puritanical marauders brutally killed more than 5000 people, vandalized the holy tombs and robbed the shrine cities. Meantime, the Mamluk garrisons fled the city and left the vulnerable Shia by themselves against this barbaric act. An eye-witnessed account by Jean Baptiste Rousseau, who is a French scholar in orientalism, described in his book, "description du Pachalik de Bagdad Suivie d’une Notice Historique sur les Wahabis" (Paris, 1809), the details of the Wahhabi sack of Karbala during his visit to the city. The French orientalist in his visit to


\(^\text{27}\) Ghadir Khumm refers to a sermon delivered by Prophet Mohammad shortly before his death in 632 A.D. According to Shia traditions, in the sermon, Prophet Mohammad announced Ali ibn Abi Talib to be his successor after his death. However, the one I am referring to here is the celebration thereof.
Karbala coincidentally witnessed the Wahhabi attack of Karbala. Herein, I quote the orientalist’s summary of what he witnessed in his book, as an eye-witnessed of the attack:

We have recently seen a horrible example of the Wahhabis’ cruel fanaticism in the terrible fate of the mosque of Imam Husayn. Incredible wealth was known to have accumulated in that town. The Persian Shah have, perhaps, never had something like that in their treasury. For centuries, the mosque of Imam Husayn was known to have received donations of silver, gold, jewels, a great amount of rarities...Tamerlane even spared that place. Everybody knew that the most part of rich spoils that Nader Shah had brought back from his Indian campaign had been transferred to the mosques of Imam Husayn and Imam Ali together with his own wealth. Now, the enormous wealth that has accumulated in the former has been exciting the Wahhabis’ avidity for some time. They have been continuously dreaming of looting that town [Karbala] and were so sure of success that their creditors fixed the debt payment to the happy day when their hopes would come true." That day came at last...12,000 Wahhabis suddenly attacked the mosque of Imam Husayn; after seizing more spoils than they had ever seized after their greatest victories, they put everything to fire and sword...The elderly, women, and children—everybody died by the Barbarians’ sword. Besides, it is said that whenever they saw a pregnant woman, they disemboweled her and left the fetus on the mother’s bleeding corpse. Their cruelty could not be satisfied, they did not cease their murders and blood flowed like water. As a result of the bloody catastrophe, more than 4000 perished. The Wahhabis carried off their plunder on the backs of 4000 camels. After the plunder and murders they destroyed the Imam’s shrine and converted it into a trench of abomination and blood. They inflicted the greatest damage on the minarets and domes, believing those structures were made of gold bricks.

Another storytelling of the Wahhabi sack of Karbala narrated by a Wahhabi historian, Uthman B. Abd Allah B. Bisher (d. 1872), "Unwan al-Majd Fi Tarikh Najd" (Mecca, 1930).

The Wahhabi historian discusses the details of the Wahhabi accomplishments that they successfully achieved throughout their invasion of Karbala. I quote the Wahhabis brief description of the Wahhabi invasion of Karbala that he wrote in his book. He noted that:

In the year 1802, Ibn Sa’ud made for Karbala with his victorious army, famous pedigree horses, all the settled people and bedouin of Najd, the people of Janub, Hijaz, Tihama and others...The Muslims [i.e., the Wahhabis] surrounded Karbala and took it by storm. They killed most of the people in the houses and the markets. They destroyed the dome above al-Husayn’s grave. They took everything they saw in the shrine and near it, including the coverlet decorated with emeralds, sapphires and pearls which covered the grave. They took everything they found in the town-possession, arms, clothes, fabric, gold, silver, and precious books. One cannot even numerate the spoils! They stayed there for just one morning and left after midday, taking away all the possessions. Nearly 2000
people were killed.28

The assault of Karbala galvanized the urban Shias to create underground militants to resist foreign aggressions against them. Between the year 1824-1843, the urban Shias coalesced with the Shia tribes outside the city walls, in case the Ottomans penetrated the holy cities, to extend support to the urban Shias.29

The Ottoman Penetration to the Shrine Cities

The Ottoman penetrated the shrine cities after the Wahhabi sack of Karbala because they saw that the Mamluks failed to preserve domestic security, which resulted in escalating the predicaments with the Shias. Throughout the Ottoman penetration to the holy shrine cities, the Twelver Shias were exposed to famine, torturing and killing. Prior to the Ottoman decision to penetrate the cities, they decided to replace the Mamluk Valis in Mesopotamia. The Ottomans determined to topple the Mamluks for three main reasons: First, the Ottomans accused the Mamluks that they gave a lot of autonomous power to the tribes and lost the shrine cities to the Shia gangs. Second, the Qajar invasion of central cities in Mesopotamia instigated the Ottomans to centralize their authority and protect their sovereignty.30 Third, the assassination of the Sultan’s diplomats from Istanbul by the head governor of the Mamluks, Daoud Pasha, in 1830 led the Sultan to dispatch his Janissaries to subdue the Mamluks.


30 The Qajar governor of Kirmanshah led a military campaign and seized different cities in Mesopotamia. As almost the Qajars reached Baghdad a plague hit the city, which forced the former to evict the city.
In turn, when the Shias received the news about the Ottomans’ desires to penetrate the city of Karbala, they showed willingness to resist the invaders and defend the holy cities from the usurpers, claiming that if the Ottomans reimpose their authority of the cities they would experience the same harsh Sunni Ottoman rule during the prior century.\(^{31}\)

In 1830, the Ottoman besieged the shrine cities and cut the food and water supply to the towns, which forced the Twelver Shia to slender. The Ottomans penetration of Karbala city permitted the Ottomans to destroy the Mamluks and cleanse the town from the Shia gangs. After the Ottomans seized the city, the Ottomans appointed a Sunni religious judge to be charged with the religious affairs in the shrine cities, prohibiting the Shia scholars and preachers from performing their religious rites.\(^{32}\) After the Ottoman penetrated the holy shrine cities, the Twelver Shias were exposed to the same Ottoman harsh rule that they experienced during the prior century.

**Aggravating Factors during the Years 1831-1922**

This period is important because it discusses the regurgitation of the Ottoman harsh rule against the Shias, prior to the Ottoman’s collapse and the creation of modern Iraq. In this period, I address the resumption of the Ottoman centralized rule in Mesopotamia and concentrate on the two crucial factors that aggravated to arouse the sectarian animosity in the state. First, I highlight the resumption of the Ottoman centralized power in Mesopotamia. Second, I discuss the Ottoman invasion of Karbala city in 1843 and show the aftermath of the Ottoman invasion of

---

\(^{31}\) Cole and Moojan, “Mafia, Mob and Shiism in Iraq,” 114-117.  

\(^{32}\) Cole and Moojan, “Mafia, Mob and Shiism in Iraq,” 118-123.
Karbala that contributed to deteriorating the Shia-Sunni relationships in the state. Overall, I argue that the resumption of the Ottoman centralized power in Mesopotamia and their invasion of Karbala played a role to compound the sectarian animosity among the Iraqis, by which made it difficult for the British to unify the Iraqi people during the creation of modern Iraq.

The Resumption of the Ottoman Centralized Rule

The resumption of the Ottoman centralized power in Mesopotamia that aimed to reimpose the government sovereignty played a crucial role to disenfranchise the minority Arab Shias from enjoying the government’s prerogatives. In 1831, the Sultan appointed the governor of Aleppo, Medhat Pasha, to be charged with performing the Tanzimat policies in Mesopotamia. The Ottoman policies incorporated secularizing the school system, reconfiguring the military and imposing new codes of commercial and laws in the state. These policies provided the governmental agencies to acquire more autonomous power across the remote peripheries in the state. With the 1858 TAPU land law, the Ottoman sought to replace the anachronistic feudal system of the land holdings.

And with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the Mesopotamians craftsmanship increased their profits from selling textiles and other products to the governments to export to the Western World.33 The government, however, took preemptive steps prior to performing these laws to guarantee removing all constraints before implementing. The preemptive steps began by subduing the Shia nomads that were abstained from paying taxes to the central government, and also by annexing the lands of al-Hasa in Southern Iraq to abrupt the connection between the

---

Persians and the Arab Shias. The Ottomans executed the decree that was declared by Sultan
Abdel Hamid II (r. 1876-1909) that aimed to proselytize the Shia nomads, which later intensified
the violent rampage of the urban Shias in the holy cities. Overall, these preemptive actions that
the Ottoman government performed to guarantee the success of the Tanzimat execution caused
the violent rampage in the Shia urban cities to escalate, which urged the government to invade
the holy shrine cities and kill tens of thousands of its population.

The Ottoman Invasion of Karbala in 1843

The Ottoman invasion of Karbala resulted in killing almost fifteen percent of the city’s population. On January 13, 1843, the Ottomans invaded Karbala because of the Shia uprising that prompted the Ottoman government to violently crack down the Shias. This invasion contributed to infusing sectarian animosity against the Sunnis, as the Shias deemed the Ottoman repercussion to them as a Sunni war against them. The casualties during that event aroused to fifteen percent of the city’s population, as well as to the death of 2000 Shia nomads outside the cities’ walls. On January 18, 1843, the Ottomans appointed a Sunni religious court judge, Najib Pasha, to oversee the religious affairs. He, in turn, dictated the Sunni preachers to call the Shia practitioners to pronounce blessings during the Friday prayers to the Ottoman Sultans, and therefore the Shias pretended to be Sunnis by practicing dissimulation (Taqiyyah), praying with their hands on their bellies instead of stretching their arms, to eschew Ottoman repercussion.

The Ottomans invasion of Karbala that resulted in killing tens of thousands of Shia, and the

---

34 Cole, *Sacred Space*, 27.

35 Cole and Moojan, “Mafia, Mob and Shiism in Iraq,” 138-139.
Ottomans unjust laws that banned the minority Shias from practicing their religious rites
instigated to produce sectarian animosity among the coming generation in Iraq, to later be
remembered that the Sunni Ottomans tortured, killed and dislocated hundreds of thousands of
Shias during their reign.

Conclusion

Chapter one discusses the influence of the Ottoman-Persian rivalry on the inclination of
the Iraqi national identity to sectarianism during the time Iraq was under the Ottoman
sovereignty. The Ottomans’ desires to expand the Empire’s boundaries to Eastern Europe and
cities that belonged in the past to prior Sunni Caliphates (e.g., Baghdad) contributed to escalating
the rivalry between the Ottomans and the Persians, which led the Ottoman to harshly react
against the Twelver Shias. The Ottomans deemed their occupation to the cities that previously
belonged to the Umayyads and the Abbasids, as a necessary step to entrench the Sultan’s Islamic
imagery across the Empire, portraying the Sultan as the Islamic legitimate arbiter who performed
the Prophet’s teachings and traits in his policies. And throughout entrenching his Islamic
picturesque, the sultan will be maintained to exploit his checks and balances that guarantees his
regime survival and his expansion of power.

To pave the way to annex the cities that were in the past ruled by the Sunni predecessors,
the Ottomans had to crack down the subversive Qizilbash tribes that were stretched from Eastern
Anatolia to North Western Iran, to seize Baghdad and claim Ottoman arbitrary over the Eastern
and Western Islamic World. These Turkic tribes revered the Iranian Shah and were the latter’s
first defense line to protect his Empire. Furthermore, Shah Ismail constituted the Safavid Empire
on the remnants of the Timurid Empire that from where these tribes were living. This is why the
Ottomans disenfranchised and disparaged the Shias during their rule because they perceived the Twelver Shias as an existential threat.

After the collapse of the Safavid State and the declining power of the Ottoman Empire, the latter appointed the Mamluks to act on their behalf in Mesopotamia. Between the year 1751-1830, the Twelver Shias periodically enjoyed some extent of autonomous power in the holy shrine cities. However, the Wahhabis sack of Karbala in 1801, and the Mamluks’ dereliction to protect the Arab Shias in the attack intensified the Shia-Sunni animosity among the Mesopotamian people.

The Wahhabi invasion of Karbala precipitated the Qajar governor of Kirmanshah to lead a military campaign against the Mamluks to retaliate for the death of the innocent Shia that died during the Wahhabi invasion of Karbala. As soon as the troops occupied the cities in Mesopotamia almost reaching Baghdad, the troops were forced to withdraw from the annexed cities because of the plague that spread in the suburbs of Baghdad. Consequently, the Ottomans decided to replace the Mamluk arbiters and reimpose their centralized authority in the state. After the assassination of the men from Istanbul that the Sultan dispatched to substitute the Mamluk governors, the Ottomans destroyed the Mamluk garrisons and cleansed the holy cities from the Shia mobs.

By the year 1831-1914, the Ottoman resumed their centralized power in Mesopotamia and reiterated the harsh Sunni Ottoman rule against the Shias. In 1843, the Ottoman penetrated the holy shrine cities that resulted in killing 15 percent of the population, disenfranchising the Shia from practicing their ritual rites and forcing the Shias to proselytize into Sunnism. Overall, the Ottoman-Persian rivalry triggered the former to perceive the Shia ideology as an existential threat to the Islamic creed and the empire’s national security, and therefore forced the Shia to
live under constant fear because they terrified that the government would discern them as a pro-Iranian fifth column in the Empire. These three periods of Ottoman rule in Mesopotamia constituted a traumatized society that from which contributed to demarcate the Iraqis based on their ideological, ethnic and religious beliefs, which made it difficult for the Iraqis to be unified in the coming decades.
Chapter 2

The Creation of Modern Iraq

After discussing in Chapter 1 the premises of the rivalry between the Ottomans and the Persians, and the aftermath that led to this rivalry, I discuss in this chapter the roots that aggravated to undermine the Iraqis national unity, during the period that Iraq was under the British tutelage. In this part, I show the roots that aggravated to deteriorate Iraq’s national identity during the period of the British Invasion of Iraq, the British Mandate, and the Hashemite rule. I focus between the period 1914-1958, which covers the period that Britain constituted Iraq, until the Hashemite collapsed in 1958. I argue that the British creation of an Iraq that served the British interests, played a role to prolong the sectarian dilemma that existed during the time that Iraq was under the Ottoman suzerainty. I also argue that the British policies that the Acting Commissioner performed prompted to undermine the national unity in Iraq, disenfranchising who the British considered an existential threat to their interests.

Furthermore, I argue that King Faysal’s distrust of the Shias instigated to alienate the Shias from possessing higher position in the government, which contributed to deteriorate the grounds that Iraq needed to create a unified national identity in Iraq. Overall, Britain’s creation of a dysfunctional state, the British policies that targeted the Shias and the alienation that the Shias experienced during the period of the Hashemite rule, were roots that undermined the national unity in Iraq and contributed to arouse sectarianism among the Iraqis.

Historical Background

The historical literature of chapter 2 explains the factors that precipitated to creating a dysfunctional state in Iraq. Herein, I discuss the ambitions of the European Powers in World War-
I; the impacts of the treaties before and after World War-I; the U.S. hegemony and the initiation of the New World Order; the British Mandate; the monarchy rule in Iraq; King Ghazi’s ascends to power; Iraq during World War-II; Iraq during the 50s. Overall, this part incorporates the historical events that explain what led the Iraqi national identity to devolve into sectarianism, which I will further explain in the section that fellows.

The Ambitions of the European Powers in WWI

The outbreak of WWI resulted in dividing the world into two coalition forces, and the emergence of new-building states in the Middle East. The Ottomans, for instance, sided with the Axis Powers because the Ottomans took it as an opportunity to confront the Russians face-to-face in the war, as well as because of the German political-economic influence in the Ottoman Empire. The Russians, on the other hand, sided with the Allies Powers because of the British promises that pledged to grant the Russians the Turkish Strait, in case the Allies coalition won the war. To the Russians, the Turkish Strait represented an access to forty percent of Russia’s export and the surrounding warm waters that the Russians needed to expand for their imports.

France, in turn, wanted to control Greater Syria because of Syria lands’ location on the littoral of the Mediterranean Sea, which would ease the French to have access to their colonies in North Africa (e.g., Algeria and Tunisia). France also wanted to monopolize the Lebanese cotton and silk that was known for its high quality in Europe. As for Britain, the British sought to annex large scales of lands in the Arabian Peninsula and Iran, to secure the trading route from India to Europe, and protect its oil investments in Iran. The significance of these facts is to give a short
brief of what led the European countries to engage in WWI, which resulted in creating tumultuous states in the Middle East.\textsuperscript{36}

The Impacts of the Treaties during and after WWI

The Constantinople Agreement that was held in 1914, did not implement as the way that the Allies coalition anticipated. After the defeat of the Axis Powers, Britain and France temporarily enjoyed control of former Ottoman territories, and Russia did not obtain what it was promised. This modus vivendi, however, paved the way to the treaties that follow to grant the victorious countries the rights to compensate for their war losses, through annexing former Ottoman territories. Treaties, such as Husayn-McMahon and the Belfour declaration were conducive to Britain because the former agreement contributed to undermine the Ottoman powers, distracting the Ottomans throughout a British support of an Arab insurgency against the Ottomans. The Balfour Declaration, on the other hand, succeeded to convince the Russian’s Jewish lobbyists to financially support the war and force the Russians to proceed their war against the Axis Coalition.\textsuperscript{37}

It is worth noting that the Arab Revolt-led by the Sharif of Mecca, sustained the British to quell the severe resistance that the Ottomans showed in Mesopotamia, which eased them to annex the cities of Baghdad and Kut. However, the British promises to the Sharif of Mecca, to officially be designated as the King of Arabia, did not take place. Although these agreements did


\textsuperscript{37} Roberto Mazza, “Occupation during and after the War (Middle East).” New Articles RSS. Accessed October 7, 2019. https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/occupation_during_and_after_the_war_middle_east.
not oblige to the desires that Britain promised for their allies, these agreements were the foundations that resulted in the 1920 Sevres Treaty.\textsuperscript{38}

In 1920, the Treaty of Sevres divided the Ottoman domains into a British and French state of interests that instigated President Woodrow to constitute the League of Nations, to resolve the disagreements-led between the members of the Allies coalition after the agreement of Sevres. Overall, I narrate these facts to comprehend the steps that led to create the modern Middle East, which is quite essential to understand the beginnings conflicts between the Muslim religious sects in Iraq.\textsuperscript{39}

The U.S. Hegemony and the Initiation of the New World Order

This part discusses the dynamics that happened after the initiation of the New World Order, President Woodrow’s Fourteen Commandments that sought to put an end to European Imperialism and empower free trading. Herein, I only focus on the part that relates to Iraq, discussing the development stages of modern Iraq’s constitution. I categorize these development stages through three points (international, regional and domestic).

First (international), the shrinking role of Britain to lead the international community, and the U.S. expansion of international influence, led the latter to lay solutions to predicaments, such as economic instability and revolutionary movements in Eastern Europe because of the rise of the ideological battles between the U.S. and the Soviets. The international pressures that Great


Britain experienced instigated the latter to accept the League of Nations’ proposal that entrusted Britain to mandate Iraq.

Woodrow’s fourteen commandments that called for democracy, peace negotiations, free trading, self-determination and an end to the ethnic centrism of the White Man’s Burden, clashed with the French and the British interests in the Middle East. The French Prime Minister, George Clemenceau (1841-1929) showed disappointment with the fourteen commandments that President Woodrow declared, saying that “God gave us Ten Commandments and we broke them. Wilson gives us fourteen points. We Shall see.” Nevertheless, Britain and France conceded the responsibilities to compose the new-building states to become active members of the League of Nations. The U.S. perceived the Westphalian System as a far reaching modus operandi to end Western pre-war imperialism. Therefore, the British saw through their appointment of King Faysal as a way to retain their influence in the region and evade the international pressures.40

Second (regional), France ousted King Faysal of Syria in 1921. In turn, Prince Abdullah, King Faysal’s brother, mobilized an army to retaliate against the French after the humiliation that Faysal experienced. This urged the British to placate the two sons of the Sharif, separating Trans Jordan from Greater Syria and installing Prince Abdullah as a King of Jordan. They also joined three prior Ottoman provinces (Mosul, Basra and Kirkuk) to Iraq and appointed King Faysal as a King of Iraq. Throughout appointing the two Kings, the British killed two birds with one stone because it strengthened their alliance with the French, as stated by the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George, that “the friendship of France is worth ten Syria.” And also because it maintained

40 Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East a History*, 200-201.
Britain to evade the international pressures, entrenching their power and interests in Iraq through appointing King Faysal as a King of Iraq.\(^{41}\)

Third (domestic), the British created the state of Iraq in terms that would only serve its interests in the region. The British constituted a country that incorporated different racial backgrounds, and therefore knew that the Hashemite would only maintain power to those who would preserve the British interests. The British avoided the Shia from holding hierarchical positions and sought to undermine the Shias because the British discerned that a Shia empowerment would lead to jeopardizing the British interest in the region. Therefore, the British kept it safe by possessing the power in the hands of the Sunnis, which instigated the 1920 Shia revolt to erupt. The facts that I addressed in this part highlight the political dynamics that from which Iraq had been formed.\(^{42}\)

The British Mandate

Between 1923-1927, Britain only served as an advisor. They impeded the policies that empowered King Faysal and solely permitted the policies that granted power to the British. The British segregated between the viable and the subversive tribes, doing a catalogue that contained the names of the entire tribes, with a list of the names that Britain considered subversive. The Acting Commissioner, Arnold Wilson, envisaged that the Sunnis would fit as the right candidates to run the governmental positions. The British only deployed the Shias in the lowest ranks in the military because of the necessity to keep the Shias away from the essential positions.


\(^{42}\) Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East a History*, 200-201.
They envisaged that positioning the Shia in hierarchical jobs would later ease them to acquire power and constitute a theoretical state.\textsuperscript{43}

The public plebiscite that the London Government ordered the commissioner to perform did not reach the populated areas of the Shias. The plebiscite incorporated inquiries about the performance of the British Mandate and the future insights of Iraq. In 1920, the Shia revolt broke out because the British Government fell short to provide equal rights to the Shias as their Sunnis counterpart. In the late 1920s, Britain began to petition for Iraq’s independence after the demonstrations prevailed in most cities in Iraq.\textsuperscript{44}

The Monarchy Rule in Iraq

In 1932, the League of Nations recognized Iraq as a constitutional monarchy with an elected parliament. However, the king had absolute power to resolve the parliament and appoint the prime minister. In turn, Britain remained in control of the two large bases in Iraq as well as the rights to acquire any governmental projects. According to Charles Tripp, King Faysal had an advantage to rule Iraq as a foreigner because he did not have any affiliation with any particular ethnic or religious group. But in the meantime, the Iraqis deemed him as a British agent. By 1933, King Faysal died, to be succeeded by his eldest son, Prince Ghazi, at the age of 21. Overall, Faysal saw that the power should be possessed by the Sunnis because of his distrust of

\textsuperscript{43} Dodge, \textit{Inventing Iraq}, 9-10.

the Shias and the Kurds, which is one of the arguments that I exploit in the section that follows the historical background.45

King Ghazi’s Ascends to Power

The new king was an anti-British and pro-Arab nationalist. He built good relations with the tribes and distanced the politicians that surrounded King Faysal during his time of rule in Syria. But, Ghazi’s fervent belief of Arab nationalism led to the emergence of the two schools of thought (Iraqi-centric and pan-Arabism) in the political arena, in which these two schools became the powers that played in the political arena in the next two decades and after the Hashemite collapsed.46

In 1936, a Kurdish general, Baker Sadiqi (1890-1937), staged a coup to overthrow the appointed Prime minister, which was designated as the first military coup d’état to happen in the Arab World. Sadiqi was an Iraqi centric that believed that his coup was necessary to extract the king’s surrounding politicians. His successful coup against the king’s prime minister led him to become the Chief Commander of the military, and purge the Prime Minister and the King’s cousin, Yasin al-Hashmi. After the coup, Sadiqi appointed his fellow, Hikmet Suleiman, as a Prime Minister. However, Sadiqi remained as the Chief Commander of the Army for almost a year, prior to his assassination by the Arab nationalists from Mosul. His coup was the threshold that opened the way for the future coups to coincide. In 1939, King Ghazi died in a car accident,


and after his death, the British abruptly engineered a regency in the name of his infant whose powers were left in the hands of the regent and pro-British Prime Minister, Nuri Saeed.\textsuperscript{47}

Iraq during World War II

After the outbreak of World War II, the Germans supported the anti-British, Rashid Ali al-Gilani, to stage a coup d’état against Nuri Saeed. The British abruptly directed their jet fighters to quell the revolt and bombarded the Shia tribes in the south. What urged the British to immediately intervene was the cutting oil supply to Britain during WWII, which Britain considered a violation of the 1930 Anglo-Iraqi treaty. Gilani escaped to Egypt as soon as the British imposed control and reinstalled Saeed’s government.

By January 1943, Iraq declared war on the Axis Powers, and allowed British planes to land in Iraq’s military bases, to fuel the planes and strike the Axis troops in Iran and the Levantine. In 1945, Iraq became a member of the British coalition, along with countries like Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. In fact, Iraq became an official member of the United Nations in December 1945.\textsuperscript{48} According to Martin Walker, “WWI established British authority in Iraq, and WWII reaffirmed it, this time with the solid support of Britain’s ally, the United States.”

In early 1947, Salih Jabr, Iraq’s first Shia Prime Minister, negotiated the 1930 Anglo-Iraqi Treaty because of the demonstrations that prevailed all over Baghdad. Throughout the negotiations, Britain and Iraq signed a new treaty, the Portsmouth Treaty, that entailed a new


partnership agreement with Britain on the basis of equity and complete independence. As a result, thousands of Iraqis mobilized into the streets and demanded to provoke the treaty. Furthermore, these demonstrations developed into a revolt, al-Wathbah Revolt, and instigated heavy damages to the public properties, which resulted in Jabr’s resignation.49

Iraq during the 1950s

In November 1952, the people mobilized into the streets and demanded the regime to take the steps that the Iranian Prime Minister, Mohammad Mosaddegh, took to nationalize the oil refineries in Iran. In 1955, Iraq entered the British coalition, the 1955 Baghdad Pact, that aimed to resist the Soviet encroachment in the region, along with countries like Pakistan, Turkey, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia. In 1956, Britain, France and Israel joined in a tripartite aggression to restore the Suez Canal after Abdel Nasser nationalized the Canal, and to remove Nasser from power. The Tripartite Aggression in Egypt galvanized thousands of Iraqis to protest against the aggression, and request to immediately cut relations with Britain.

The U.S. condemned the aggression and demanded the three states to halt their invasion of Egypt, which embarrassed the three states. The Tripartite Aggression was the beginning point that from which the Iraqis began to conceive that the military was capable of taking charge if the regime collapsed. In 1958, Egypt and Syria created a Union State, the United Arab State, which galvanized to the emergence of the 1958 revolution.

To resist threats stemming from the United Arab States, Nuri Saeed requested from the King of Jordan, King Hussein, to permit the Iraqi troops to base in Jordan. After the king approved the

proposal, the Iraqi government coincidentally chose Abdel Kareem Qassim and Abdel Salam Arif, the two members of a clandestine military movement that sought to topple the King, to oversee the transition of the military equipment and bases to Jordan. They instead directed the troops to Baghdad and put an end to the Hashemite rule in Iraq.\textsuperscript{50}

The series of developments detailed in this section discuss the development stages that Iraq went during World War I, until the end of the Hashemite regime. In the sections that follow, I argue that the British creation of a dysfunctional state, aggravated by protecting the British interests, compensating the War losses that was caused from World War I and evading the international pressures, instigated to prolong the sectarian dilemma that existed at the time Iraq was under the Ottoman rule.

Aggravating Factors during the Years 1914-1932

In this part, I argue that Britain’s interests to cover the losses of World War I, and maintain their power in the Mediterranean World, is what led to create a dysfunctional state that became an arena for sectarian conflict. Herein, I argue that the British policies that took place during the British Invasion of Iraq, the British Mandate, and the Hashemite rule, prolonged the sectarian cycle that existed during the Ottoman era. Overall, I argue that the British embroilment to create a state that only served their interests prompted to segregate the Sunnis and the Shias community, which was at the price of Iraq’s unity.

British Tribal Policies

In this part, I discuss the three factors that aggravated Britain to handle the power to the Sunnis. I also discuss the modus operandi that Britain exploited to distinguish between the viable and the subversive tribes. Overall, I reveal the statements that entailed why the British officials created a state that was an anti-Shia. The first factor, Britain did a catalog to distinguish between the viable and the subversive tribes, marking the names of the tribes that Britain considered subversive. To Britain, this was an essential step to notify who should they install in power. Most of the names that Britain marked as subversive were from the Shia tribes that lived in the south. The Acting Commissioner, Arnold Wilson, saw that it was more convenient to collaborate with the Sunni tribes because they were more tolerable than their Shia counterpart.51

The second factor, Britain positioned individuals from Sunni tribal backgrounds in major positions in the government, whereas they contrarily did with the Shias, deploying them in lower ranks in the military. The statements of Gertrude Bell, who was in the interior of modern Iraq and among one of the greatest women in the 20th century, justify why the British excluded the Shias from positioning in hierarchical positions. She stated:

We as outsiders can’t differentiate between Sunni and Shi’a, but leave it to them and they’ll get over the difficulty by some kind of hanky punky, just as the Turks did, and for the present it’s the only way of getting over it. I don’t for a moment doubt the final authority must be in the hands of the Sunnis, in spite of their numerical inferiority, otherwise you will have a mujtahid-run, theocratic state, which is the very devil.52

Therefore, the threats that the Shia exposed to Britain led the British officials to perceive that the Sunnis were the viable candidate to run the government positions, which played a role to permit the Sunnis to enjoy the government’s prerogatives and disenfranchised the Shias.

51 Vinogradov, “The 1920 Revolt,” 133-134.

The third factor, the London Government dictated the acting commissioner to initiate the public Plebiscite, to get feedback on the Iraqis outlooks of the British Mandate. However, the plebiscite did not reach into areas of populated Shias because the government claimed that it was the inability of the prior Ottoman institutions to deliver the plebiscite due to its weak performance. Overall, Britain failed to contain the entire tribes, and create an umbrella that would encapsulate all Iraqis to hold equal rights because they similarly decided to follow the Ottomans’ steps. The plebiscite contained important inquiries that Britain was not willing to share with the tribes in the south because Britain sought to avoid these anti-British remarks to be reached to the League of Nations.

British Religious Policies

In this part, I discuss the three religious policies that aggravated the stalemate of sectarianism to prevail among the Iraqis, through the policies that Britain exploited against the Shias. The first policies, the British taxed the pious donations that the Shias received from abroad to repair the mosques and the tombs in Karbala and Najaf, which the Iraqi Shias saw that this policy was unlawful. The second policy, Britain arrested and deported hundreds of Shias into diaspora because of the demonstrations that prevailed after the religious ceremonies in Ramadan, demanding the British forces to immediately evict Iraq, which aggravated the 1920 Shia revolution to break out.

The third policy, Britain besieged Karbala and Najaf cities for almost five months, and cut the water and food supply to the cities, to force the Shias to slender. As a result, Britain

---

confiscated 3000 arm weapons and 81000 pieces of gold as compensation for the losses from the 1920 revolution.\textsuperscript{54} On July 14, 1918, Gertrude Bell highlighted the roots of the British anti-Shia, prior to the eruption of the 1920 revolution. She noted that:

The nationalists had picked their tempo in continual meetings at the mosques. Extremists are calling for independence and refusing moderation and there have dominated the mobs in the name of Islamic unity and the rights of the Arabs.\textsuperscript{55}

Britain’s anti-Shia religious policy aggravated the Shia-sectarian animosity to arouse against the Sunnis because of the conspicuous gap between the Sunnis and the Shias in receiving the prerogatives that the British government offered. They also envisaged that the Shias were anti-statists because of the British beliefs that the Shias only desired to create a theocratic state, which urged the British officials to distance the Shias from situating in hierarchical positions.

Britain’s Harsh Policy Against the 1920 Shia Revolt

In this part, I discuss the political manners that the British officials exploited to break the Shias’ wills to resist the British forces, through three harsh British policies that from which I argue that it played a role to undermine the national unity in Iraq. The first policy, the British closed down the Shia political parties in Baghdad and bombarded the Shia tribes in the south after the 1921 Cairo Conference that took place between the British officials and King Faysal, which instigated thousands of Shias to protest and reject the agreement that was held between the king and the British. On August 25, 1921, Sir Piercy Cox justified that it was necessary to quell

\textsuperscript{54} Vinogradov, “The 1920 Revolt ,” 134.

\textsuperscript{55} Gertrude Lowthian Bell and Florence Eveleen Eleanor Olliffe Bell, The Letters of Gertrude Bell (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1939).
the insurgency of the Shia tribes in the south by force, to notify that Britain would not tolerate any type of anarchy, even by those that stemmed from the holy senior clerics. Cox noted that:

I think rightly, that the tribes must be made to submit to force. In no other way was it possible to make them surrender their arms, or teach them that you must not engage lightly in revolution, even when your holy men tell you to do so.\(^{56}\)

The British reactions to disciplined the Shias, closing down the Shia factions in Baghdad, and bombarding the tribes in the south, instigated the Shias to envisage that Faysal was a British puppet, which entrenched the distrust between the monarchy regime and the Shias, and led the regime to depend on the Sunni bases that were supportive to the king.

The second policy, Britain’s electoral law gerrymandered the electoral seats to the king’s favor. Although the Shia represented 40 percent of the parliament, the electoral law empowered the Sunnis, increasing the numbers of the electoral seats in areas that were in favor of the king, to resist the Shia opposition in the parliament, undermining the Shias from passing any laws that were in disfavor to the king.\(^{57}\) The third policy, Faysal’s obedience to empower the Sunnis at the Shias’ expense, urged the Shia Grand Mufti, Mohammed al-Khalisi, to demand the king to break all bonds with the British. On July 13, 1921, Khalisi called the King to respect the sovereignty of Iraq and to be the one that he would rule. In his speech, he noted:

The king had to respect the complete sovereignty of Iraq, he had to break all bonds with a foreign power whatever that power is, and he had to be bound by an assembly representing the Umma.\(^{58}\)

---

\(^{56}\) Karol Sorby, “Iraq from Faysal’s Ascendancy to the Throne to the Ratification of the First Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, 1921-1924,” https://doi.org/Slovenská Akadémia Vied › sk › ...PDF Web results iraq from faysal’s ascendancy to the throne to the ratification of the first ... - SAV., 201-205.

\(^{57}\) Karol Sorby, “Iraq from Faysal’s Ascendancy,” 208-209.

Although Khalisi demanded the king to end all ties with the British, he later rescinded his pledge of allegiance to the king after the latter neglected his calls. On June 6, 1922, Khalisi accused the king that he betrayed his promises to God, Islam and the prophet. On November 5, he declared a fatwa that forbade the Muslims from voting or participating in the coming elections, after the king resolved the parliament because of his fears that the parliament would vote against the Anglo-Iraqi treaty, which instigated Britain to deport Khalisi into exile. Khalisi’s remarks to end ties with Britain, embarrassed the king because it perceived Faysal as a British puppet that had no legitimacy, which urged the British to deport him into exile. Overall, the British anti-Shia policies deemed the Shias as an existential threat to the state, which alienated the Shias to engage in the political life, and be a part of the equation that forms the national unity in Iraq.

Aggravating Factors during the Years 1932-1958

In this part, I discuss the factors that aggravated to undermine the Iraqi national unity. I argue that Faysal’s distrust of the Shias was one of the roots that dismantled the national unity, and led to envisage the Shias as an existential threat. I also argue that the emergence of the two schools of thought during the period of King Ghazi was the onset that aggravated the conflict between the different political factions, which prompted their ideologies to clash that resulted in different discernment of Iraq’s national unity. Overall, I argue that the British failure to create a unified state in Iraq, left the Hashemite to struggle with those who the British considered their foes in Iraq.

The Iraqis’ Perspectives of King Faysal

Charles Tripp argued that Faysal had an advantage to rule Iraq because he had no ties with any particular ethnic or religious group. However, he stated that his disadvantage was that he was deemed as a Western proxy. The Sayyid families, for instance, the descendants of the prophet, envisaged him as a British agent, although Faysal himself was a descendent of the prophet. The Shias barely respected him, the Kurds never supported him, and the Sunnis were split into two halves, one half that constituted the King’s popular bases, and the other half that similarly deemed him as a Western agent. The Kurds considered Faysal’s ascends to power as a British betrayal because of the British promises that pledged to constitute a Kurdish state after the 1920 Sevres Treaty.60

Therefore, these predicaments that were left by the British, led the Hashemite to alienate the Kurds and the Shias from holding power. Nevertheless, the Shias and the Kurds’ perspectives were sources of threats because they have realistically been demands that requested to extract much of the king’s powers. Therefore, the monarchy regime had to prolong the way that the British performed their policies to ensure the regime’s survival.

The King’s Discernment of the Twelver Shias

The king’s fears of the Shia led the latter to keep the Kurdish state inseparable from Iraq, in order to demographically empower his Sunni stance against the Shias, who sought to turn the nation into a theocratic state. The British refused the king’s proposal to give the Kurds and the Shias autonomous powers because the British believed that giving them power would shift the

---

nation’s identity into a nationalist or a theocratic state, which would threaten Britain’s interests.\(^{61}\) The king’s compliance to the British dictums instigated the Iraqis to alienate themselves from the nation-state identity because they feared that the nation identity would embody them as betrayals to Islam and the Arab virtues. Therefore, the King deemed the Shias as an existential threat, and saw that alienating the Shias was essential to his regime’s survival. Overall, the regime failed to find a common ground to unite the Iraqis because of the political threats that the regime believed that Shias exposed, which made it difficult to consolidate the Iraqis.

The King’s Oligarchies

King Faysal favored to appoint his fellow politicians who surrounded him during the time he ruled in Syria because of his distrust of the Shias and the Kurds. According to Adeed Dawisha, the king only appointed 14 individuals during his rule period between 1921-1932, who they mostly possessed the entire hierarchical positions. The King also stood with the politicians that he trusted, such as Nuri Saeed and Jamil al-Madfi between the period 1930-1933, which sustained both officials to head the parliament cabinet for twenty-one times. Although the parliament had the power to resolve the government, the king had the absolute power to resolve the parliament and appoint a prime minister. The King’s support to Nuri Saeed galvanized the other politicians to join Nuri’s faction as it was seen by the politicians that it was the quickest way to reach their personal and political gains.\(^ {62}\) This monopolization of power was at the price of the Iraqi national unity because it undermined the Shias influence and addressed the power to


those who the king trusted. This hindered the Iraqis to unite on the basis of equity, which limited the Kurds and the Shias political influence and alienated them in the political arena.

The Emergence of the Two Schools of Thought

The inability to contain the entire Iraqis to practice their political rights during the period of King’s Faysal rule, in addition to Ghazi’s fervent of Arab nationalism, instigated the two schools of thought (Iraqi-centric and pan-Arabism) to emerge in the political arena. These two powers were the actual powers that later united and toppled King Faysal-II in 1958, which I will further discuss in chapter 3. These two schools of thought competed over power, rather than uniting the Iraqis. Their usage of anti-slogans against those who opposed them undermined the Iraqi national identity and sustained escalating sectarian violence between the Sunnis and the Shias due to the pejorative words that described the Shias as an anti-Arabs. The Arab nationalists referred to the Shias as Luti (homosexual) and Rafidi (heretics) because of their large participation in the communist and the leftist factions. The Arab nationalists also described the Shias as Ajam (whose mother tongue is not Arabic), which was used as a racial pejorative. Overall, the disagreements over the genuine meaning that describes the Iraqi national identity contribute to creating a gap between the Sunnis and the Shias.63

Conclusion

The desire that the European Countries sought to annex in the Ottoman Empire, and lead the European continent, were roots that caused WWI to break out. The modus vivendi that the

---

allies’ coalitions agreed on prior to their victory against the Axis Powers, did not take place. The prevailed disputes among the members of the Allies Coalition after the end of WWI, led President Woodrow to constitute the League of Nations, to resolve the predicaments that were existed after the treaty of Sevres, and implement the New World Order. The New Order banned the victorious countries to compensate for their war losses through annexation, and instead promoted democracy, free trading and an end to imperialism.

In order to escape the international pressures, and prolong the British interests in the Mediterranean region, Britain had to appoint King Faysal as the King of Iraq, to ensure that their interests will prolong. Therefore, Britain killed two birds with one stone, placating the Hashemite that fought on their behalf against the Ottomans, and creating a state that preserved their interests. But, what serves Britain’s interests contradicts with what units the Iraqis, which instigated to extend the sectarian conflict among the Iraqis.

Britain’s tribal policies contributed to arouse sectarianism because it marginalized the Shias from equally earning the government prerogatives. Britain’s policies in distinguishing between the tribes resulted in disenfranchising the Shias at the expense of the Iraqi national unity because the British neglected to engage the Shias to practice their political rights and deployed them in the lowest positions of jobs.

Furthermore, they imposed taxes on the philanthropic donations that were sent to repair the mosques and the tombs in Karbala and Najaf, and banned their religious festivals in Ramadan, which led the 1920 Shia revolt to breakout. The British forces took three months to quell the 1920 revolt. During the revolt, they cut the water and food supply to the Shia cities, and forced them to slender. After the revolution ended, Britain confiscated 3000 arm weapons and 81000 pieces of gold to compensate for their war losses from the revolt.
Gertrude Bell stated that it was necessary to distance the Shias from power because the Shias exposed an existential threat to the British interests in Iraq. The Shia disenfranchisement was at the price of the Iraqi national unity, which contributed to spread hatred and sectarianism among the Iraqis.

The British policies excluded the Shias from participating in their political rights and installed an electoral law that was slanted to the king’s bases. These policies urged the Shia Grand Mufti, Mohammad Khalisi, to rescind his allegiance to the King, after the latter neglected Khalisi’s demands to cut relations with the British.

Following the recognition of Iraq by the League of Nations in 1932, King Faysal ruled the country throughout the politicians that surrounded him during his rule in Syria. His oligarchies monopolized the political power, and Ghazi’s support to the Arab nationalists, contributed to emerging the two schools of thought in the political arena.

Britain appointed Nuri Saeed to take charge after King Ghazi died in 1939. During WWII, the Germans supported the anti-British politician, Rasheed al-Gilani, to lead a coup d’état against Saeed’s government. As soon as Gilani’s revolt succeeded to topple the government, and cut the oil supply to Britain, Britain abruptly responded by destroying Gilani’s revolt. After Britain restored Baghdad and Kut, and installed Saeed’s government, Gilani escaped to Egypt.

The demonstrations that took place against the 1930 Anglo-Iraqi treaty, contributed to Nuri’s resignation and Salih Jabr’s appointment, the first Shia Prime Minister. At his appointment, Jabr renegotiated the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, and signed a new treaty, the Portsmouth Treaty, which faced rejection by the people. In 1955, Iraq entered the 1955 Baghdad Pact that aimed to resist the Soviet encroachment in the Middle East, which escalated to more animosity against the government, and led the Iraqis to chant for the regime’s removal.
Overall, Britain created a state that only served the British interests, which contributed to creating a dysfunctional state that became an arena for sectarian conflicts between the Sunnis and the Shias. The British anti-Shia policies that they exploited were at the price of Iraq’s national unity. King Faysal’s distrust of the Shias contributed to alienating the Shias from practicing their political rights, which increased more antagonism against the regime. Finally, an Iraq that served the British interests, and the power that was monopolized by the hands of who surrounded the king, were the primary roots that instigated Iraq to demarcate into sectarian and racial communities.
Chapter 3
The Clash of Identities in Iraq’s Republic

After discussing in chapter 2 the stage details of Iraq’s developments in the period 1914-1958, we recognize that the British creation of a modern Iraq that solely served the British interests in the region tended to undermine the national unity of Iraq and escalated the sectarian animosity among the Iraqis. In chapter 3, I discuss the events that coincided after the 1958 revolution, to examine the consequences that instigated to undermine the national unity after the Hashemite collapsed.

Chapter 3 covers two historical periods of Iraq between the year (1958-1968) and (1968-1979). The first period (1958-1968) entails the nationalists and the Nasserists period of power. The second period (1968-1979) covers the ascends of the Ba’ath regime to power, which is deemed as the harshest ruling epoch against the Twelver Shias. In this chapter, I discuss Iraq’s historical literature between the years 1958-1979, and examine the impacts of those who ruled during the two periods, which led to deteriorate the Iraqi national identity.

In this part, I argue that Abdel Kareem Qassim’s collaboration with the communists to alienate the Ba’athists and the Nasserists from power resulted in the hatred against the Twelver Shias. I also argue that political Islam and the 1979 Iranian revolution played a role to increase the Ba’athist repercussions against the Twelver Shias. Overall, the competing presidential visions after the success of the 1958 revolution that were not focused on unifying the country resulted in undermining the Iraqi national identity.
Historical Background

In chapter 3, the historical background shows the initiation of the Free Officers’ movement, the 1958 revolution, Qassim’s ascends to power, the Ba’ath coup d’état and the ascend of Abdel Salam Arif to power, the ruling period of the Ba’ath regime and the ascends of Saddam Hussein to power. Overall, the historical literature in this part continues the events that coincided during and after the collapse of the Hashemite in 1958.

Initiation of the Free Officers’ Movement

There were six crucial developments that contributed to the emergence of the Free Officers’ movement in the political arena: First, the skeleton design of government jobs within the reign system that served solely those who had accompanied King Faysal – I in Syria – before the French ousted the king in 1921. Second, Iraq’s involvement in the Baghdad Pact in 1955, and the negative public views against the king’s surrounding politicians that sharpened the social discontent in Iraq. Third, the tripartite aggression in Egypt in 1956. Fourth, the army’s posture toward the public uprising in 1956. Fifth, the spread rumors among the public that the military was capable of taking charge if the regime collapsed. Sixth, the Egyptian-Syrian coalition and the constitution of the United Arab Republic in 1958, which advocated Arab nationalism and social resistance against Western imperialism.64

These developmental stages from which the Free Officers’ movement forged, went through five phases: First, the emergence of the first cell in a meeting at the house of the Major, Rifat al-Haj Sirri, that had taken place with three other officers in the Baghdad suburbs of

---

Kazimayna. Second, the gatherings that were convened with other officers in the military after knowing about the first assembly. Third, the executive committee’s establishment that followed the allying of the Baghdad organization with a group of military veterans. Fourth, the meeting that took place with eight officers ranking from colonels to majors at the house of a pensioned air force major, Muhammad as-Sab, that resulted in the supreme committee’s installation. Fifth, the invitations of the two brigades, Abdel Kareem Qassim and Abdel Salam Arif, to become active members of the supreme committee. These facts that I address in the section are important because it narrates the details of the events that from which the 1958 revolution broke out.

The 1958 Revolution

Following the Egyptian-Syrian coalition in 1958, the Iraqi Prime Minister- Nouri Saeed- requested from the king of Jordan to allow the Iraqi soldiers to base in the kingdom- for the aim to enforce protection against the UAR. After King Hussein’s approval, the military committee coincidentally chose Abdel Kareem Qassim and Abdel Salam Arif to lead the transition of the military equipment and soldiers to Jordan. However, the two brigades instead directed the militant battalion to Baghdad, and occupied the entire media stations over there. A few hours


68 Johnson, “Iraq: Legal History and Traditions.”
later, the army declared full control over Baghdad and the city peripheries surrounding the capital.\textsuperscript{69}

On July 14, 1958, the new regime pronounced the declaration of the Republic State of Iraq and the death of the monarchy regime. Meantime, the United States and the West sped up their recognition to the new republican state because they feared that a late acceptance would lead Iraq to devolve into the Soviet Camp.\textsuperscript{70} During the time that the new regime pronounced Iraq as a Republican State, thousands of Iraqis occupied the streets and chanted death to the king and his close associate, Nuri Saeed, which forced the government to issue black warrants to the king and Nuri Saeed. The new regime obliged to the masses’ demands and enacted the execution order over members of the monarchy family and the king.\textsuperscript{71} As soon as the news reached Nuri Saeed, the latter sought to escape disguised like a veiled woman to Jordan before being discovered by the existing forces in the streets of Baghdad and getting assassinated.

The Rivalry over Power

However, the end of the monarchy regime was not to resolve the predicaments that the new regime experienced because the members of the regime cabinet disagreed on the ideologies that the new regime should exploit to rule the state. For instance, the president of Iraq, Abdal Kareem Qassim, perceived the validity of positioning Iraq’s interest before the incentives of the

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{69} During the ascendancy of the two brigades to power, the destiny of those who constituted the supreme committee was to end.
\item \textsuperscript{71} Dawisha, \textit{Iraq: A Political History}, 171.
\end{itemize}
other Arab countries.\textsuperscript{72} Whereas the Vice President and his colleague coup orchestrator, Abdal Salam Arif, prioritized Iraq’s responsibilities toward its Arab brethren before the state’s interests. During a convened meeting that took place between Jamal Abdal Nasser and Arif in Syria, the latter discussed the regime’s desire to join the Arab coalition that Egypt and Syria constituted in 1958.

In turn, Abdal Nasser inquired about the possibility of Qassim’s approval of Iraq’s affiliation to the coalition. In response, Arif told Abdal Nasser that the president was nothing more than an Iraqi Neguib (the early figurehead of the 1952 Egyptian revolution who was later ousted by the younger Nasser), and added that if he were to resist a bullet would resolve the argument.\textsuperscript{73} Abdal Nasr jested Arif and discussed the importance of exchanging insights over the axis that Iraq would benefit from.

After the meeting ended, Arif publicly spoke to praise Abdal Nasser in his speeches, referring to him as “our champion” and “our beloved leader.” In his speeches, the latter’s manuevrily sought to disparage Qassim’s emphasizes on the revolution, indicating that al-Thawr al-Muqaddssa (the blessed revolution) was of Abdal Nasser’s creation.\textsuperscript{74} The president, himself, perceived the maneuverability that Arif aimed at through his speeches, and thus decided to undermine Arif’s power by proposing him to become the Iraqi Ambassador in Germany. When Arif refused the president’s proposal, Qassim abruptly accused Arif that the latter was planning to overthrow him and ordered for his arrest.


\textsuperscript{73} Dawisha, \textit{Iraq: A Political History}, 173.

\textsuperscript{74} Dawisha, \textit{Iraq: A Political History}, 174.
The Empowerment of the Communists during Qassim Rule

Hence, many of the president’s supporters and the communist politicians regarded the president’s belligerent step as a positive move for shifting Iraq into a modern state, and entitled him as the sole leader to rule the country with wisdom. The president himself was not a communist, but because of the disagreements that were led by the regime’s cabinet, and the attempted coups against Qassim, it alarmed Qassim of the importance to purge off the Nasserists and the Ba’athists officers from power, to fill these vacancies by communist men.75

Throughout the empowerment the communists received, the communists began to publish their political brochures and newspapers to the public. And through a failed attempted coup by the conservative Sunni nationalist, Abdal Wahab al-Shawaf, in which the communists mobilized 250,000 supporters into the city origin of Shawaf and killed many of his men, their supportive stance opened a new partnership relations between the regime and the communists.76

The year 1959 was a watershed to the communists as they began to be positioned in the highest echelons in the military and the government, and in their alliance with the president, the communists helped to improve relations between the president and the Soviets. Therefore, Iraq inaugurated diplomatic relations with Russia, and thus economic agreements and arms deals were to begin.77 Qassim saw that his alliance with the communist was essential to resist the threats stemming from the Nasserists and the Baathists. Qassim, whose mother was an Iraqi Shia, saw that al-Thawra town was a crucial base to increase his popularity, which was the same town

75 Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History*, 174-175.

76 Johnson, “Iraq: Legal History and Traditions.”

that from which the communists took power during the 40s, 50s and 60s. Most members of the Communists were Shias, which provoked the Nasserists and the Baathists to show hatred against the Arab Shias.

The Declining of the Communist Power

However, what later contributed to undermining the communist organizations, and purging them gradually from different positions in the government, was their empowerment that led the socialist Kurdish laborers to kill the Turkoman upper class in Kirkuk. The president’s severe reactions against the communists opened the Ba’athists’ appetite to dislodge Qasim from power. The Baath leader, Fouad Rihab, chose the future president, Saddam Hussein, to carry out the attempted assassination against Qassim, which after he failed to assassinate Qassim, Hussein escaped to Egypt.\textsuperscript{78}

The president, thereafter, renewed his partnership with the communists. Although this partnership strengthened Qassim’s regime against a series of coup d’état, his alliance with the communists did not last long. The president, aware of the communist gradual power in the political arena urged him to reiterate the scene of positioning himself as the sole leader in the country. By which, he cracked down on the leftist and the Baathist organizations and excluded the former from holding sensitive positions in the government.\textsuperscript{79} The Baathists, nevertheless, led another coup d’état against the regime, but this time it was the nail in the coffin that contributed


\textsuperscript{79} Dawisha, \textit{Iraq: A Political History}, 177.
to Qassim’s collapse. According to Hanna Batatu, the CIA was the primary player in the 1963 coup against Qassim because of the fear that Iraq would devolve into communism.

Abdal Salam Arif Ascends to Power

After Qassim’s collapse, the Baath retaliated against the communists, restricted their political activities and extracted the communist from the military. They established a national revolutionary command (NCRC) and appointed Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr as a Prime Minister of Iraq. However, the ebb and flow that prevailed among the members and the icons of the Baath regime because of the different visions that the politicians envisaged for Iraq’s future, triggered a new wave of Kurdish unrest in Northern Iraq. Thus, the Egyptian president saw these upheaval affairs as an opportunity to vituperate the legitimacy of the Baath in Syria and Iraq, and paves the way for Arif to erode the Baath’s validity of espousing pan-Arab principles. Thereby, Nasser’s support strengthened Arif’s political posture to mobilize supporters against the Ba’ath and lead a bloodless coup in 1963.

Following Arif’s successful coup, the latter publicly announced his control over the country, which made him the second president in the history of Iraq’s Republic. In consolidating power, he constituted a new core government that incorporated himself, Abdal Rahman Arif (his

80 Many scholars argue that Qasim Alienating his political supporters from power, objecting on the Arab’s league decisions vis-a-vis the state recognition of Kuwait on June 19, 1961, and his severe reactions toward the Nasserists and the Ba’athists led to his isolation, which eased later to his toppling in 1963.


brother) and Colonel Said Slaibi (his trusted colleague). By the year 1964, the new president entirely cleansed the members of the Baath from the military and the government, substituting them with Nasserist officers.\(^8^4\) In his coalescence with the Nasserists, the president aimed at reiterating the Egyptian-Syrian coalition in 1958, merging Iraq with Egypt.\(^8^5\) In July 1964, the regime enacted the law that enforced the entire political parties in the state to unite under the Iraqi Arab-Socialist Union, and also Arif nationalized the state’s natural resources, banks and corporations. Ultimately, the new president sought to use the same tactic that Qasim exploited during his reign to clear out the political ground to himself.\(^8^6\)

By the year 1965, Arif started losing his interest in Nasserism, noticing how powerful the Nasserists had become in the political arena. Therefore, the president extracted the Nasserists officers from office and saw in his appointments of the brigade, Arif Abdal Razzaq, as a way to mitigate the existential threats stemming from those officers. On September 05, the appointed prime minister led an unsuccessful coup against Arif, by which urged the president to purge off the entire Nasserists from the military and to appoint a new military intelligence, Abdal Razzaq Nayef al-Jumaily, who was a member of Arif’s tribe.\(^8^7\)

He appointed Abdal Rahman Bazzaz as the first civilian prime minister to run the government since the days of the monarchy regime. In April 1966, the president died in a helicopter crash at the Iraqi Air Force de Havilland in Southern Iraq. By the votes of the consensus of the National Defense Council, Abdal Rahman Arif became the president. The

---

\(^8^4\) Johnson, “Iraq: Legal History and Traditions.”

\(^8^5\) The Iraqi-Egyptian coalition did not occur as the president planned.

\(^8^6\) Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History*, 186.

\(^8^7\) Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History*, 187-188.
Kurdish insurrection in Kirkuk urged Bazzaz to propose a settlement to mitigate the uprising’s severity in Northern Iraq. The military, in turn, rejected the prime minister’s proposal and rejected his membership as a civilian politician in the regime cabinet. Due to these pressures, the elected president requested Bazzaz to submit his resignation and instead appointed the Nasserist Colonial, Abdal Razzaq Nayif, to forge a new government. Following his appointment, the prime minister and Ibrahim Daoud staged a successful coup against Arif.

The Ba’ath Regime’s Era

Their coup was to be quickly capitalized upon by the Baath and the destiny of those who orchestrated the coup was to end. When the Baath took power, their interests were primarily to focus on Iraq’s domestic issues. Although a series of attempted coups were staged against the new regime, the Baath was able to subdue them. On television, they publicly broadcasted the trials and the hangings as a means to spread intimidation across the public; they accused a small Jewish community dwelling in Baghdad of spying for Israel and working with the Iranian intelligence.

In November 1969, Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr ascended to power and appointed his relative, Saddam Hussein, to become the vice president. In the 1970s, the Baath made a peace treaty with the Kurds, and throughout the agreement, the latter pledged to cut the Kurdish relations with the Shah. But, the agreement did not prolong for too long. In may 1971, Saddam Hussein reneged...

88 Bryan R. Gibson, Sold Out?: US Foreign Policy, Iraq, the Kurds, and the Cold War (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 94.

89 Gibson, Sold Out?: US Foreign Policy, Iraq, the Kurds, and the Cold War, 96-98.

90 Johnson, “Iraq: Legal History and Traditions.”
his promises to give the Kurds autonomous powers on matters of defense, finance, and oil holding. Furthermore, the attempted assassination against the Kurdish general which was blamed on the Baath contributed to the regime’s rapprochement to fall. In 1974, Saddam Hussein ascended to power after Bakr’s severe illness, and became the president, who Saddam’s predecessor later died in his apartment in Baghdad in 1982. The Baathists increased repercussions against the Twelver Shias after the success of the 1979 Iranian revolution. It is worth noting that Imam Khomeini lived in Najaf for 14 years during his exile, and exploited the regime’s radio station to attack the Shah’s regime.

The regime feared the Shia Grand Mufti, Mohammad al-Sadr, because numerous Iraqis called him Iraq’s future Khomeini, which urged the regime to plan to assassinate him. Sadr’s books and thoughts were anti-secular and anti-Ba’ath, which instigated the regime to arrest him. After Sadr’s arrest, members of the Dawah Party carried their weapons and went to the Muntasiriya University to shoot Tariq Aziz, the regime’s ideologue, at the time that he was giving a speech at the school, which resulted in killing his personal bodyguard. During the bodyguard’s funeral, a group of Shia activists threw a grenade bomb on the assembly, which urged Saddam to publicly announce that he would retaliate against the perpetrators. Saddam, in turn, executed all members of the Dawah Party, and executed Mohammad al-Sadr. Sadr’s execution led thousands of Shias to occupy the streets and protest against the regime. In response, the regime shot the protestors, and resulted in killing, dislocating and arresting hundreds of Shias.

The series of developments detailed in this section reveal a cycle of competing presidential visions that were not focused on unifying the country. In the sections that follows, I will argue that these competing visions, aggravated by the rivalry over power and the fear of political Islam, undermined the Iraqi national identity.

Aggravating Factors during the Period 1958-1968.

In this part, I argue that the policies Qasim exploited to alienate his political rivals caused excruciating consequences in disenfranchising the Arab Shias and undermining the comprehensive Iraqi national identity. I discuss the roots that aggravated the regime’s cabinet to discern the communist empowerment as an anti-Iraqi and accentuate the reason why this discernment led to the hatred against the Twelver Shias. I also assess why the government fell short in providing services to the Shia inhabitants in al-Thawra town in Baghdad.

The Clash of the Shia Identity throughout the Communist Coalition with Qassim’s Regime

The prevailed disputes among the revolutionary actors and the participant factions in the 1958 coup contributed to dividing the regime cabinet into a corps of different ideologies. These ideological diversions, however, urged Qasim to cleanse out those who disagreed with his visions of the state.\(^{92}\) By choosing the communists, He appreciated the role that the ICP played during the 1958 revolution. Qasim conceived the importance of the high percentage of the Shias that departed from al-Thawra town for two reasons: first, the communists acceded with the president’s vision vis-a-vis the state’s interests.\(^{93}\) Second, the communists departure from this


\(^{93}\) On May 1, 1959, while celebrating the international labor’s day, the communists chanted through the main street of Baghdad “my leader is Abal Kareem, and the communist party in government is a lofty demand.”
marginalized town was crucial to surge up his popular bases averse the opposition clashes that he met.  

Herein, I describe the four factors that aggravated these derogatory views to emerge in opposition to the Twelver Shia. First, the Ba’athists and the Nasserists conceived the Iraqi Communist Party to be a group of a camouflaged Shia that sought to expand the Shia’s beliefs and ideologies across the nation; the Ba’athists and the Nasserists accused the Shias throughout their participation in the ICP as being anti-Arabs and pro-Iranians in the state. Second, they perceived the ICP acceptance toward the 1967 United Nations’ resolution 242 as treason of the revolutionary’s virtues and as purely Shia.

Third, they saw that the Communist callings to the Shia dwellers and college students in Baghdad to join the party as a conspiratorial move to strength the anti-Arab participation in the political arena; nonetheless, the Shia clerics in Najaf similarly saw that the communists attempt to recruit Shias as a hypocritical act to advocate for the separation of politics from religion. Fourth, the two parties naively perceived the doctrines and the eschatology features of Shiism as they thought that Shiism reflected the communist ideals, because of how both homogeneously embodied their combating calls averse the usurper rulers. However, some Shia seculars saw that Marxism matched to a certain extent with their belief. They conceived Imam Ali’s support to the poor, and Ali’s resistance to the illegitimate rulers as a social virtue that portrayed the communist

---

94 Al-Thawra town was known as the city of heroes in Baghdad


96 Resolution 242 is one of the most widely affirmed resolutions on the Arab–Israeli conflict and formed the basis for later negotiations between the parties.

An Iraq poet, Muzallar al-Nawab (b. 1939), illustrates these views in his poetry:

And they say that I have been extreme in my belief about the sovereignty of the poor. In excess, indeed I am. They reproached (me) that I blow fire in the Islamic tradition. I only refuse the metal scraps from the jurists. There is a difference between the tradition and his sound of it.  

However, the religious committee in Najaf declared that communism was a blasphemous ideology and revealed the atheistic tenets of Marxism-Leninism as a corrupted atheist ideology. For instance, the religious mujtahid, Mirza Mahdi al-Shirazi (d. 1960), made a fatwa that forbade the Muslims from buying meat from a communist butcher. Another fatwa issued by a Najafi scholar, Abdal Hakim, also forbade the Shias from joining the communist factions, describing them as murtaddun, defectors from Islam, whose punishment must be death.

The Shias’ Marginalization in al-Thawra Town

Al-Thawra is a town which accounts for more than a quarter of the entire population of the capital and contains Baghdad’s worst slum. The inhabitants of the town where the Shias that left their hometowns to the capital for livelihood. In their dwelling, they lived in miserable conditions and badly suffered from the government’s dereliction. The officials claimed, however, that the city was to lay on rich oil fields, and that providing the district with such services like sewers and asphalt streets would deteriorate their upcoming projects. According to Hanna Batatu, nevertheless, the government’s dereliction to the district had much to do with their


99 Abisaab and Abisaab, *The Shiites of Lebanon*, 89.

100 Abisaab and Abisaab, *The Shiites of Lebanon*, 91.
susceptibility to the influence of Dawah and the Mujahideen.\textsuperscript{101} He added that this same hometown was that from which the communist derived much of its strength in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s.\textsuperscript{102} Accordingly, the disenfranchisement that the inhabitants experience while living in this town had much to do with their political views toward the state.

Table 1: Iraqi Ethnic Participation in Lower and Higher Positions in the Government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Upper level jobs</th>
<th>Upper level percentage</th>
<th>Lower level jobs</th>
<th>Lower level percentage</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arab Sunnis</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab Shias</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurds</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: The estimated percentage of Iraqi’s ethnic participation in higher and lower ranks in the government between the year 1958-1968.\textsuperscript{103}

Table 1 gives a glimpse of the amount of marginalization that the Twelver Shias experienced through the years 1958-1968. The Arab Sunnis accounted for 54 percent of all jobs in the government at only 25% of the population. In juxtaposition, the Shias, 53 percent of the overall

\textsuperscript{101} The Dawah was a party that Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr founded in the late 1960s, which the government deemed subversive and hazardous to the state. However, the Mujahideen were another Shia faction that opposed the intervention of the Ulama in politics and that lay the religious charges to the Iranian clerics.


population, accounted for only 30 percent of the jobs in the state, of which 87 percent of these acquired jobs were in the lowest ranks. The aggravating factors in this section show the amount of marginalization that the Arab Shias were exposed to because of the state’s policies that perceived any individual who disagreed with their ideologies as an anti-Iraqi, and therefore depriving the Shias from receiving their citizenry rights was viable to the regime’s survival. In the section that follows, I will argue that the rise of the 1979 Iranian revolution and political Islam increased the regime’s repercussions against the Twelver Shias.

Aggravating Factors during the Years 1968-1979

In this part, I argue that the regime’s fears of the rise of political Islam galvanized them to harshly suppress the Twelver Shias. The regime perceived the success of the Iranian revolution as an existential threat, and therefore they constrained the Shias from performing their religious and political rites, which was vital to undermine the Shias influence. In sum, I discuss the amount of suffering that the Arab Shias experienced by the Ba’ath during the seventies, and argue that this vicious cycle contributed to the Iraqis to perceive their social prerogatives through their sectarian groups, which facilitated the deteriorating Iraqi national identity.

The Fear of Political Islam

The Ba’ath regime perceived the ideologies that descended from the Dawah, which advocated to deny the recognition of a secular state, as an existential threat to the regime’s sovereignty. The callings of the Dawah Party to constitute an Islamic state in Iraq installed the

---

party under the regime’s surveillance. Sadr’s attempts to prove the points that Islam was far more superior in resolving the sociopolitical predicaments in his books (our philosophy, our economy and the non-usurious Islamic bank) were regarded as dangerous by the authorities.\footnote{105 T. M. Aziz, “The Role of Muhammad Baqir Al-Sadr in Shi’î Political Activism in Iraq from 1958 to 1980,” \textit{International Journal of Middle East Studies} 25, no. 2 (1993): 207-222. \url{https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020743800058499} 209.} As a matter of fact, these views were what urged the government to shut down the Jawadayn elementary school and the Usual-Din College in Baghdad. The party’s political orientation had much to do with the confiscation of lands that were allocated for building the Kufah University in Southern Iraq.

At the time that thousands of students demonstrated against the regime’s decision, the government sanctioned the students who participated during the uprising by expelling some and arresting others. In addition, the government deported the non-resident Shia students to their home countries and enforced compulsory deployment on the students who attended the seminar classes in Hawza.\footnote{106 Aziz, “The Role of Muhammad Baqir Al-Sadr,” 211.} Saddam feared that Sadr would rise in power and lead the people to revolt against the regime. The regime assassinated Sadr because they feared that Sadr would follow the steps that Khomeini took in the 1979 revolution against the Shah. Therefore, his assassination was perceived vital to the regime’s survival.

The Ba’ath Harsh Rule toward the Twelver Shias

In their boldest steps, the Ba’athists in early 1977 prohibited the convening of the annual ceremonies of Imam Husayn’s commemoration. The government abandoned the Shi’a pilgrimage that usually takes four days to cover over 50 miles, which triggered the Shi’as to
congregate and proceed their pilgrimage. Throughout their proceedings, the Shia demonstrators left leaflets that called every Shia to participate in defiance against the government. Following the solidarity that the Shias exhibited, the government ordered the military to shoot the protestors who neglected the regime’s warnings. At the time that the military hesitated to obey the orders, the Ba’ath Security Forces took charge, went to the streets and forged a human shield to halt the proceeding wave of 30,000 protestors from finishing their pilgrimage. At the point that the demonstrators reached the checkpoints of the Security Forces, thousands of Shias were detained and fetched to a special court, the revolutionary court.\textsuperscript{107} During the hearings, the court sentenced the notorious religious scholar, Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, to life imprisonment and seven others to death.

In 1977, the Ba’ath regime was determined to put an end to the religious opposition. The 1979 Iranian Revolution galvanized the religious clerics in Najaf to call what Khomeini performed against the Shah.\textsuperscript{108} In fact, Khomeini himself lived in Najaf for 14 years before the Iranian Revolution broke out, who during his living had the chance to exploit the government’s radio station to assault the Shah’s regime. However, as soon as Hussein signed the Algiers Agreement with the Iranian Shah, Khomeini then conceived the hypocrisy that Hussein’s regime carried in their agendas. His witnesses to the grief that the religious clerics experienced in Najaf made him realize how deceitful the Iraqi regime was.\textsuperscript{109}

The Iranian revolution opened the appetite of many followers across the world to follow the steps that Khomeini took against the Shah. The declared fatwa by Muhammad al-Sadr that


\textsuperscript{108} Aziz, “The Role of Muhammad Baqir Al-Sadr,” 216.

\textsuperscript{109} Batatu, “Iraq’s Underground Shi’a Movements,” 588.
forbade the Muslims from joining or collaborating with the Ba’ath regime resulted in his incarceration. During his detention, the Ba’athist interrogators persuaded Sadr to halt his political activities against the regime, for the price of his own leeway. Sadr, in turn, responded that:

The only thing I have sought in my life is to make the establishment of an Islamic government on earth possible. Since it has been formed in Iran under the leadership of Imam [Khomeini] it makes no difference to me whether I’m alive or dead because the dream I wanted to attain and the hope I wanted to achieve have come true, thanks to God.\(^\text{110}\)

The Dawah party, in response, took up their arms and went to the speaking event at the University of Muntassriya, which at the time the Ba’athists ideologues, Tariq Azziz, who later became the foreign minister of Iraq, was giving a speech at the school. During the event, they threw a grenade bomb at the audience and resulted in his personal bodyguard’s death. During the public funeral for the guard, another bomb was thrown at the assembly, which resulted in killing several people. In response, Saddam Hussein during his hospital visit to the injured promised to seek vengeance against the perpetrators.

In his first move, the government deported 130,000 Iraqis of Iranian origin to Iran, and then sentenced all members of the Dawah members who participated in the party during the past or were incumbent to death. In his second move, he ordered the execution of Sadr after the latter issued an ultimatum that called for toppling the regime. Sadr noted that:

It is incumbent on every Muslim in Iraq and every Iraqi outside Iraq to do whatever they can, even if it cost them their life to keep the Jihad and struggle to remove this nightmare from the land of beloved Iraq, to liberate themselves from this inhuman gangs, and to establish a righteous, unique, and honorable rule based on Islam.

On April 5, 1980, Sadr and his sister were detained by the authorities, and a few days later, his body was brought back to his uncle, Muhammad Sadr, for secret Burial.\(^\text{111}\)

---


assassination of Mohammad Sadr was one of the consequences that brought Iraq into war with Iran for eight years.

The 1979 Iranian revolution

The execution of Sadr by the Ba’athists received no criticism from the west. Partly, due to the fear that the Iranian Revolution would spread into Iraq. The calling of Imam Khomeini to follow the example of the Iranian revolution increased the Baathists repercussions against the Twelver Shias. Sadr’s anti-Ba’athist activity made the public to regard him as the future Khomeini of Iraq, which killing him was necessary to the regime’s survival. The success of the Iranian revolution made the world fear that the Iranian revolutionary would be exported to other neighboring countries.

Conclusion

The several coups that coincided during the period of the Hashemite reign, starting from the 1936 Sadiqi’s coup; the 1941 Jilani’s civil war; the successful coup of the Egyptian Free Officers in 1952; the tripartite aggression in Egypt in 1956, and the 1956 uprisings that prevailed in most cities in Iraq, entirely were reasons for the success of the coup of the 1958 revolution. However, the disagreements among members of the revolutionary cabinet and the participants of the coup led to a sectarian and ethnic dilemmas at the price of seizing power.

Qassim’s ascends to power, his fears from the Arab nationalists, his attempts to oust his rival from the political scene, and his rapprochement with the communists had an impact on the

\[112\] Batatu, “Iraq’s Underground Shi’a Movements,” 593.
designation of the Shias as pro-Iranians. The president ousted the entire political parties and cut relationships with the other Arab countries because of the Arab leagues’ recognition of Kuwait in 1961, which were all reasons that paved to his toppling.

The rivalry between the Nasserists and the Ba’athists to fill the position seats in the government after Qassim’s collapse resulted in limiting the Shias participation in the state. 30 percent of the jobs that the Shia seized, 87 percent of those were positioned in the lowest ranks in the government. The harsh rivalry between the Nasserists and the Ba’athists following Qassim’s collapse, and later the appointment of Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr as a prime minister urged Abdul Nasser to relegate the Ba’athists’ credibility of espousing pan-Arab principles, which eased Arif’s bloodless coup to succeed. Arif’s three years of power were to end after his death in a helicopter crash in an Iraqi military base. Hence, the regime counsel appointed his brother, Abdal Rahman Arif, to be in charge, which led to further coups against the new regime.

In 1968, the Ba’ath was able to purge Arif and entirely extract the Nasserists and the Communists from the higher ranks in the government. The years 1968-1979 were the harshest toward the Shias since the establishment of Iraq’s Republic. Overall, the disagreements against the genuine meaning of being an Iraqi, who is truly an Iraqi, and the conflicts over who should seize power, were all roots that aggravated to conceive the Shias as an existential threat, and therefore to crack down and disenfranchised the Shias, which has been at the expense of deteriorating the Iraqi national identity and arousing the sectarian animosity among the Iraqis during the periods 1958-1979.
Chapter 4
Iraq under Saddam’s Totalitarian Rule

In chapter 3, I discussed the events that happened after the 1958 revolution, which included the ruling period of Abdal Kareem Qasim, Abdal Salam Arif and Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr. In this chapter, I examine the factors that aggravated the Iraqi national identity to devolve into sectarianism, between the period 1979-2003. I argue that the killings that took place against the Shia clergymen between the period 1979-2002 escalated the sectarian animosity between the Sunnis and the Shias. I also argue that the regime’s atrocities against the 1991 and 1999 revolts that happened after the U.S. quelled the Iraqi invasion resulted in turning Iraq into a warfare-sectarian territory.

Historical Background

The historical literature in this chapter shows the roots that led the Iranian-Iraqi War to breakout; the outcomes of the Iran-Iraq war; the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait; the Desert Storm operation-led by the United States and it’s coalitions to expel the Iraqi forces from Kuwait; the outcomes of 1991 Shia revolt; the regime’s engagement in targeting U.S. interests during the years 1992-1998; the roots that prompted the 1999 Shia Intifada to breakout; the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq.

An Introduction of the Iran-Iran War

The Iran-Iraq war was given different names by Iran and Iraq because they both envisioned the war in the way that reflected their beliefs and ideologies. On the one hand, the
Iranians envisioned the war as a battle for holy defense, *Jang e-Tahmili*, because it referred to their battle against a tyrant that oppressed the Muslims and desired to bring Islam into blasphemy.\(^{113}\) On the other hand, the Iraqis envisaged their war against the Iranians as Saddam’s Qadissiya, which referred to the Islamic conquest of the Sassanid Empire in Mesopotamia in 637. Hussein exploited the word al-Qadissiya in his speeches when he was at the Islamic conference and the Arab League of Nations. He used the name of the battle at the Islamic conference to draw a parallel story between his invasion of Iran and the seventh century Persian defeat of al-Qadisiya Battle. In his visit to al-Muntansiriyyah University in Baghdad on April 18, 1980, Hussein noted that:

> In your name, brothers, and on behalf of the Iraqis and Arabs everywhere we tell those Persian cowards and dwarfs who try to avenge al-Qadissiya as well as the blood and honor of al-Qadissiya who carried the message on the spearheads are greater than their attempts.\(^{114}\)

Hussein wanted to pinpoint that the time had come to replace Iran as the hegemonic regional power. He believed that this was the appropriate time to invade Iran because of the anarchy that prevailed in Iran after the success of the Islamic Revolution. Saddam thought that the war would be quick and strategic for Iraq, although the war prolonged for 8 years. More than 500,000 civilians died from both sides. The war resulted in economic losses that ranged between $ 500-600 Billions, and damages in the infrastructure that was worth of $ 300 billion. It is worth

---


noting that prior to the 1991 Persian Gulf War-led by the U.S. and its allies, the Iran-Iraq War was known as the Persian Gulf War.\textsuperscript{115}

After the Islamic Revolution

The potential for increased oil profit, in addition to Khomeini’s threats to Iraq, opened the Baathist appetite to justify their invasion of Iran. The Iraqi regime thought that their invasion would be quick because of Iran’s engagement in repairing the damages that left after the eruption of the Islamic Revolution.\textsuperscript{116} Hussein believed that his invasion of Iran would help enlarge Iraq’s petroleum reserves. Furthermore, he envisioned that joining Khuzestan to Iraq would earn him the reputation as the Arab liberator who liberated the Arabs from the Persian rule, and by increasing the population of Arab Sunnis in his domain, would balance the threatening Shia population.\textsuperscript{117}

Iraq’s Pretext for the War

Saddam alleged that his invasion of Iran was because of Iran’s continued engagement in Iraq’s affairs. He complained that Iran’s continuous support of the Shia insurgency led to the attempted assassination that took place against the Iraqi Minister, Tariq Aziz, in southern Iraq on April 1980, which resulted in killing 20 Ba’athist officials. On September 17, 1980, Saddam

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{116} “Iran-Iraq War,” 3.
\end{itemize}
blamed the Iranians for killing innocent Iraqis through their support of Shia militants. In his speech, Saddam also argued that:

The frequent and blatant Iranian violations of Iraqi sovereignty….have rendered the 1975 Algiers Agreement null and void…. This river must have its Iraqi-Arab identity restored as it was throughout history in name and in reality with all the disposal rights emanating from full sovereignty.\textsuperscript{118}

Saddam’s religious-nationalist rhetoric was to justify his invasion of Iran. But, his real objectives in invading Iran were to control Shatt al-Arab waterway, to recuperate the three occupied islands (Abu Musa, the Greater and Lesser Tunbs) on behalf of the United Arab Emirates, to annex Khuzestan to Iraq and prevent the spread of the Islamic Revolution in the region.\textsuperscript{119}

The 1980 Iraqi Invasion of Iran.

In this period, Iraq was on an offensive strategy against the Iranians. On September 22, 1980, the Iraqi Air Forces fired missiles on ten Iranian targets with the aim of destroying the Iranian Air Force. However, they failed to destroy a significant number of Iranian air crafts. The Iraqi regime hoped that the people in Khuzestan would revolt at the time that the Iraqi forces would invade Iran. But, the Arabs that lived over there remained loyal.\textsuperscript{120} The British journalist, Patrick Brogan, described Iraq’s encroachment to the Iranian territories as “badly led and lacking in offensive spirit.”\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{118} “Iran-Iraq War,” 4-5.

\textsuperscript{119} Roger Hardy, “Middle East | The Iran-Iraq War: 25 Years On,” BBC News (BBC, September 22, 2005), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4260420.stm)


\textsuperscript{121} “Iran-Iraq War,” 6.
In turn, Iran did not remain silent. The Iranian Navy fired missiles on the city of Basra, and on the way, they destroyed two oil terminals near Iraq’s port in Fao, which reduced Iraq’s ability to export oil. By September, the Iranian air forces struck important targets in Iraq, including dams, oil facilities, petrol chemical plants and nuclear reactors near Baghdad. In October 1980, Iraq responded with a series of aerial strikes against Iranian targets, and annexed Khorramshahr after a severe fight, which resulted in killing 7000 soldiers from both sides. Because of the battle’s intensity, the Iranian people named it the battle of Khunistan, which means “the city of blood.” This year of war was the onset to slip Iraq and Iran into a protracted- detrimental war.

The War during 1981

The war during 1981 was devastating for both sides, as Iran and Iraq engaged in one of the biggest tank battles in the world, which resulted in destroying the entire fleet of Iranian tanks. It also hastened the fall of President Abdel-Hassan Bani Sadri after Iraq won the battle in Dezful. In turn, the Iraqi regime began to assassinate the Shia clergymen after Iran dismantled the siege of Abdan, and recuperated the city of Bostan from the Iraqi division that they were holding for almost a year. The regime targeted the Shia clerics because of the advance that the Iranians performed in their battles, which is one of the roots that played a role to undermine the national unity in Iraq that I exploit as one of the agreements in the section that follows the historical background.

---


123 “Iran-Iraq War,” 8.
The Period 1982-1983

Due to the human wave attacks that the Revolutionary Guard exploited to target the Iraqi bases at night, Iraq was forced to withdraw from the occupied cities and retreat behind its borders. According to Efraim Karsh, Saddam’s decisions to withdraw the army behind his borders were because of the military exhaustion from the human wave attacks that the Iranians performed, and because Iraq could easily cause damage to Iran while situated behind the frontiers, without sacrificing more life casualties and war expenses. The Iranian requested that the Syrian regime close the Kirkuk-Banias pipeline that Iraq depended on to reach its oil to the tankers on the Mediterranean, which reduced Iraq’s budget by $ 5 billion U.S./month. The British journalist Patrick Brogan stated that:

From the time the southern front stabilized at the end of the 1980, Iran was able to prevent all Iraqi oil pipelines to the Mediterranean, and it approved for a while that Iraq would be strangled economically before it was defeated militarily.

Iraq therefore continued to export oil through the pipeline of Turkey that had the capacity to deliver 500 barrels a day, which was insufficient to pay for the war expenses. This urged the Iraqis to rapprochement with the Arab Gulf States to receive financial support because the monarchy states feared that an aftermath of an Iranian victory might lead Iraq to bankruptcy.

The Gulf States provided $ 60 billion in subsidies each year to support Iraq against Iran in the war. The Gulf States feared that an Iranian victory in the war, would lead Iran to spread its influence and Islamic ideologies into Arab neighboring states. Khomeini’s statements that the

---


125 “Iran-Iraq War,” 7.
monarchy regimes in the Arab World were illegitimate alarmed the Arab states of the existential threat that Iran posed. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia saw Iraq as less of a threat than Iran, as their reluctant decision to support Iraq was taken only after the Iranian victories and the retreat of the Iraqi troops from Iran. British journalists, John Bulloch and Harvey Morris stated that:

The virulent Iranian Campaign, which at its peak seems to be making the overthrow of the Saudi regime a war aim on a par with the defeat of Iraq, did have an effect on the Kingdom, but not the one the Iranians wanted: instead of becoming more conciliatory, the Saudi became tougher, more self-confident, and less prone to seek compromises.

Khomeini’s obstinacy to resolve the conflict extended the war for another six years. In a meeting between Saddam Hussein and his cabinet, the president inquired if any of the attendees would propose a solution to put an end to the Iranian-Iraqi War. In turn, the Minister of Health, Dr. Rayidah Ibrahim Hussein suggested that Saddam could temporarily be replaced by another commander, until Iraq could sign a ceasefire agreement with Iran. Then, Saddam inquired if any of the attendees wanted to propose a solution to the predicament. He asked if anyone agreed to Dr. Rayidah’s proposal, but no one did. A few days later, Dr. Rayidah was found shot for his treason.126

The slogans that the Iranians exploited to galvanize heroism among the young Iranians exhausted the Iraqi army. After the extensive training that the volunteers received by the Pasdaran, they wore wooden keys on their necks as a symbol to open the doors of heaven after Martyrdom.127 The Iraqi army exploited chemical weapons to resist the human wave attacks. But, the Iranian victories that took place in the battles during 1982, urged the U.S. to support

126 “Iran-Iraq War,” 8.

Iraq. The United States began to supply Iraq with military weapons and intelligence aid to empower Iraq’s military power against the Iranian forces.\footnote{Seymour, “U.S. Secretly Gave Aid to Iraq Early in Its War Against Iran,” The New York Times (The New York Times, January 26, 1992), https://www.nytimes.com/1992/01/26/world/us-secretly-gave-aid-to-iraq-early-in-its-war-against-iran.html} The U.S. restored their relationships with Iraq after it flattered during the 1967 Six-Day War against Israel, as President Reagan stated that the United States could not afford to allow Iraq to lose the War to Iran.

The facts mentioned in this part are important because it discusses the world’s engagement to support Iraq from falling apart to the Iranians, and also because their support to the Iraqi regime benefited Saddam to destroy the Shia opposition in the south, which contributed to obliterating the national unity in Iraq.

The War Event during the Period 1984-1985

Saddam tried to trouble Iran, firing missiles on Iranian tankers in the Persian Gulf, to provoke Iran to aggressively retaliate and close the strait of Hormuz, to urge the U.S. to intervene and end the war. But, the Iranians rejected falling into the trap, and only limited their attacks on Iraqi shipping.\footnote{“Iran-Iraq War,” 11.}

Saddam’s excessive support from the West and the Arab Gulf States galvanized the Iraqi forces to switch their military strategy from a defensive to an offensive mode.\footnote{Ili F. Gregory Gause, “Iraq’s Decisions to Go to War, 1980 and 1990,” Middle East Journal, January 1, 2002, https://www.jstor.org/stable/4329720?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents} Imam Khomeini delivered a speech in March 1985, urging the Iranians to pursue their holy defense against the Iraqi regime. In his speech, he noted that:
It is our belief that Saddam wishes to return Islam to blasphemy and polytheism… If America becomes victories… and grants victory to Saddam, Islam will receive such a blow that it will not be able to raise it head for a long time… The issue is one of Islam versus Blasphemy, and not of Iran versus Iraq.

The Iranian operations, Dawn-5 and 6, continued in its mission to capture Baghdad and Basra, but Saddam responded by launching chemical weapons against the Iranian forces positioned along the highway, and striking missiles against Iranian urban cities, including Tehran. The Iranian offensive operations that penetrated to Southern Iraq led Saddam to target the Shia cities because of the fears that the Shia would consolidate with the Iranians against the Ba’athists. This war skipped the phases that only included the opponent to resist and mitigate the enemy’s threats, the Iran-Iraq War escalated the sectarian warfare between the Sunnis and the Shias that resulted in entrenching the sectarian animosity among the Iraqis.

The Period 1986-1987

The failure to restore the Fao Peninsula from the Iranians led the Gulf States to fear that the Iranians might win the war. Iraq, in turn, annexed the city of Mehran and suggested a proposal to exchange the cities with the Iranians. But the Iranians rejected the proposal. In 1987, the operation that was led by Karbala-5 to capture the city of Basra resulted in killing 20,000 Iraqis, 65,000 Iranians and destroying the entire city of Basra. Iran’s operation in the North- led by Karbala- 10, made better results than the one attempted in the south. The Iranians almost captured the oil-rich city in northern Iraq (Kirkuk), before the Security Council passed the resolution 598 that forced the Iranians to retreat back from occupying the city because they

131 “Iran-Iraq War,” 12.

feared that the international community would impose sanctions on them. Most of the lands in the south where the Iranians fought forced the Shia to move to neighboring countries, such as Iran, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia.

The War during 1988

On April 17, 1988, Iraq succeeded in retaking the Fao Peninsula after three days of severe battle. In May 1988, the Iraqi forces purged the Iranian forces from the annexed cities that Iran captured during their offensive operations in Iraq. The two rivals were demoralized to proceed in their war, and on July 20, 1988, Iran showed willingness to accept the ceasefire resolution of 598. Khomeini gave a speech that expressed his dismay of Iran’s decision to accept the conditions of the U.N.’s resolution, he noted that:

Happy are those who have departed through Martyrdom. Happy are those who lost their lives in this convey of light. Unhappy am I that I still survive and have drank the poison chalice.

Iraq, in turn, showed willingness to accept the U.N Resolution if only Khomeini disallowed his calls to overthrow the Ba’ath regime. Iraq continued bombing cities in Iran to force Khomeini to accept the U.N. settlement. In July 1988, Iraq threw a chemical bomb on a Kurdish village of Zardan to halt the support that the Kurds received from their brethren in Iran. On August 20, 1988, Iran conceded the terms of the U.N. Security Council Resolution 598, after the U.S. Naval struck an Iranian passenger airline, which resulted in killing 290 people on board. Iran interpreted the plane attack as a sign of American resolve to force Iran to accept the


resolution. As a result, the eight year war resulted in killing more than a million individuals from both sides and the loss of $600 billions of infrastructure and trade damages.\textsuperscript{136}

Before the Invasion of Kuwait

Hussein met the U.S. ambassador of Iraq, April Claspie, at the presidential palace on July 25, 1990. In the meeting, he showed his annoyance because Kuwait exceeded more than its allotment in the joint oil field in Rumilian. At the time that Saddam met the U.S. ambassador, the Iraqi forces were mobilized at the borders between Iraq and Kuwait, waiting for a green light to invade Kuwait.\textsuperscript{137} Meantime, April Claspie appreciated Saddam’s honesty and thanked him for the invitation, but she also stated that the U.S. had no interest on Arab-to-Arab conflict, which Saddam interpreted that she indirectly gave the green light to invade Kuwait.\textsuperscript{138}

The Operation of the Desert Storm

On August 2, 1990, Iraq annexed Kuwait, and within two days, Iraq declared Kuwait as the nineteenth province. Immediately, the international community condemned the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. On November 29, the U.N. approved to use power against Iraq, in case Iraq refused to withdraw from Kuwait. January 11, 1991, the majority of U.S. congressmen voted in favor of the U.N. decision. Six days later, the U.S. struck cruise missiles on Iraqi targets in Kuwait. A month


later, Bush H.W. delivered an ultimatum that demanded Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait and complete the withdrawal steps in less than 48 hours. February 24, the U.S. declared the operation of Desert Force that took more than 100 hours to destroy the entire fleets of Iraqi tanks, which instigated the Iraqi forces to withdraw behind their borders.\textsuperscript{139}

The Aftermath of the Persian Gulf War

After the war ended, George H. W. Bush delivered another speech, declaring that the U.S. and their allies ended their operations against the Iraqi regime. In his speech, he also demanded the Iraqis to unite and topple Saddam, and start a new era of Iraq. Bush’s speech pushed thousands of Shia and Kurdish Iraqis to revolt against the regime, which forced the regime to brutally react against the revolt. The U.S. immediately withdrew after the operation ended, which gave a golden opportunity to Saddam to unite and increase his militant forces to crack down and resist the Shias and the Kurds. The world condemned Saddam’s atrocities in the south, although many argued that the U.S. did not proceed to topple Saddam because the U.S. feared that toppling Saddam would support the Iranians to spread their ideology into the region. Therefore many alleged that the U.S. was late to impose a no-fly zone in the south like it had been in the north because of the fears that the Iranian troops would consolidate with the Shia protestors at the time that the revolt broke out.\textsuperscript{140} The crimes of war that Saddam did against the Shias were discussed by MP Emma Nicholson in the British Parliament. Throughout Nicholson’s networks and campaigns, her voice reached to the United Nations, the British government and


the international community. Nicholson also shed light on the massacre that Saddam did in the Marsh lands. She gave evidence that Saddam’s intentions to build dykes near the Marches were more than for agricultural purposes. She also alleged that the regime drained the Marshes, building dykes to divert water from it, because they wanted to quell the 1991 Shia uprising. More details of this particular dilemma will be discussed in the section that follows.

Iraq during the Period 1992-1998

The U.S. believed that Saddam was years away from developing a nuclear weapon, but the United Nations inspectors assured that Saddam was a year away from reaching that capability. The nuclear defector that was exposed in 1995 proved that Iraq still maintained the capacity to produce W.M.D., which urged the U.S. to request the U.N. to open an investigation case to evaluate Iraq’s progressions on its program. In 1993, Saddam Hussein planned to assassinate George H.W. Bush during his visit to Kuwait, but President Clinton responded by striking cruise missiles against Iraq’s intelligence at night when they were largely unoccupied.

In 1996, Saddam uncovered and killed a CIA-sponsored coup attempt and frustrated the international weapon inspectors during their time mission in Iraq. President Clinton signed a legislation of regime change in Iraq in 1998. The President allocated $100 million U.S. to support the scattered exiles and opposition figures. In 1995, the United States alleged that Iraq was behind the airplane passenger bombing that the radical terrorists claimed guilty for. In 1998, al-Qaeda targeted the U.S. embassies in Africa, and alleged that their attacks were a response to the U.S. desecration of the two holy lands in Saudi Arabia during their Desert Storm operation.
against Iraq. The support that the opposition figures received from the U.S., led the regime to assassinate two prominent Shia scholars in 1998.141

The 1999 Shia Uprising

The Ayatollah Sadr was assassinated on February 19, 1999, in the holy city of Najaf while riding in his car along with his two sons, Mustafa and Muammal, and his driver. The regime appointed Sadr as Grand Ayatollah after the death of Ayatollah Abdul Qasim al-Khoei because they thought that Sadr was an easy target to be manipulated and directed. At his beginning, Sadr temporarily attempted to keep the clergy out of politics. However, he later distanced himself from the government and began his activist acts against the regime.

In his Friday sermons, Sadr called his audience not to fear to attend the Friday prayers at the Shia mosques, and urged them to challenge the orders of the authority by mobilizing at the Shia mosques during the Friday prayers. In 1998, he demanded the Shias to march to the shrine of Imam Hussein, requesting the prayers to break the government’s restrictions on banning the Shias to march to Karbala. On March 5, 1999, the Independent (London) published Sadr’s last speech on February 12, 1991, a week before his assassination. In his account, the Ayatollah demanded the government to release the Shia clergy that the regime arrested during the 1991 uprising and declare the clergies’ whereabouts that remained unknown until this day.142

After Sadr’s assassination, a heavy clash took place between the regime’s security forces and the Shia civilians in populated Shia neighborhoods, such as in Karbala, Nasiriya, Kufa, Najaf


and Basra. On March 17, 1999, at about 11:00 p.m., groups of armed demonstrators in Basra mobilized in the streets, attacked the governmental buildings and the intelligence service headquarters. Several eyewitnesses told the Human Rights Organization in Iraq that hundreds of Shias were incarcerated, wounded and killed during the attack. They reportedly told the Human Rights Watch that the attack resulted in killing 40 troops of the security forces. According to the CIA report, the ongoing assault by the security forces resulted in relocating tens of thousands of Shias from their hometowns and added that the intensity of the regime’s repression increased after the February killing of the leading senior Shia cleric, which resulted in killing and arresting hundreds of Shias.  

Iraq’s Destiny after the Horrific Attack of 9/11

After the horrific attack of September 11, the U.S. intelligence told George W. Bush that Saddam finally was able to possess weapons of mass destruction, and that the world could not tolerate an illegal W.M.D. programs in the hands of an anti-Western dictator. In the early fall of 2001, the U.N. began an intensive work activity to disarm Saddam. But, Bush sped his decision to invade Iraq, winning congressional authorization for war. December 2003, the coalition forces-led by the United States captured Saddam Hussein while he was hiding in a farm at the town of ad-Dawr near his city home (Tikrit).  

The series of developments detailed in this section manifested Saddam’s insecurity against the attempted


coup that sought to topple him. His excessive use of totalitarian power and his miscalculated invasion of Iran and Kuwait prompted him to annihilate the Iraqi national unity. In the section that follows, I will argue that Saddam’s insecurity, aggravated by his invasion of Iran and Kuwait, precipitated the latter to brutally react against thousands of Shia civilians, from the time he took power until his overthrow in 2003.

Aggravating Factors during the period 1979-2003

In this part, I argue that the brutal reactions against the Shias that included assassinating Shia senior clergymen, and against the Shias who revolted in 1991 and 1999, caused to undermine the national unity in Iraq and increase the severity of sectarianism among the Iraqis. In this chapter, I discuss the roots that aggravated Saddam to brutally react against the Twelver Shias and the outcomes that left after he waged war against the Shias in Iraq. Overall, I argue that Saddam’s focus on waging wars against his opponents, and his use of oil profit to strengthen his resistance against the opposition, instigate to destabilize the state, and become a nation of a warfare-sectarian territory.

The Assassination of the Shia Senior Religious Clerics

The assassinations, abductions, arrests and torturing that took on the Shia senior clergymen- led to perplexed the predicaments that aroused between the Sunnis and the Shias. Forces from the intelligence services (al-Mukhabarat), the General Security (al-Amin al-Aim), the Military Bureau and Commandos of Saddam (Fedayeen Saddam), entirely participated in killing and abducting tens of Shia senior clergies. The increase of numbers of arrests and killings that took place against the Shia clergymen aroused after the 1991 Shia uprising.
The security forces were regularly located in areas of majority Shias. In a way to prevent
the Shia practitioners from reaching to the Shia preachers that the government considered
subversives, the regime arbitrarily harassed and arrested the practitioners after leaving the
mosques or visiting the tombs. Furthermore, they checked the ration cards that were supplied by
the U.N. for humanitarian aid whenever the card bearer entered the mosque. These cards were
printed with a notice of severe penalties in case the carrier prayed at an unauthorized location.145

The regime prohibited the Shia seniors from preaching at the Friday prayers, banned
publication of Shia books and funeral procession other than those organized by the
government.146 They expelled and denied visas to thousands of foreign students wishing to study
at Najaf during the Iran-Iraq War. In 1991, the Human Rights Watch Commission Special
Rapporteur for Iraq, Max Van Der Stoel, dispatched a letter to the government that expressed his
concerns over the killings that took against the Shia clerics, but received no response from the
government.147

145 The card gives the recipient access to monthly food rations of essential items, such as rice, sugar,
cooking oil, and milk.


147 “ENDLESS TORMENT The 1991 Uprising in Iraq And Its Aftermath,” Human Rights Watch (Library
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Biography</th>
<th>Method of Assassination</th>
<th>Year of Death</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qasim Shubar</td>
<td>A Prominent Shia scholar</td>
<td>Was arrested and his whereabouts remain unknown</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad Sadeq al-Qazwini</td>
<td>One of the noble Ayatollahs in Karbala</td>
<td>Was arrested and his whereabouts remain unknown</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasrallah al-Mustanbat</td>
<td>A Shia mujtahid and cleric</td>
<td>Was killed by the regime</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammed Taqi al-Jawahary</td>
<td>A Prominent Shia cleric</td>
<td>Was arrested and his whereabouts remain unknown</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad Baqir as-Sadr</td>
<td>An Iraqi philosopher, an Ayatollah Sayad cleric and founder of the Dawah party.</td>
<td>Abducted along with his sister and executed by the government</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ala’din Bahr al-Aloom</td>
<td>One of the noble Ayatollahs in Najaf</td>
<td>Was arrested with dozens of his family members and still missing</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdul-Qasim Khoei</td>
<td>A Senior Shia clergy man who died at age 93</td>
<td>Died under house arrest after intensive interrogation</td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad Taqi al-Khoei</td>
<td>The son of the Grand Ayatollah, Abdul-Qasim Khoei</td>
<td>Died in a staged car accident</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali al-Seistani</td>
<td>One of the influential Grand Ayatollahs in Iraq</td>
<td>Survived a killing attempt on his life</td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muratada al-Borojerdi</td>
<td>One of the respected Shia clerics across the globe</td>
<td>Was shot with his followers near Imam Ali’s Mosque in Najaf</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheikh Bashir al-Hussani</td>
<td>A Shia scholar and Mujtahid</td>
<td>Escaped an attempt on his life when a hand grenade was thrown at his home</td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadeq Sadr</td>
<td>A Senior Shia clergyman and an influential Grand Ayatollah in Iraq</td>
<td>Was killed with two of his sons in his car while he was boxed by two cars and shot with a machine gunfire</td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: contains the names of the hierarchical Shia clerics that Saddam’s regime assassinated during his tenure.\(^{148}\)

By observing table 2, we can see that these killing operations were mostly taken during the Iraq-Iran war and after the Persian Gulf War, which explains why the regime considered the senior clerics as an existential threat. The assassination attempts against the Shia clergymen increased after the Joint Action Committee (JAC- Lajnat al-Amal al- Musharraf) was established, which became the umbrella that contained the religious clerics and oppositions in exile. The meeting that was convened between the Iraqi opposition, the Saudis’ officials and the former Ba’athist politician, Iyad Alawi, in Beirut, made the regime to violently react against the clergymen.\textsuperscript{149}

On February 15, 1991, the security forces harshly reacted against the Shias and the Kurds because of President H.W. Bush’s calls to topple Saddam’s regime. Several scholars argued that the quick American withdrawal from Kuwait, after the end of the Desert Force operation, eased Saddam to consolidate his troops to resist the 1991 Shia uprising because the soldiers that withdrew from Kuwait increased the number of forces to resist the 1991 uprising.

In an article that was written by the Saudi journalist, Mohammad al-Shammrani, he stated that the outcomes that were left after the U.S. quick withdrawal from Iraq, sustained to increase the number of forces to quell the 1991 uprising. In the article, he noted that:

\begin{quote}
Evidently feared a popular uprising modeled on the Islamic Revolution in Iran, refrained from supporting it. Instead, the U.S. stood back as Saddam crushed the uprising. Indeed, a similar hands-off attitude was among most Iraqi opposition groups (the exceptions were the PUK, the KDP and the Supreme Council), who took a wait- and- see approach rather than those who rise up, they looked to use the results of the uprising to achieve their own interests.\textsuperscript{150}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{150} Al-Bayati and Galbraith, \textit{From Dictatorship to Democracy}, 27-28.
Although the Saudis were desired to see an end to Saddam’s regime, the U.S. succeeded to protect its allies and interests in the region. Meantime, the international community failed to shelter the people that Saddam considered his foes in Iraq. The northern no-fly zone that was established by the United States, United Kingdom and France under the United Nations resolution 688 in April 1991, did not halt Saddam from exploiting his helicopter gunships to quell the Shia uprising in Southern Iraq.

The regime tortured and killed tens of Shia clerics during the Iraq-Iran war. In turn, the world failed to deter Saddam from brutally reacting against thousands of Shias after the Persian Gulf War ended.\(^{151}\) Saddam’s hatred of those who sought for his toppling kept him insisted on brutally crushing any opposition that stands in his face. The killings that took part against the Shia clerics resulted in increasing the sectarian animosity against the Sunnis because it left both sides to fear that one of the two sects might retaliate against the other.

The 1991 Shia Uprising

The 1991 Shia uprising, sometimes referred to as the 1991 civil war, was the aftermath of the economic devastation that was resulted from the Iraq-Iran War and the Persian Gulf War, which urged the vulnerable Shias to outrage against the regime. The 1991 uprising that many Arab Iraqis referred to as the Sha’aban intifada, led the regime to increase repercussions against the Shias.

The perpetual bombing of the Shia cities in the South during the 1991 uprising, led thousands of Shias to flee their hometowns to the Marches, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Iran. The Shias who fled to the Marshes considered it a safer place for refuge because of the army’s tanks and artillery useless functionality in wetlands. In response, the government burned the house villages in the south and built a dam near the Marches to divert water from it, to force the Shias to slender. According to the United Nations, the Marches that were the largest wetland in the Middle East had nearly vanished.\footnote{Al-Bayati and Galbraith, From Dictatorship to Democracy, 29.}

In January 1993, British MP Emma Nicholson wrote in Arab Review of what she witnessed in the March Lands. Nicholson stated that the detrimental conditions that the Iraqis experienced at the Marshes were in “misery and deprivation in the south of Iraq.” She accentuated that building the dykes near the Marches was a plan to force the Shias to slender. After Nicholson spoke to the victims, she reported that the water in 46 villages of the Misan Marches was almost dried, which forced 40,000 people to dig wells to access water for daily use.\footnote{Al-Bayati and Galbraith, From Dictatorship to Democracy, 48.} She concluded that the living conditions in these Marches were detrimental and disastrous for a living because the inhabitants were unable to fish, hunt, and graze animals. On November 21, 1992, she requested the United Nation to urgently intervene to stop the regime’s repressive reactions in Southern Iraq,” imposing a no fly-zone in the south.

By March 1993, Nicholson provided more evidence to the British government that the dykes near the Marches that were reportedly claimed by the Iraqi regime for agricultural purposes were inaccurate. The maps she provided to the government made strong evidence that
the regime’s intentions in building those dykes were more than for agricultural needs. The British government, in turn, took these notes with full consideration, but they did not comment that much on the part of creating a safe haven for the people in the south as it had been for the Kurds in the north. After a meeting between Nicholson and Putman-Cramer, the head of the Iraq unit for the UN office for the coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Geneva, the U.N. requested the Iraqi government to grant visas to the U.N. delegations to visit the Marches. But, the regime refused to grant visas to the U.N. delegations.  

The campaigns that Nicholson promoted reached out to Prince Charles. In October 1993, Nicholson and a few people were invited to St. James’s Palace. In her visit, she told the prince about the detrimental consequences that Saddam caused in the Marches and stated that the regime’s brutal reactions against the Shias in the Marches were to force the Shias to slender. On October 27, Prince Charles delivered a speech at Oxford University about Islam and the West. In his speech, he expressed his disappointment at Saddam’s barbaric rule of Iraq and remarked that the Shia inhabitants were exposed to atrocities by the regime. In addition, he added that the Marches that were the source of human living and sheltering since the dawn of human civilization had vanished. The Marches were not the only dilemma that the Shia experienced after the 1991 uprising in the south, but as well it was the destiny of the Shia demonstrators that participated during the 1991 uprising, who their whereabouts remain unknown until this day.

The Human Rights Watch estimated that the Shia detainees in the Radwaniyah prison exceed more than 5000 prisoners. The Radwaniyah detention center was the former prison-of-


155 Al-Bayati and Galbraith, *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, 51.
war facility near Baghdad and reportedly a site for torturing and mass executing. The Abu Ghraib prison west of Baghdad held more than 15,000 prisoners, where the prisoners over there were subjected to torturing. The United Nations Special Rapporteur continued to receive reports of arrested individuals that were subjected routinely to mistreatment, prolonged interrogation, torturing and beating. The U.N. warned the Iraqi regime that if they did not stop their inhuman acts against the prisoners, the U.N. will impose more sanctions on Iraq, but the regime neglected their warnings.

The arbitrary arrests of the Shias, the devastated conditions that the Shias experienced and the economic sanctions that deteriorated Iraq’s economy, led to the eruption of the 1991 uprising in Southern Iraq. They subjected, mistreated, dislocated and killed tens of thousands of Arab Shias. The regime’s atrocities to the Arab Shias following the 1991 uprising contributed to destroying the national unity in Iraq and instigated to demarcate Iraq into an area of civil wars, disastrous region and impoverished villages, which became a fertilized area to infuse sectarian radicalism.

The 1999 Shia Intifada

The heavy clashes between the regime’s security forces and the Shia civilians after the regime’s successful assassination of Sadeq Sadr in February 19, 1999, was also attributed to the killings of Ayatollah Ali-Gharwai and Sheikh al-Borjoudi during the summer of 1998. The government provoked to provide rations to thousands of people in Nasiriyah and Basra that were supplied by the U.N., which led thousands of Shias to outrage against the Iraqi regime in 1999.
Prior to the assassination of Ayatollah Sadr, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) reported that the security forces arrested Sheikh Awas, the Imam of the Nasiriyah Mosque in January 1999. Shortly after the Imam’s arrest, hundreds of Shia civilians congregated in front of the security directorate to demand for his release. In response, the security fired and threw a hand grenade on the demonstrators, which resulted in killing five people, wounding 11 protests and arresting 300 persons.

The impoverished Shia Thawra district of Baghdad experienced atrocity by the government. The regime’s security forces shot the inhabitants, and throughout their brutal reactions, 25 people were killed, 850 people were arrested, and 50 individuals were reportedly wounded. Another Shia source indicated that the security forces surrounded the city of Najaf and killed the Imam of Majar al-Kabir Mosque and executed nine others at the Ramadi prison.

The Human Rights Organization in Iraq (HROI) reported that 1093 Shias were arrested in June 1999 in Baghdad alone. The Iraqi National Congress stated that more than a thousand Shia were arrested in July 1999 in Basra and added that tanks from the Hammurabi Republican Guard Division attacked the towns of Rumaitha and Khuddar in June 1999, after the protestors demonstrated against the systematic unequal distribution of medicine and food in the detrimental areas of the Shias.

Fourteen villagers were executed, over a hundred people were arrested and forty homes were destroyed in June 1999. The 1999 uprising was one of the longest civil wars that prolonged during Saddam’s reign. The state exploited several types of torture techniques to take

---


confessions from the culprits while interrogating. They disenfranchised the Shias from receiving their rations that were supplied by the United Nations. The regime’s reactions against the Shias led the latter to be envisaged as a low social class that had been deprived of holding all the citizenry rights that the constitution granted. It extracted them from enjoying the government’s prerogatives that had been mostly enjoyed by those whom the government considered loyal to them. Overall, the 1999 uprising was a massacre by all means that infused sectarianism to arouse across the inhabitants of Iraq and contributed to the Sunni-Shia hostility in Iraq.

Conclusion

Saddam alleged that the wars, the Mother of All Battles (the Persian Gulf War) and Saddam’s Qadissiya (the Iran-Iraq War), were important because it showed the world that Iraq was not hesitated to defend its pride and dignity against the Iranian threat and the Western imperialists. The world supported Iraq against Iran in the war that prolonged for eight years. It resulted in killing and dislocating hundreds of thousands because of the world’s fears of Iranian ideological expansion into neighboring countries after the success of the 1979 Islamic revolution.

The war, however, contributed to infusing the sectarian animosity among the Sunnis and the Shias because of the political justifications that legitimized the war for religious and political reasons that only benefited to protect the interests of the countries that feared the threats that Iran and Iraq exposed to the region. The dynamics that led Khomeini and Saddam to be in rival contributed to escalating the sectarian agitation because of the stands that both countries took in the war against each other. Saddam’s interests to join Khuzestan to Iraq, to empower the checks and balances that the regime needed to protect its power, was at the price of Iraq’s unity.
The Iran-Iraq War triggered Saddam to target the Shia clergymen that were revered by the Shia Muslims because of their political orientation that the regime deemed as an existential threat. The Iraqi defeat in the battles in 1982, urged the regime to increase repercussions against the Shia clergymen. The Iran-Iraq War contributed to surge the sectarian animosity among the Sunnis and the Shias because the war led the two sects to believe that either sect might retaliate against the other.

The heavy damages that were left after the Iran-Iraq War, and the debts that were compounded on Iraq, caused Saddam to complain about the policies that Kuwait and United Arab Emirates exploited to reduce the oil prices, less than $ 15 for a barrel, which made it difficult to Iraq to cover up the expenses of the war losses. Saddam claimed that Kuwait exceeded the oil allotment from the joint field in Rumaila, and that Kuwait did it on purpose to increase the oil production and reduce the oil prices, which precipitated the regime to invade Kuwait.

The Security Council Resolution 678 that Iraq ignored instigated the Allies coalition to expel the Iraqis from Kuwait. Bush’s quick mission to only quell the Iraqi invasion (to keep the balance of power between Iraq and Iran), and his calls to topple Saddam after the U.S. Desert Storm operation ended, prompted the Iraqi regime to brutally quell the 1991 revolt. Bush’s decision not to proceed to topple Saddam, gave the Iraqi regime an advantage to mobilize the forces and destroy the Shia and the Kurdish revolt.

The bans that took on the Shias to pray in the Shia mosques, receive rations and publish Shia journals and books, caused to deteriorate the Iraqi unity and infuse the Sectarian animosity. Saddam’s continued attempts to develop the nuclear program in Baghdad, his support of fundamentalist terrorists to target U.S. interests around the globe and the crimes that he initiated
against the opposition, urged President Clinton to allocate $ 100 million to support the religious clergymen and opposition figures in exile.

The killing of Ayatollah Sadr in 1999, erupted the 1999 Shia revolt. The regime shooting innocent civilians in the streets, arresting, torturing and executing hundreds of Shias, annihilate the foundations that any nation needs to create their own national unity. The killing of Ayatollah Sadr caused Shia disappointment around the world and produced sectarian stalemate among the Sunnis and the Shias. Overall, Saddam’s fears of the Islamic Revolution, and the world’s support of the opposition to topple Saddam, were roots that aggravated Saddam to atrociously react against the opposition in Iraq. Saddam’s insecurity about the world’s intention to topple him, led the latter to invade neighboring countries, which was at the price of the Iraqi national unity that precipitated Iraq to become a warfare-sectarian territory.

The Conclusion of the Thesis

The thesis covered the history of Iraq from the period the Ottoman ruled in Mesopotamia, until the U.S. invaded Iraq, which resulted in Saddam’s collapse. I covered 603 years of events in Iraq’s history, and accentuated the roots that aggravated sectarianism to arouse among the Iraqis. Many people nowadays inquired about the roots that instigated to undermine the comprehensive
national unity in Iraq, and that led Iraq to turn into a political Muhassas (political quote).

Throughout the thesis, I also explained the roots of the sectarian violence that were triggered by the political conflicts between the regional powers, the political officials and the people.

What Aggravated the Iraqi National Identity to Devolve into Sectarianism

In chapter 1 (the Ottoman-Persian rivalry), we recognized that the Sultan’s desires to maintain his religious legitimacy, imposing religious sovereignty onto the eastern and western Islamic World, was the beginning of the rivalry between the Ottomans and the Safavids that precipitated to produce sectarian conflict between the Sunnis and the Shias in Mesopotamia. The Ottoman-Persian conflict was the basis that led the Ottoman government to envisage the Arab Shias as an Iranian fifth column in the state. The plot that the Ottomans sought to perform to impose Ottoman sovereignty onto the Mediterranean World, annexing the city of Baghdad, and subduing the Shia-Qizilbash tribes, promoted severe consequences that instigated to prolong the sectarian war between the Ottomans and the Safavids that lasted for more than two centuries.

The Ottoman-Persian rivalry played a role to disenfranchise the Arab Shias because the Ottoman considered them as Iranian agents that dwelled in the Ottoman domain. Furthermore, we also envisaged that the rivalry resulted in deeming the Arab Shias as an existential threat that increased the sectarian animosity between the different spectrums of the Mesopotamian people. The Mamluks’ dereliction to the 1801 Wahhabi invasion of Karbala that precipitated in killing more than 5000 Arab Shias and destroying the holy shrines and mosques in the city, led to escalating the sectarian violence between the Sunnis and the Shias. Following the Wahhabi sack of Karbala, the Khorramshahr governor led an invasion to retaliate against the Mamluks, which caused the Ottomans to extract the Mamluks and reimpose a direct rule in Mesopotamia. Indeed,
the Ottoman’s centralized rule caused severe impacts on the sectarian dilemma. The Ottomans besieged and annexed the shrines in 1843, and killed thousands of Shias, which instigated to a large extent to arouse sectarian violence among the Mesopotamian people. The sectarian dilemma prolonged to grow, even after Britain invaded Iraq in 1914.

In chapter 2 (the British creation of modern Iraq), we also recognized that the majority Shia, who were a minority during the Ottoman rule, became a controversial aspect of the British, which forced Britain to deem them as an existential threat. They alienated the Shias from participating in making decisions and practicing their political rights. They, however, only empowered the Sunnis to lead the hierarchical positions in the government. After the Sevres Treaty in 1920, the rise of the U.S. influence led the latter to promote democracy and put an end to Western imperialism. In order for Britain to evade the international pressures, and prolong the British interests in Iraq, the British appointed King Faysal as a King of Iraq. Therefore, it was quite essential to exploit the anti-Shia policies to alienate the Shias from possessing hierarchical positions in the government because Britain feared that a Shia empowerment would lead the Arab Shias to constitute a theoretical state. Indeed, the clandestine agreements that were held between the King and the British, impeded King Faysal from playing a larger political role.

Furthermore, because of the political conflicts between the Iraqis, the king saw that it was essential to possess power in the hands of the Sunnis, and alienate the Kurds and the Shias, which was at the price of Iraq’s national unity. The king’s distrust of the Shias provoked him to separate the Kurdish state from Iraq, to sustain the balance of power between the Sunnis and the Shias. The king also saw that the Shias were anti-statists, and that the demagogic Shia clerics sought to rule the state, which prompted the King to appoint the politicians that surrounded him during his rule in Syria. At the time that Iraq became recognized by the League of Nations in
1932, the King discerned that the power should be possessed by the factions that departed from the king’s supportive bases, to undermine the other political factions that were in opposition to the nation-state’s agenda to grow in power. After King Faysal’s death, King Ghazi ascended to power, and during his rule, he sided with the Bedouins and the Arab nationalists that precipitated the emergence of the two schools of thought in the political arena.

The 1936 Sidiqi’s coup, World War-II, Gilani’s revolt, and Britain’s resumption of power in Iraq after WWII, entirely paved the way to erupt the 1948 Wathbah revolt against the government. The nationalists’ hatred of the leftists and the communists were reflected on the Arab Shias because of the large participation of Shias in these factions. The nationalists exploited different words to designate the Arab Shias. They exploited words such as Rafidi (heretics), Ajam (foreigners) and Luti (homosexuals), which infused sectarian animosity between the Sunnis and the Shias. As soon as Mohammad Mosaddeq, the Iranian Prime Minister, nationalized the oil refineries in Iran, the people demanded that the government follow the steps of Mosaddeq, and cut relations with Britain. In 1955, Iraq entered the Baghdad pact that was a British coalition to resist the Soviet threats, along with countries like Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Jordan, which provoked more agitation against the government. The 1956 Tripartite Aggression in Egypt promoted the people to claim that the military was capable of taking charge if the Hashemite regime collapsed. The Egyptian-Syrian unification, and their establishment of the United Arab State, galvanized the Iraqi officers to lead a coup against the Hashemite, which resulted in the regime’s collapse.

Chapter 3 (the clashes of identities in Iraq’s republic) incorporated the events that followed the Hashemite collapse, which covered the year 1958-1979. Therein, I argued that Qassim’s strategy to alienate the Nasserists and the Ba’athists from the political scene, and his
alliance with the communists, instigated the Nasserists and the Ba’athists to detest the Arab Shias. I also argued that the government’s dereliction to al-Thawra town in the suburbs of Baghdad, because of the government’s claims that the town was laid on a rich oil reserves, instigated to disenfranchise the Shias from obtaining equal services like the other cities.

According to Hanna Batatu, the government’s dereliction to the city of Thawra had much to do with their susceptibility influence to the Dawah and the Mujahideen that the government considered subversive. The Shias constituted 53 percent of the population between the years 1958-1968. However, the Shias only accounted for 30 percent of the governmental jobs, which 87 percent of those jobs were in the lowest positions. I also argued that the rise of political Islam in the 70s, multiplied the regime’s repercussions against the Shias. The Ba’ath regime closed the Usuli-Din college and the elementary school of Jawaddayn in Najaf. They also confiscated the lands that were allocated to build the University of Kufa. As a result, the students protested against the regime’s orders, in which the Ba’ath expelled and arrested hundreds of Shias. The regime deported the non-Shia residents from Najaf and forced compulsory deployment on students who attended the seminary classes in Hawza.

The regime also arrested the Shia Grand Mufti, Mohammed al-Sadr, because of the fear that Sadr would lead a revolt against the government. They incarcerated Sadr because of his statements that called the Shias to break the government’s ban on their annual pilgrimage, mobilizing thousands of Shias to proceed the pilgrimage. Sadr’s arrest led members of the Dawah to carry their weapons and head to the Muntassriya University, where the regime’s ideologue, Tariq Aziz, was giving a speech at the school, which resulted in killing Aziz’s bodyguard. At the bodyguard’s funeral, a group of Shia activists threw a grenade bomb on the assembly that resulted in killing 40 Ba’athists officers. Saddam during his visit to the injured in
the hospital publicly pledged that he would retaliate against the perpetrators. In his first move, Hussein ordered the execution of the entire Dawah party, who currently were members or served in the past, including Mohammad al-Sadr.

On April 5, 1980, the Ba’ath executed Sadr and sent his body to his uncle, Mohammad Sadr, for secret burial. Indeed, the 1979 Iranian revolution had much to do with Sadr’s execution because thousands of Iraqis called him “Iraq’s future Khomeini”, which caused fear to the regime. Sadr’s execution resulted in the outbreak of the Shia uprising that from which thousands of Shias were shot in the streets. Finally, I argued that the presidential competing visions between the performers of the 1958 revolution precipitated to undermine the national unity in Iraq and also disenfranchise the Shias.

In chapter 4 (Iraq under Saddam’s totalitarian rule), I covered the events that coincided after the 1979 Iranian Revolution, until Saddam Hussein’s toppling in 2003. I argued that the arrests and killings that took place against the Shia senior clergymen increased the severity of sectarianism in Iraq. The security forces banned the Arab Shias from praying in Shia mosques. They harassed the Shias after leaving the mosques or visiting the tombs. The regime assassinated the prominent Shia clerics during the Iran-Iraq War, and after the Persian Gulf War. Following the end of the Desert Storm operation to liberate Kuwait, President H.W. Bush delivered an ultimatum that called the Shias and the Kurds to rebel to topple Hussein from power, which galvanized the Arab Shias to revolt against the regime in 1991. Many argued that President Bush’s goal to only expel the Iraqi forces, to maintain power equilibrium between Iraq and Iran, was because of his fears that if he toppled Saddam the Iranians would annex Iraq. However, Bush’s quick withdrawal from Kuwait facilitated Saddam to resist the 1991 Shaban Intifada, increasing the number of his forces to resist the Arab Shias in the south.
The regime’s anti-Shia policies that included assassinating the Shia senior clergymen, banning the publication of Shia books and denying visas to thousands of students wished to study in Najaf, destroyed the foundations that the regime needed to constitute a comprehensive national unity among the Iraqis. Saddam’s continued bombing of the Shia cities, and his building of the dykes near the Marches, instigated to deteriorate the Iraqi national unity.

MP Emma Nicholson wrote in the Arab review what she witnessed during her visit to the Marches. She described the amount of suffering that the Arab Shias experienced from building the dykes and ordered the international community to impose a no-fly zone in the south, to quell Saddam’s bombardment on the Shias’ villages.

In chapter 4, I also argued that the 1999 Shia Intifada instigated to spread sectarian violence among the Iraqis. The regime’s brutal reactions to quell the 1999 Intifada precipitated to turn Iraq into a warfare-sectarian territory and deteriorate Iraq’s national unity. Saddam’s Qadissiya against Iran, his invasion of Kuwait, his battle “the Mother of All Battles,” the international sanctions, and the regime’s brutal reaction against the Shia clergymen and the Shia uprising, were all roots that aggravated the Iraqi national identity to devolve into sectarianism. Overall, the Ottoman-Persian rivalry, the British creation of Iraq, the presidential competing visions that did not focus on unifying Iraq, and Saddam’s totalitarian rule were the roots that aggravated the Iraqi national identity to devolve into sectarianism.

Predicaments for Further Research

There are further topics to discuss that accentuates other roots that aggravated the Iraqi national identity to devolve into sectarianism. The period that followed the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq and the rise of the Shia in power, which was the onset of the end of the Sunnis empower in the state. The year 2003-2006, the year of the sectarian violence between the Sunnis and the
Shias, and the period that the terrorist Salafist’s movement was constituted, ISIS, and ISIS coalescence with the prior Iraqi officers from the previous regime. The suicidal attacks against the Shia mosques and tombs during Ashura in Karbala, and the emergence of the Shia militias. The period of Arab Spring and its consequences spread sectarian violence among the Iraqis. The dynamics that lead the Iraqis to vote for the demagogue politicians, based on their religious sect groups, and exclude the pragmatic politicians from playing a role in the political scene. Furthermore, the Muhassas System and its roots to destroy the Iraqis national unity. The period of the current uprising in Iraq that calls for a constitutional state after 620 years of sectarian violence. And the juxtaposition between sectarianism in Iraq and the sectarian conflict between the Allawis and the Sunnis in Syria. All these topics are essential to complete the journey of acknowledging the roots that aggravated the Iraqi national identity to devolve into sectarianism.

Bibliography


Bell, Gertrude L. The Letters of Gertrude Bell VI-2. 2011.


Mazza, Robert. “Occupation during and after the War (Middle East).” *New Articles RSS* (n.d.). https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/occupation_during_and_after_the_war_middle_east.


Sorby, Karol. “Iraq: from Faysal’s Ascendancy to the Throne to the Ratification of the First Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, 1921-1924.” (n.d.), 199-217. https://doi.org/Slovenská Akadémia Vied › sk › ...PDF Web results Iraq from Faysal’s ascendancy to the throne to the ratification of the first ... - SAV. P. 201-205.


