

SWITCHING SIDES: POLITICAL POWER, ALIGNMENT, AND ALLIANCES IN  
POST-SADDAM IRAQ

by

Diane L. Maye  
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## **DEDICATION**

This is dedicated to my wonderful husband, without whose love and support this dissertation would have not been completed.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Al Qaeda in Iraq.....	AQI
Asa'ib ahl al-Haqq .....	AAH
Association of Muslim Scholars in Iraq.....	AMSI
Civilian Police Assistance Training Team.....	CPATT
Commander's Emergency Response Program.....	CERP
Coalition Provisional Authority.....	CPA
Comparative Historical Analysis .....	CHA
Counterinsurgency .....	COIN
Dawlat al-Islamiyah f'al-Iraq wa al-Sham.....	Daesh
Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan.....	DPAK
Forward Operating Base .....	FOB
Government of Iraq.....	GOI
Jaysh al Mahdi .....	JAM
Jaysh Rikal Tariqah al-Naqshahbandi .....	JRTN
Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah (Islamic Resistance Movement).....	HAMAS
Improvised Explosive Device .....	IED
International Monetary Fund .....	IMF
Iraqi Governing Council .....	IGC
Iraqi Islamic Party .....	IIP
Iraqi National Congress .....	INC
Iraqi National Accord .....	INA
Iraqi Police Service.....	IPS
Islamic Movement of Kurdistan .....	IMK
Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps .....	IGRC
Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq .....	ISCI
Islamic State of Syria and the Levant .....	ISIL
Islamic State of Syria and al Shams.....	ISIS
Islamic State.....	IS
Kurdistan Alliance .....	KA
Kurdistan Democratic Party.....	KDP
Kurdistan Islamic Union .....	KIU
Kurdistan National Assembly .....	KNA
Kurdish Regional Government .....	KRG
Kurdistan Workers' Party .....	PKK
Ministry of Communication.....	MOC
Ministry of Defense .....	MOD
Ministry of Interior .....	MOI

Multinational Force-Iraq .....	MNF-I
Multinational Force-West .....	MNF-W
Multinational Corps-Iraq .....	MNC-I
Multinational Division- Baghdad .....	MND-B
Multinational Division-Central .....	MND-C
Multinational Division-Center-South .....	MND-CS
Multinational Division-North .....	MND-N
Multinational Division-North West .....	MND-NW
Mujahideen el-Khalq .....	MEK
Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance .....	ORHA
Operation Iraqi Freedom .....	OIF
Operation Northern Watch .....	ONW
Patriotic Union of Kurdistan .....	PUK
Palestinian Islamic Jihad .....	PIJ
Popular Mobilization Unit .....	PMU
Provincial Reconstruction Team .....	PRT
Senate Armed Services Committee .....	SASC
Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq .....	SCIRI
State of Law Coalition .....	SOL
Sons of Iraq .....	SOI
Status of Forces Agreement .....	SOFA
Transnational Administrative Law .....	TAL
United States Army Corps of Engineers .....	USACE
United States Government .....	USG
United States Forces .....	USF
United Iraqi Alliance .....	UIA
United Nations .....	UN
Victory Base Complex .....	VBC

## **NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS AND NAMES**

This dissertation makes extensive use of source material from Iraq as well as Arabic news mediums. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Arabic are the author's own and were verified by the author's husband, Sheikh Dhafir Abdul Karim who is a native Iraqi and served as a cultural advisor to Multinational-National Corps Baghdad from 2006 through 2010. Relevant words and names have been transliterated from Arabic to English.



## **ABSTRACT**

### **SWITCHING SIDES: POLITICAL POWER, ALIGNMENT, AND ALLIANCES IN POST-SADDAM IRAQ**

Diane L. Maye, Ph.D.

George Mason University, 2015

Dissertation Director: Dr. Mark N. Katz

The removal of Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime in Iraq gave rise to a plethora of non-state actors, sub-state political factions, warring ethnic groups, and terrorist organizations all seeking to fill the political power vacuum. Using theories from academic literature on coalition building, neorealism, behavioral science, sociology, as well as complexity theory, this research project will use the U.S. and coalition intervention in Iraq to frame a within-case comparative historical analysis of how power was distributed within Iraq after the U.S.-led invasion and the complex interplay between shifting alignments and alliances between political factions, militant groups and occupation forces. This study argues that political factions will make alignments and alliances based on agent-based considerations in their formative stages and will quickly gravitate toward the authority of a charismatic leader. Over time, these political factions become institutionalized and behave in accordance with what neorealist political theory would predict.



## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this dissertation is to explain the causal mechanisms behind political alignments and alliances within a country in a state of civil war, civil insurrection, or when militant factions challenge state sovereignty. To explore the process that leads to political alignment and alliances, this study looks at Iraq after the 2003 coalition invasion, and subsequent fall of the Ba'ath Party, which exposed several competing political and military factions in the country. The current scholarly literature is focused on alignments and alliances *between* sovereign states and between political parties *within* states, but there is a literature gap when it comes to explaining causal mechanisms leading towards political alignments and alliances that take place within a state undergoing an armed conflict. Furthermore, the current literature offers several competing hypotheses to explain why alliances and alignments occur; however, the literature does not explain each step in the path leading to the outcome of political alliance and alignment.

### **Theoretical Model**

In order to fill this gap, this study proposes a new theoretical model to explain the causal process of alliance and alignment formation in a state of civil unrest. David Dressler suggested that one approach to explaining an event is a “generalizing strategy to

show an event as a type of event.”<sup>1</sup> This study will use a historical explanation of alliances and alignment in Iraq after the fall of the Ba’ath party that relies on theoretical models to explain each step towards the historical outcome where the theories “are used in piecemeal fashion at each step of the path leading to the outcome.”<sup>2</sup>

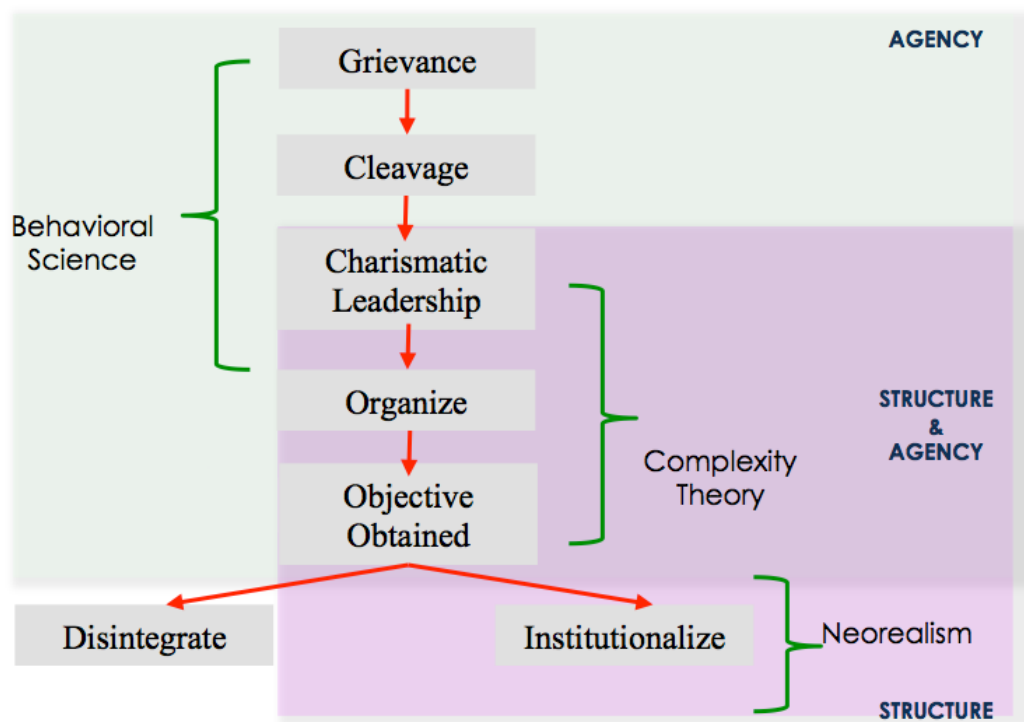


Fig 1.1 Theoretical Model. The model above shows each step of a political faction’s development and the theories that explain why alliances are formed at each point in the process.

<sup>1</sup> Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005, 147.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



This dissertation will show that at different points in the causal process of alliance formation, the behavior of the political faction will act in accordance with different theories. Political factions are typically born because of a grievance with the current regime or political party in power. This grievance then causes a political cleavage. In the early stages of a political faction's existence, charismatic leaders typically drive political alignments; therefore *agent-based* theories of alignment and alliance formation are more appropriate in explaining how the political faction behaves. The agent-based theories of alignment and alliance formation are derived from the behavioral sciences, and explain how *individuals* react to competition for survival. During the period where the political faction is achieving a political or military objective, both *agency and structure* will explain behavior because the political faction is becoming more mature, but is typically led by a charismatic leader. The most appropriate theories for this stage in the process come from the complexity literature.

In the latter-stages of political development, political factions will either become institutionalized and act in accordance with *structural* theories of alliance formation, or they will disintegrate. The structural theories of alliance and alignment formation come from the neorealist body of literature and comparative politics. In summary, the structural approach predicts *what* alliances might occur, but cannot predict *when* they will begin. In order to fully understand the causal process of alliance formation from the beginning, it is important to also focus on the individual leaders that initiate the political cleavage.

## **Strategy & Policy Significance**

In warfare and military interventions only so many variables can be controlled. Obviously, each military intervention and occupation has quite different socio-political factors, backgrounds, and historical frames of reference. This dissertation seeks to explain the causes behind **alliance formation** within Iraq. It is important to note that each political faction, as well as the occupying power, made decisions based on a different set of calculations and consequences. Much of the literature thus far on the Iraq war only takes into account the American and coalition strategies and tactics. Meanwhile, the various factions within Iraq had their own set of strategic calculations as well as short and long-term goals. This research project will address why certain groups, acting below the state level of analysis, chose to align in the manner they did, and based on this, how alignment can be facilitated during future political and military interventions.

## **Dissertation Roadmap**

The following chapter (Chapter 2) will give a background to the socio-political environment in Iraq during the timeframe of this study and will conclude with the strategy and policy significance of understanding the importance of understanding the causal process of alliance formation. Chapter 3 provides a review of the current literature on alliance and alignment formation, as well as theories for each level of analysis. Chapter 4 will outline the methodology used in this research project. Chapter 5 will give a background on Iraqi politics and how the country became a modern nation-state. Chapter 6 will give a detailed analysis of the first case: the Arab Sunni political

alignments and alliances after the fall of Saddam Hussein. Chapter 7 will give background on the second case in the study: the Shi'ia political processes and how the Iranian Revolution has fueled the Shi'ia political dynamic in Iraq. Chapter 8 will detail the final case: the history of the Kurds in Iraq and their alliance and alignment rationale. Chapter 9 will summarize how the political dynamic in Iraq changed after the departure of U.S. forces from the country. Chapter 10 will conclude with the newly proposed theoretical framework for understanding how political and military groups make alliances as well as policy recommendation and prospects for future research.

## CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND

“We are ready to sacrifice our souls, our children and our families so as not to give up  
Iraq.”

-Saddam Hussein, 2003<sup>3</sup>

In March 2003, when Saddam Hussein’s Ba’athist regime fell, so did the facade of public order. Without the regime in place to provide security, the Iraqi people took to the streets, looted, and burned the city of Baghdad. Initially, coalition forces were not ordered to contain the violence. This proved to be a critical error in decision-making. The impact of the lawlessness compounded the already dilapidated state of Iraq’s infrastructure, making it far more difficult to provide basic services. The looting made it difficult for the coalition to operate under the plans they had devised for the post-war occupation and recovery. The subsequent de-Ba’athification of the internal security police and military forces exacerbated the problems. The result of these decisions was widespread criminal activity and civil chaos.

The abolition of the Iraqi government, military, and security forces by the coalition forces created a power vacuum that was quickly filled by Shi’ia militias, Sunni insurgents, former Ba’ath party loyalists, and Al Qaeda (AQI) operatives. For many Sunnis, the bombing of the al-Askari Mosque in Samarra in February 2006 was the

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<sup>3</sup> Saddam Hussein, quoted in John F. Burns, “In Iraqi Capital, People Prepare for the Conflict,” *The New York Times*, March 18, 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/18/international/middleeast/18BAGH.html> (accessed 15 May 2015).

catalyst for the ideological divide between nationalistic Sunni Arab insurgents and radicalized AQI fighters. After the bombing, retaliatory killings, torture, and kidnappings greatly increased across the country and the rift between all armed factions proliferated.

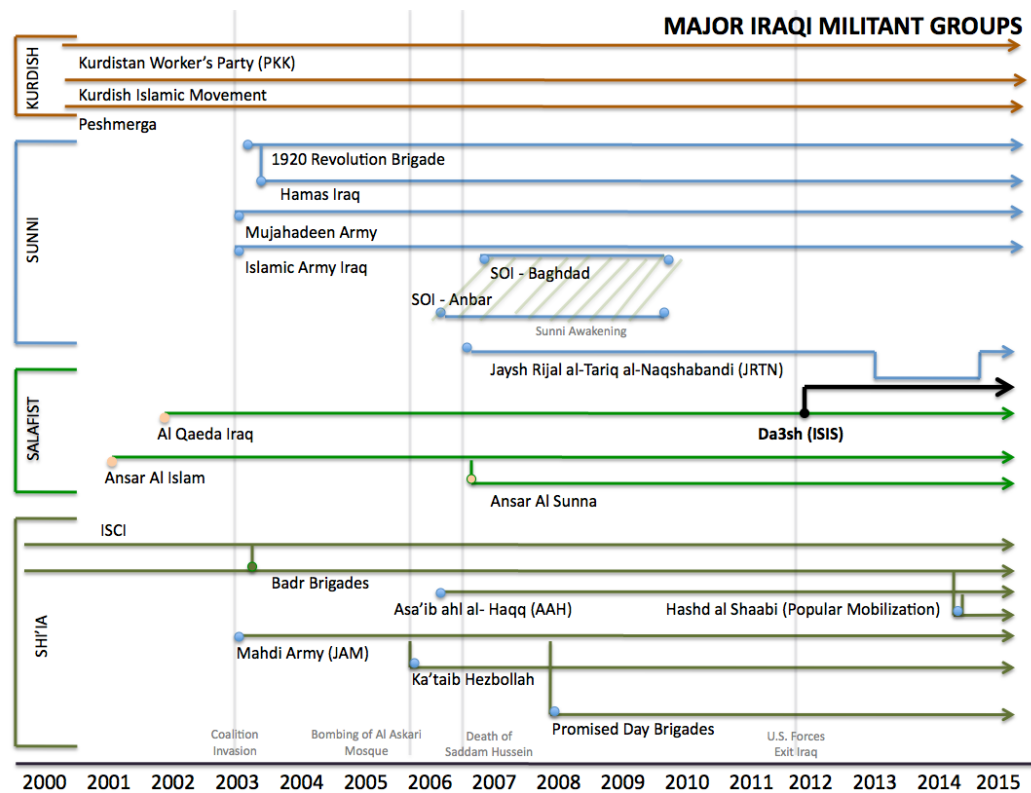


Fig. 2.1 Major Iraqi Militant Groups 2000 – 2015. Data compiled from a variety of sources, see: Stanford University, *Mapping Militant Organizations: Iraq*, available from: <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/> and Azeem Ibrahim. *The Resurgence of Al Qaeda in Syria and Iraq*, Strategic Studies Institute: U.S. Army War College Press, 2014. [Figure is the author's own].

The story of the recent coalition occupation and reconstruction of Iraq is also the story of separate occupations. The headquarters for the duration of the coalition

involvement was maintained at Victory Base Complex, the largest military installation in Baghdad as well as the International Zone (IZ) in central Baghdad. Victory Base housed Multi-National Corps Iraq (MNC-I), responsible for maneuver (warfighting) units, whereas the IZ compounds headquartered Multinational Force-Iraq (MNF-I), which served as the coalition headquarters.

Initially, MNC-I divided Iraq into multiple sectors, each with their own division command. In the west, U.S. Marines controlled Anbar province under Multinational Division-West (MND-W). Polish Armed Forces occupied MND-Center South, which consisted of parts of Al-Najaf, Wasit, Babil, and Al-Qadasiyah provinces. The Koreans occupied sections of Erbil, Kirkuk, and Ninewa, organized as Multi-National Division Northeast (MND-NE). The U.S. Army controlled the Kurdish regions in the north of the country under MND-North and MND-North-Center, and eventually assumed control of the center of the country from Polish and Korean forces under a reorganized MND-North, MND-Baghdad, and MND-Center in 2008. British forces controlled the southern provinces of Al Muthanna, Basra, Dhi Qar, and Maysan under MND-South-East until August 2009, when it was reorganized and integrated into MND-Center as MND-South. Throughout the duration of the war effort, each division reported to MNC-I at Victory Base Complex (VBC) in Baghdad.

Each major area—Anbar province in the west, Kurdistan in the north, the south of the country, and Baghdad in the center—was characterized by distinctly separate environmental and socio-political factors. Likewise, each division managed the occupation and reconstruction in a different manner. During the insurgency that

manifested after coalition forces occupied the country, political power, alignments and alliances varied widely by sector.

### **Sunni Realignment**

In 2006, to counter the massive resistance movement from Iraqis took place in the years following the U.S and coalition invasion, a “surge” of U.S. forces were deployed to the region. Concurrent to the surge of U.S. forces, Sunni tribesmen in the U.S. Marine-controlled western Anbar province of Iraq experienced an “awakening” movement, which led the tribesmen to side with U.S. and coalition forces. These newly dubbed, “Sons of Iraq” (SOI) were financed by the U.S. forces and organized to fight Al Qaeda. The combination of the surge in forces, doctrinal changes, and the Sunni Awakening led to a decrease in violence and a strategic pause which enabled U.S. policy makers to negotiate (albeit not actually agree to) a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with the Iraqi government and develop a plan for complete withdrawal of U.S. forces.<sup>4</sup>

In Anbar province, Sheik Abdul Sattar Abu Risha is credited as the founder of the Anbar *Sahwa* or “Awakening” movement. Abu Risha was a prominent sheikh in the al-Dulaymi tribe, a large and powerful Sunni tribe in western Iraq. For most of his life, he lived as an opportunist, smuggling oil and conducting highway robberies. In 2006 he approached U.S. forces in Anbar province to build an alliance to fight AQI. He was the first tribal leader to encourage his followers to join the local police forces in Anbar

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Ricks, *The Gamble: General Petraeus and the American Adventure in Iraq*. (New York: Penguin, 2008).

Province to fight against the insurgency. Later, U.S. forces discovered the killing of his three brothers and his father by AQI had motivated him to align against the insurgency. As his movement grew, he founded the Anbar Salvation Council, which included dozens of Sunni tribal leaders from his region. The “collaborative pattern quickly spread through the province” and thousands of young men joined the movement.<sup>5</sup>

The Awakening movement also spread to Iraq’s other Sunni-dominated provinces. By 2008, the SOI had grown to a force of over 100,000.<sup>6</sup> Many of the SOI members were former Iraqi officers and soldiers under Saddam Hussein, and were familiar with formal military doctrine as well as nonconventional tactics. The SOI members were paid approximately \$300 per month for providing security services, and many were integrated into the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and the Iraqi Police Forces (IP). The Anbar Awakening was particularly successful because the SOI knew exactly where the AQI fighters lived. Their knowledge of the local population, insurgent strongholds, and access to reliable intelligence, facilitated the efficiency and success of the movement.

The Anbar Awakening in MND-W became a model for “exploiting the rift between insurgent groups and the population.”<sup>7</sup> One of the first proponents of the awakening movement in Baghdad, Sa’ad Al-Obaidi Ghafoori (*aka* Abu Abed), was a former Iraqi intelligence officer. At that time Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) was controlling the

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<sup>5</sup> Mark Wilbanks and Efraim Karsh, “How the Sons of Iraq Stabilized Iraq” *Middle East Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (2010), par. 15 <http://www.meforum.org/2788/sons-of-iraq> (accessed 15 May 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett. *Iraq Since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship* (New York : I. B. Taurus, 2003), 2.

<sup>7</sup> Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, “Sons of Iraq Program: Results are Uncertain and Financials Controls Were Weak.” (2011), [www.sigir.mil/files/audits/11-010.pdf](http://www.sigir.mil/files/audits/11-010.pdf) (accessed 9 April 2015).



population in the Al-Amiriyah area of Baghdad through kidnapping, torture, and murder. His own brothers were tortured and beheaded by AQI militants. Abu Abed was encouraged by the success of Anbar Awakening, and in May 2007 he brought the movement to the al-Amiriyah area in Baghdad. Over the course of the next few months, Abu Abed worked with the U.S. military to gain control over the region. Three months after the initial collaboration, the U.S. military signed a security contract with 300 of Abu Abed's militiamen to help fight Al Qaeda.<sup>8</sup> The militiamen, also known as Forsan Al Rafidain, (or knights of the two rivers), provided safety and security to one of the most dangerous sectors in Baghdad.

### **Shi'ia Resistance**

After the U.S. and coalition invasion, the Shi'ia political factions were split with regard to their support for U.S. political objectives. The political blocs with institutional longevity, like the Dawa party and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), generally worked with the Americans and coalition partners. Populist Shi'ia groups, like Jaysh al Mahdi (JAM) who supported the clerical teachings of Moqtada al Sadr, put up a resistance front to U.S. and coalition efforts as well as the Shi'ia-led government in Baghdad.

From 2003 to 2009, British forces controlled the southernmost, predominantly Shi'ia provinces Iraq. Iraq's only deep-water port at Umm Qasr served as a port of entry for arms destined for Iranian-backed Shi'ia militiamen like JAM. The southern cities of

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<sup>8</sup> Dale Kuehl, "Galula and Ameriya" *Military Review* (March/April 2009), 74.

Amarah in Maysan province and Nasiriyah in Dhi Qar were also primary sources of insurgent arms trafficking.<sup>9</sup> By late 2007, “the British position in Basra had eroded”<sup>10</sup> and in the spring of 2008 Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki developed a military plan of attack to take control of Basra from the Shi’ia religious extremists. Unfortunately, the offensive was unsuccessful, and Maliki’s government in Baghdad experienced increasing pressure from Tehran and Sadr loyalists for cracking down on Shi’ia militias.<sup>11</sup>

### **Kurdistan Regional Government**

In the north, the Kurdish provinces initially saw very little fighting or resistance to the U.S. and coalition forces. Kurdish *peshmerga* actually fought alongside coalition forces during the Iraq war, and the Kurdish region of Iraq was confirmed as an autonomous entity within Iraq in 2005. By 2006, in Iraq’s eastern province of Diyala the dynamic had shifted. Diyala became a bastion for numerous AQI strongholds, most notably in the city of Baqubah. In 2007, former Ba’ath party members in Baqubah aligned with U.S. forces and provided intelligence on AQI strongholds in the city.<sup>12</sup> By 2007, AQI was slowly being pushed into northern Iraq. The oil-rich and ethnically diverse city of Kirkuk remained under dispute and for a period AQI cells were able to regroup in Mosul. In 2008 and 2009, coalition forces again worked with Kurdish tribal leaders in the area to clear sectors and find weapons caches. By the time U.S. forces

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<sup>9</sup> Kimberly Kagan, *The Surge: A Military History*. (New York: Encounter Books, 2009), 180.

<sup>10</sup> Anthony Cordesman, “Iraq Force Development” *Center for Strategic and International Studies* (2006), <http://www.iraqsolidaridad.org/2006/docs/iraqi-forces.pdf> (accessed 13 April 2015).

<sup>11</sup> Ricks, *The Gamble*, 282.

<sup>12</sup> Kagan, *The Surge*, 118.

departed Iraq in 2011, the Kurds were successfully leveraging their amity with the Americans and pushing for more economic expansion and development, as well as more political autonomy.

### **Conclusion**

The Sunni realignment demonstrates that the impetus to “change sides” often happens on a personal level before it grows into an ideological movement. Some have argued that the realignment of the Sunni factions in Iraq was the catalyst that gave the U.S. “surge” its momentum.<sup>13</sup> This finding is difficult to measure mainly due to the fact the reason political factions choose to realign during military intervention and civil wars is an understudied concept. There are, though, many debates about this issue. One of the primary issues when studying the motivations of individuals is that the reasons people cite as their motive may be different than their actual motive.<sup>14</sup> Both the Sunni Awakening in Anbar province and the Sons of Iraq movement in Baghdad demonstrate that some individuals realign because of betrayal and opportunities for advancement. They also show that individual motives can have macro-level social consequences.

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<sup>13</sup> Stephen Biddle, Jeffrey A. Friedman and Jacob Shapiro, “Testing the Surge: Why Did Violence Decline in Iraq in 2007?” *International Security* 37, no.1 (2012), 7-40.

<sup>14</sup> For a good synopsis of motives in international relations see: Richard Ned Lebow, *Why Nations Fight: Past and Future Motives of War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

### CHAPTER 3. LITERATURE REVIEW & HISTORICAL CONTEXT

*“The people of England have been led in Mesopotamia into a trap from which it will be hard to escape with dignity and honor.”*

T.E. Lawrence, 1920<sup>15</sup>

There are several competing beliefs regarding how political factions at the sub-state level choose to align and realign. The literature on this topic can be divided into four major categories: historical literature on the ethno-sectarian violence in Iraq, international relations literature on alliances and coalitions, sociological literature on the theories of motivation, and complexity theories on self-organizing social systems.

#### **History of Ethno-Sectarian Violence in Iraq**

There is an abundance of literature on the history of ethno-sectarian violence and sociopolitical divides in Iraq.<sup>16</sup> After the fall of the Ottoman Empire and from its inception as a nation-state in the 1920's, Iraq has remained an amalgamation of hostile ethnic, national and religious entities forced together by the British after World War I. Socially, Iraq is divided into three major ethnic groups; each is based in different areas

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<sup>15</sup> T.E. Lawrence, quoted in *The Sunday Times* of 2 August 1920, in Paul Knight, *The British Army in Mesopotamia, 1914 – 1918* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2013), 185.

<sup>16</sup> See: Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East: A Brief History of the Last 2,000 Years*, (New York, NY: Scribner, 1995); Yitzhak , Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Ofra Bengio, *Saddam's Word: Political Discourse in Iraq* (New York: Oxnard, 1998).

within the country. Sunnis dominate areas in the center and the west of the nation and make up approximately 20% of population. The Shi'ia people reside primarily in the south and account for nearly 60% of the Iraqi people. The historically oppressed Kurdish minority lives in the north and accounts for approximately 20% of the population.

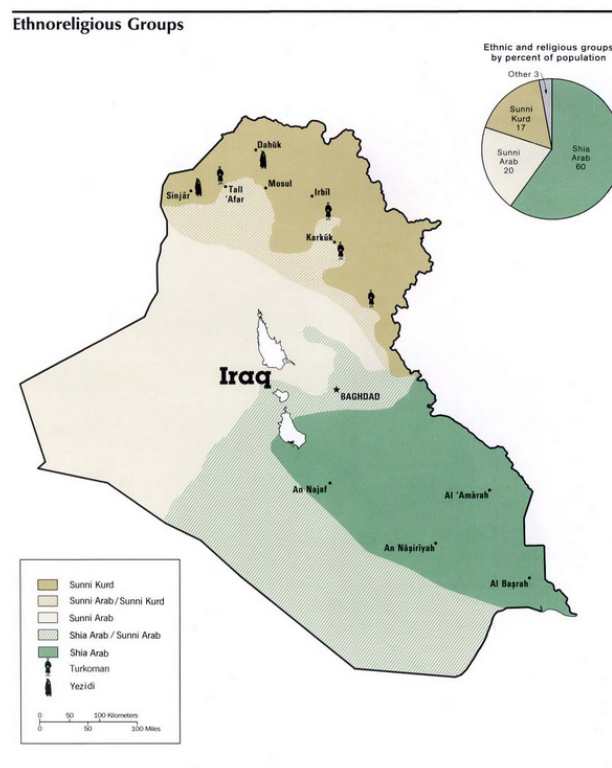


Fig. 3.1. Iraqi ethnoreligious groups; Iraq is divided into three primary ethnoreligious factions: Sunni Arab in the west, Sunni Kurd in the north, and Shi'ia Arab in the south. Source: University of Texas Perry Castaneda Library Map Collection [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/iraq\\_ethnoreligious\\_1992.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/iraq_ethnoreligious_1992.jpg) From Iraq: Ethnoreligious Groups [map] CIA, 1992. Reprinted, by permission, from University of Texas Libraries.

From an economic standpoint, Iraq faces many obstacles that serve to divide the country. Like many Middle Eastern countries, Iraq's public sector accounts for a significant portion of the economy.<sup>17</sup> During the rule of Saddam Hussein, Iraq had a highly centralized, command economy, controlled by the state. The nation still relies on oil revenue, a major dividing factor amongst the three major ethnic factions, to sustain its economy.

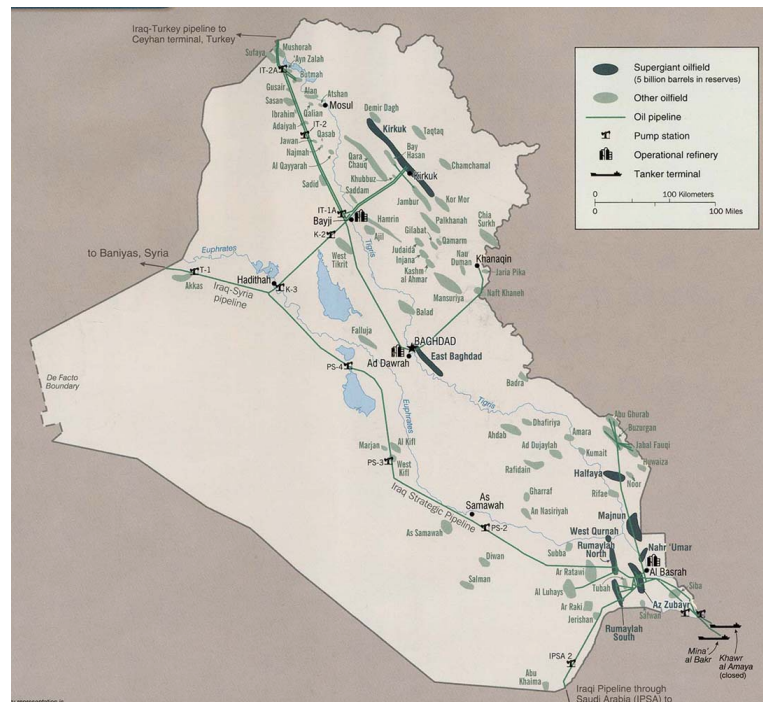


Fig. 3.2 Iraqi Oil Regions. Source: University of Texas, Perry Castaneda Library Map Collection, [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/iraq\\_oil\\_2003.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/iraq_oil_2003.jpg); Iraq- Oil Infrastructure, CIA (PCL Map Collection), January 2003. Reprinted, by permission from the University of Texas Libraries.

<sup>17</sup> Eva Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East," *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (2004), 139.

When the Ba'ath party lost power, the Sunni minority was unable to maintain primary control over the oil producing regions in the northern and the eastern parts of the country. The division of oil revenue is a source of major contention between the once powerful Sunni minority, the Kurdish-controlled oil rich northern areas, and the Shi'ia dominated parliament. During the initial occupation phases of the Iraq war, the U.S. and coalition forces adhered to the "big bang"<sup>18</sup> approach for instituting neoliberal economic reforms, and by using this method the coalition overlooked many unique challenges facing Iraq at the time: a post-authoritarian government, a weak middle class, residually socialist institutions, and the forces of Islamic fundamentalism. Post-war reconstruction and democratic institution building were driven by modern Iraqi political realities.

Most historians agree that in order for democracy to succeed, Iraq must maintain political institutions that represent all Iraqis fairly and equally. After the 2003 U.S.-led invasion, Iraq operated as an occupied government under the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). During this period, U.S. and coalition officials worked with Iraqis in developing a new political system, which better represented minority factions, like the Kurds, Turkmen, and Christians. Iraq's Constitution, approved in 2005, established a parliamentary democracy consisting of three branches: judicial, executive, and legislative. The judicial branch is a consolidated federal judiciary based on European civil and Islamic religious law. The executive branch consists of a chief-of-state

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<sup>18</sup> The 'big bang' approach to economic reform suggests market-oriented reforms should be implemented before entrenched politicians can block them. See: Iyanatul Islam, "Neoliberalism and post-Saddam Iraq: A global perspective," in *Beyond the Iraq War: Promises, Pitfalls and Perils of External Interventionism*, ed. Michael Heazle and Iyanatul Islam (Northampton, MA: Elgar Publishing, 2006), 156.

(President), a head-of-government (Prime Minister), and a Council of Ministers. The legislative branch consists of a unicameral council of representatives, of which the majority faction selects the Prime Minister.

The major structural obstacle impeding Iraq's political development is the historical ethnic and sectarian divisions amongst the Arab Shi'ia in the south, the Kurdish populations in the north, and the Sunni Arab populations in the center and west. Because the ethnic imbalance has a propensity to ignite sectarian civil war, coalition forces urged the Iraqis to develop a type of proportional representation. In theory, the ethnic divisions could have served as a check against one another's power. Instead, the fractious decision-making and majority-representation created more alienation and resentment amongst the disparate parties.

### **Alignment and Alliance Defined**

Alignments and alliances are strategies used by organizations to gain a mutual benefit, or to maximize utility. In the realm of political science and the study of international relations, the standard definition for 'alliance' comes from Bruce Russett, who described an alliance as, "a formal agreement among a limited number of countries concerning the conditions under which they will or will not employ military force."<sup>19</sup> The challenge with this definition is that it does not take into account alliances that take place within a country, or between factions that are in a state of civil war or civil insurrection.

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<sup>19</sup> Bruce Russett, "An Empirical Typology of International Military Alliances," *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 15, no. 2 (1971), 262-89.



Nor does it take into account alliances that take place between countries assisting factions within a particular country.<sup>20</sup> For the purposes of this study, the term ‘alliance’ will not be used in the traditional sense, but rather as a way to describe a formal security arrangement between previously competing political/military factions. Likewise, an alignment, for the purposes of this study, is used in the broadest sense to refer to a formal or informal relationship between two armed political or military factions, for the purposes of mutual security cooperation and mutual policy coordination on security issues.<sup>21</sup>

## **Structural Arguments**

### *State-Level of Analysis Arguments*

Much of the literature on why groups align or realign comes from the realist and neorealist school of thought in International Relations. There are four major theoretical debates at the foundation of how and why alliances form in the international system of state actors. The first can be found in the balance of power theorists like Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz and, more recently, John Mearsheimer.<sup>22</sup> Balance of power

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<sup>20</sup> See also: Ken Booth, 'Alliances', in John Baylis et al. (eds), *Contemporary Strategy I* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1987), 258; Glenn Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 2; Stephen Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of Power" in M. E. Brown, S. M. Lynn-Jones and S. E. Miller (eds), *The Perils of Anarchy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 208-48; George Liska, *Nations in Alliance : The Limits of Independence* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1962), 26; Thomas S. Wilkins, "Alignment not 'alliance'- the shifting paradigm of international security cooperation: toward a conceptual taxonomy of alignment," *Review of International Studies* 38, no.1 (2012), 53 – 76.

<sup>21</sup> See: William. L. Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments, 1871 – 1890* (New York: Vintage, 1950); Michael N. Barnett and Jack S. Levy, "Domestic sources of alliances and alignments: the case of Egypt, 1962-73," *International Organization*, 45, no. 3 (1991), 370.

<sup>22</sup> See: Morgenthau, Hans J., and Kenneth W. Thompson. *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993; Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979). John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001).

theory is one of the basic pillars of the realist theory of international relations. Realists argue states balance against the rising power since it creates a vital problem for their national security. Since states are living in an anarchical self-help world, they should act in a way as to balance against rising state actors.

The second major theoretical debate behind alliance formation takes us one step beyond the realist balance of power doctrine. This camp is often referred to as “neorealist.” The neorealist literature suggests that the distribution of power in the international system provides the most convincing theoretical explanation for conflict.<sup>23</sup> The leader of this school of thought is Stephen Walt. In his seminal work, *The Origins of Alliances*, Walt challenges the realist balance of power theory and questions whether states will choose to balance or bandwagon against threats. He also examines how states choose alliance partners. After a close examination alliance structures in the Middle East, Walt argues that a “balance of threat” thesis provides a better grasp on alliance formation than variables of ideology, foreign aid, and political penetration. Furthermore, Walt shows that factors such as: geographic proximity, offensive capabilities, and perceived intentions can be just as important elements in alliance politics. Walt also claims that aggregate power (including population, individual and military capabilities, technical prowess, geographic proximity, offensive power, and aggregate intentions) all affect the

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<sup>23</sup> Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979).

level of threat. Walt posits that balancing is more common than bandwagoning, but weak states are more likely to bandwagon against rising powers.<sup>24</sup>

Randall Schweller argues that balancing and bandwagoning are not dichotomous activities because the motivation for bandwagoning and the motivation for balancing is quite different. He shows that bandwagoning is associated with change and balancing with maintaining the status quo. He argues that status quo states have self-preservation in mind; therefore their behavior will tend to be balancing.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, revisionist states have a desire to change the status quo, therefore may bandwagon, or accept forms of aggression. John Mearsheimer asks whether states systematically engage in aggression as their relative power increases, and what determines whether great powers balance as opposed to bandwagoning, buck-passing, or appeasing. Mearsheimer argues on the side of offensive realism, in that he suggests that in a world of uncertainty and anarchy, leaders are likely to seek more power and enhance prospects for survival.<sup>26</sup>

The third major theoretical approach has its roots in economics. Mancur Olson's work, *The Logic of Collective Action*, is an important underpinning in the academic field of social movement theory, revolutions, and cases of collective state actions.<sup>27</sup> In the same camp, Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye provide the foundation of neoliberal

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<sup>24</sup> See: Walt, Stephen M., *The Origins of Alliances*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1987; Walt, Stephen M., 'Why Alliances Endure or Collapse', *Survival* 39:1 (Spring 1997): 156–79.

<sup>25</sup> Randall Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In." *International Security* 19, no.1 (1994), 42 – 107.

<sup>26</sup> John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001).

<sup>27</sup> Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965).

institutionalism.<sup>28</sup> Like the realists, neoliberal institutionalism focuses on the state as the central unit of analysis. Neoliberals do not deny the anarchic nature of the international system, but instead, they focus on game theory in the explaining state behavior. Game theorists seek to show, through the employment of games, how rational actors behave under a set of circumstances.

The fourth major theoretical approach can be attributed to Glenn Snyder in his work *Alliance Formation*. Snyder synthesizes the neorealist, neoliberal, and historical analysis into a general, multi-faceted theory of alliance formation. Snyder looks at several factors: costs, benefits, systemic forces, non-systemic incentives, conflicting interests, and the effects of bargaining. Snyder amalgamates these factors into a generalizable model alliance formation.<sup>29</sup>

#### *Sub-State (Sub-National) Level of Analysis Arguments*

There are two areas of scholarly literature that address how groups form and coalesce at the level beneath the state (sub-state). The first area is an extension of the neorealist literature; it carries the same assumptions as the neorealist literature with the exception of the level of analysis. Instead of the level of analysis being at the state level, these authors look at inside the state.<sup>30</sup> The second area that addresses how groups form

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<sup>28</sup> See: Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in Political Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984) and Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

<sup>29</sup> See: Snyder, Glenn H. "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics." *World Politics* 36 no.4 (July 1984): 461-95; Snyder, Glenn H. "Mearsheimer's World-Offensive Realism and the Struggle for Security." *International Security* 27 no.1 (Summer 2002): 149-173.

<sup>30</sup> See: Barry Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," *Survival* 35, no.1 (1993), 27-47; Richard M. Wilcox, "The Politics of Transitional Anarchy: Coalitions in the Yugoslav Civil Wars 1941 -45 and 1991 – 95," MIT Dissertation. 2000; Fotini Christia, *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars* (Cambridge:

at the sub-state level comes from the comparative politics literature on coalition formation.<sup>31</sup>

### *Neorealist Departures*

Posen applies fundamentals of the realist tradition of international relations theory to conditions at the sub-state level in his work on the security dilemma and ethnic conflict.<sup>32</sup> He addresses how the competition for power and security unfolds in states where the sovereign is no longer in control. Posen concludes that realist international relations theories can help explain and predict the “intensity of military conflict among groups emerging from the wreckage of empires.”<sup>33</sup> He also shows that the security dilemmas in these situations make the risk of conflict quite high. Wilcox argues that coalitions between warring factions in the Yugoslav civil wars, which had three distinct political factions, are best explained through balance of power theory.<sup>34</sup> Like Wilcox, Christia finds that at the sub-state level of analysis, alliances manifest based on the distribution of relative power, not identity factors such as race, language, or religion.<sup>35</sup>

### *Comparative Political Theory on Coalitions*

The second area below the state level of analysis comes from the comparative politics literature on coalition formation. Much of the work in the field assesses political coalitions using bargaining theory. This field developed around a theory of political

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Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>31</sup> William Riker, *The Theory of Political Coalitions* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1962).

<sup>32</sup> Posen, “The Security Dilemma.”

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>34</sup> Wilcox, “The Politics of Transitional Anarchy.”

<sup>35</sup> Christia, *Alliance Formation*.

coalitions: the postulation that politicians are inclined to form coalitions that are just large enough to win, but not any larger.<sup>36</sup> This gives them the maximum payoff (winning an election) for the minimum price (attracting votes), or a *minimum winning coalition*. Other literature in this field assesses coalitions in terms of the circumstances and environment under which they form<sup>37</sup> or combinations of both.<sup>38</sup>

The 19<sup>th</sup> century military philosopher Carl von Clausewitz famously described war as “a continuation of politics by other means.” Despite the fact that politics and war are intertwined, the authors of the comparative political theory on coalitions generally do not apply their theories to political factions that were in a state of armed conflict, however theories on minimum winning coalitions yield some interesting hypotheses, which pertain to alliance formation at the sub-state level when armed conflict is taking place.

### Two-Level Games

Robert Putnam deviates from the state-centric literature in his theory of “two-level games” whereby he shows how domestic politics and international relations are intertwined.<sup>39</sup> He argues that when domestic decisions need to be made, policy makers

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<sup>36</sup> William Riker, *The Theory of Political Coalitions*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).

<sup>37</sup> See: Robert Axelrod, *Conflict of Interest*, (Chicago: Markham, 1970); Abram de Swaan, *Coalition Theories and Cabinet Formation: A Study of Formal Theories of Coalition Formation Applied to Nine European Parliaments After 1918* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1973); Jose Antonio Cheibub, Adam Przeworski and Sebastian Saiegh, “Government Coalitions and Legislative Success under Parliamentarism and Presidentialism,” *British Journal of Political Science* 34, (2004), 565 -587; their relative bargaining power Kaare Strom, Ian Budge and Michael Laver, “Constraints on Cabinet Formation in Parliamentary Democracies,” *American Journal of Political Science* 38 (1994), 303-335.

<sup>38</sup> David Austen-Smith and Jeffrey Banks, Elections, Coalitions and Legislative Outcomes,” *The American Political Science Review* 82, no. 2 (1988), 405 – 422.

<sup>39</sup> Robert Putnam, “Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of two-level games,” *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (1988), 427 – 460.

will take the concerns of domestic players into account and work to build coalitions. On the international level, however, policy-makers simply look for decisions that will benefit their state.

The notion of two-level games is important when discussing the U.S. intervention in Iraq. From the standpoint of the U.S. policy maker, there were several important international-level foreign policy decisions being made that impacted the outcome of the war, stabilization, and reconstruction efforts. Those decisions took into account broad issues dealing with the region as a whole, balance of power considerations, as well as economic and diplomatic ties with regional partners. Concurrently, military commanders on the ground had to make tactical military decisions on a daily basis. Ideally, those tactical decisions would have aligned with changing U.S. foreign policy objectives. Empirical evidence suggests that commanders on the ground were likely driven by the politics of more existential threats, like coalition building between local Iraqi counterparts, not state-level concerns.<sup>40</sup>

From the standpoint of the Iraqis, who have a multitude of political factions, there were certainly international-level considerations as well as domestic level win-sets that did not coincide. Furthermore, the literature also suggests that in order for there to be an international agreement between both the U.S. and Iraq, the “win-sets” of both countries must overlap. In 2009, these win-sets overlapped to the point where a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) was negotiated, but it is possible that domestic-level considerations

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<sup>40</sup> Dale Kuehl, interview by author, 2 May 2014.

were ignored when those decisions were being made. Furthermore, as time progressed, these win-sets changed, as did domestic and international considerations on each side.

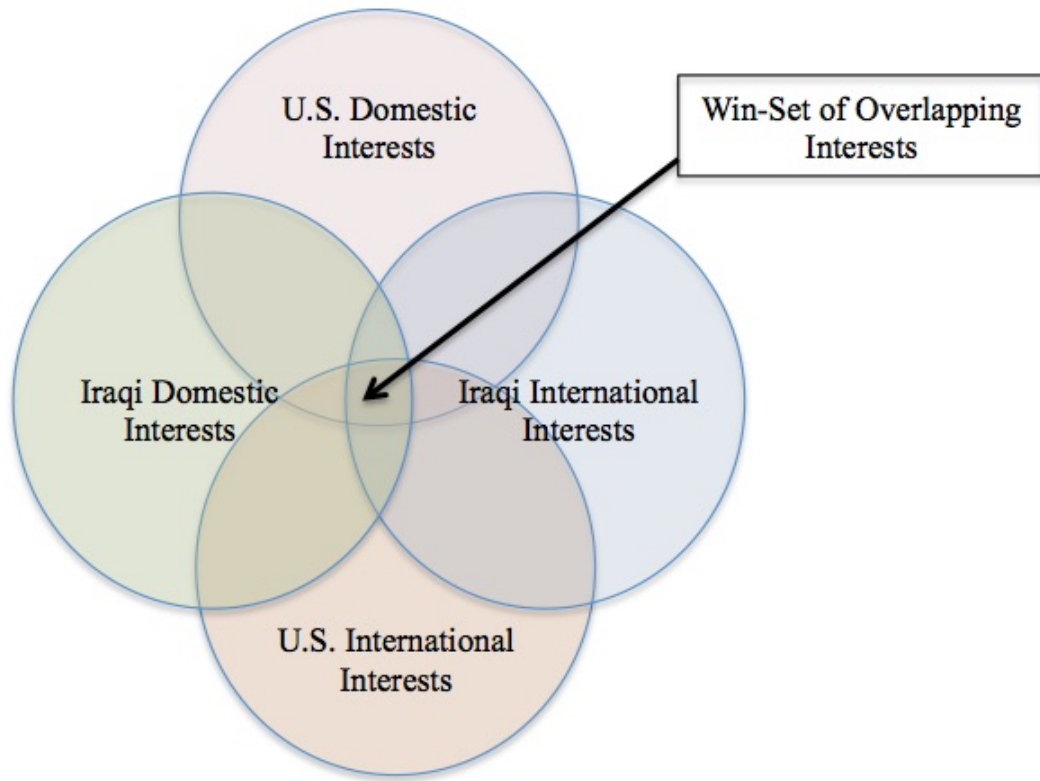


Fig. 3.3 Conceptualization of overlapping interests to produce win-set. [Figure is the author's own].

### **Agent-based Arguments**

Agent-based arguments for how groups coalesce look at individual actions, versus environmental or structural conditions. These arguments are based on the idea that people make choices based on what others do, and in making those choices people affect



others. The micro motives of individuals in war are especially important when assessing the actions on non-state actors, however this sort of analysis is cumbersome and rarely performed in the academic literature. Paul Staniland looks at the causes of insurgent cohesion and fragmentation in his dissertation on insurgent groups. His analysis is at the micro-level; looking at individual actors within armed groups, their rivals, and motivations.<sup>41</sup> Likewise, in a 2011 study by RAND, 36 cases of reintegration in Afghanistan were studied and 71% of the cases cited “grievance” as a key factor for deciding to switch sides.<sup>42</sup>

### *Identity*

Another way of looking at how groups align is to look at identity considerations, such as religion, race, or ethnicity, similar to the way many historians describe the demography of Iraq. Posner assesses this theory when explaining the institutions and ethnic politics in Africa.<sup>43</sup> He looked at groups of ethnically homogenous people on either side of two artificially construed colonial boundaries and shows that ethnicity helped explain differences in political alignment, not national identity. This is a common argument when looking at politics in Iraq; it is naturally assumed that factions will align based on religious or ethnic considerations, like Sunnis aligning with other Sunnis or Kurds aligning with other Kurds. To the contrary, Posner’s work does not predict what will happen when there is a fracture within religious and ethnic groups or when there are

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<sup>41</sup> Paul Staniland, “Explaining Cohesion, Fragmentation, and Control in Insurgent Groups,” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2010).

<sup>42</sup> Seth Jones, “Reintegrating Afghan Insurgents,” (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2011), [http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional\\_papers/OP327](http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/OP327) (accessed 8 April 2015).

<sup>43</sup> Daniel Posner, *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004).

multiple competing groups vying to align for power.

## **Combining Structure and Agency**

### *Complexity Theory and Self-Organizing Systems*

Rooted in the study of non-linear dynamics, complexity theory in the social sciences looks at how micro-systems and events can cause complex behaviors at the macro-level. Complexity theories take into account both agency and structure as well as a multitude of variables contributing to initial conditions, many of which do not act in a linear fashion. The theorists postulate that these layers of interactions produce self-reinforcing feedback loops, many of which depend on strong prior conditions.

Complexity theory is characterized by nine basic concepts: survivability, co-evolution, emergence, agent-based systems, self-organization, self-organized criticality, punctuated equilibrium, and fitness landscapes.<sup>44</sup>

### *Micromotives and Macrobbehavior*

Schelling's 1978 work *Micromotives and Macrobbehaviors* assesses the aggregation of individual micro-motives as an expression of societal macro-behavior.<sup>45</sup>

One of the key models that Schelling uses is in the notion of "critical mass," which is the

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<sup>44</sup> See: Roger Lewin, *Complexity: Live at the Edge of Chaos* (New York: MacMillan, 1992); Stuart Kauffman, *The Origins of Order: Self Organization and Selection in Evolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Stuart Kauffman, *Investigations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Robert Axelrod, *The Complexity of Cooperation: Agent-Based Models of Competition and Cooperation*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Robert Axelrod and Michael Cohen, *Harnessing Complexity: Organizational Implications of a Scientific Frontier* (New York: The Free Press, 1999); Diana Richards, *Political Complexity: Nonlinear Models of Politics* ed. (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

<sup>45</sup> Thomas Schelling, *Micromotives and Macrobbehavior* (New York: Norton, 1978).

point where a sufficient number of individuals adopt a change in a social system so that change becomes self-sustaining. Schelling also introduces the concept of feedback loops applied to social behavior.

The complexity literature in the social sciences is a departure from neorealism on three major fronts. First, non-state actors are important when looking at the evolution of the international system.<sup>46</sup> Complexity models are important in the analysis of sub-state alignments and alliances because there is a propensity for multiple layers of belligerents and actors.<sup>47</sup> Second, equilibrium is not as meaningful a concept. Whereas in the realist literature, the concepts of balancing and bandwagoning to restore the balance of power are key strategies for state survival; the literature on complexity theories looks at evolutions, dynamic systems, and patterns of change. Third, the complexity literature takes into account both agency (in terms of micro-motives) and structure (in terms of initial conditions). In terms of the perpetuation of complex behavior and the reinforcement of specific actions taken by militant groups, various scholars have introduced the concept of “violence markets” whereby actors are economically incentivized to continue fighting regardless of what the conflict is doing to the “state” at large.<sup>48</sup> The concept of a “violence market” combines both agent-based economic incentives with structurally-based broad ideological and political goals.

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<sup>46</sup> Robert Jervis, *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> See: Georg Elwert, “Intervention in markets of violence,” (2015) Institute for East European Studies, Berlin: [http://www.oei.fu-berlin.de/en/projekte/cscca/downloads/ge\\_pub\\_marketsofviolence.pdf](http://www.oei.fu-berlin.de/en/projekte/cscca/downloads/ge_pub_marketsofviolence.pdf) (accessed: 22 July 2015).

### *Weberian Sociology*

The German social scientist, Max Weber, stressed the importance of charismatic leadership in his analysis of power and legitimate authority.<sup>49</sup> While charisma itself is difficult to define, Weber notes that charismatic leadership is often found with Prophets, demagogues, war heroes, and popular political leaders. Charismatic leaders often lead social movements by performing heroic deeds through unconventional means. In the Middle East, charismatic leadership is often found in religious and political leaders.<sup>50</sup> Going back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, the Islamic Prophet Muhammad is said to have been a charismatic leader. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Middle East saw a succession of political leaders who were typically deemed to be a source of legitimate authority after a *coup d'état* or social revolution. Yasser Arafat, Gamel Abdul Nasser, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the Ayatollah Khomeni, and even Saddam Hussein are all viewed as charismatic leaders.

Samuel Huntington also emphasized the importance of charismatic leadership in the absence of traditional sources of legitimacy or where political institutions are very weak. Specifically, he notes, “[i]nstead of the party reflecting the needs of the state, the state becomes the creation of the party and the instrument of the party.”<sup>51</sup> Huntington defines institutionalization as “the process by which organizations and procedures

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<sup>49</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968).

<sup>50</sup> Weber, *Economy and Society*.

<sup>51</sup> Samuel Huntington. *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 91.

acquire value and stability.”<sup>52</sup> Huntington suggests political institutions are stable when they have “reoccurring patterns of behavior.”<sup>53</sup>

### **Literature Gap**

The complexity of the alignments and realignments that took place in Iraq post - 2003 at the sub-state level warrant additional scholarly research. While there is an abundance of literature on the history of the Iraq war, alliances at the international level, coalition politics, and micro-behavior (at the individual level), there is a gap in the literature on the variables affecting alignments and alliances in a state of civil war, civil insurrection, or where internal militant factions challenge state sovereignty. This research project draws upon the aforementioned literature to derive hypotheses on how alignments and alliances were made, and will use the Iraq war to do a within-case analysis to test those hypotheses.

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<sup>52</sup> Huntington, *Political Order*, 12.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

## **CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY**

This research project will employ comparative historical analysis (CHA) of instances of political realignment during the war in Iraq. This dissertation focuses on alliances and alignments within Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein. Most importantly it looks at the unique nature of the Sunni Arab realignment in Iraq and assesses it against theoretical frameworks that are used to explain other types of alignment and alliances. The CHA method was chosen in order to show the patterns of alliance building and use the method of process tracing to explain the development of this social phenomenon. Specifically, this dissertation seeks to show how theories apply in several cases as well as show a contrast of context by which theories on alliance formation can be developed. This study will use a historical explanation of alliances and alignment in Iraq after the fall of the Ba'ath party that relies on theoretical models to explain each step towards the historical outcome where the theories “are used in piecemeal fashion at each step of the path leading to the outcome.”<sup>54</sup>

### **Research Question(s) & Variables**

Q1. Why did competing politico-military factions in Iraq form alliances and align the

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<sup>54</sup> Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005, 147.

way that they did, and more specifically, why did the Sunni Arabs realign in such a rapid fashion?

Q2. What was the relationship between realignment and the occupying force's policies?

Q3. Is there a pattern to the alignment process or a general theory that can be derived from the way alliances and alignments took place in Iraq?

Dependent Variable: Alliance/Alignment formation

Independent Variable(s): Structural: Power distribution, momentum; Agent based: intrinsic motivation, ethnic and religious (identity) considerations, ideological considerations, charismatic leadership

Potential Intervening Variable: Institutional maturity

### **Case Selection**

In order to assess the dynamics of Iraq politics, the country is divided into three cases based on their distinctly separate environmental and socio-political factors. This dissertation employs Mill's empirical method of logic, whereby:

if an instance in which the phenomenon under investigation occurs, and an instance in which it does not occur, have every circumstance save one in common, that one occurring only in the former; the circumstance in which alone the two instances differ, is the effect or cause, or necessary part of the cause of the phenomenon.<sup>55</sup>

In this study, the phenomenon under investigation is why alliances and alignments occur. The question of why the Sunnis realigned (whereas neither the Shi'ia nor the

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<sup>55</sup> John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic, Volume I* (London: Harrison & Co., 1843), 455.

Kurds experienced such a rapid realignment) with an occupation forces needs to addressed. While Iraqis do not completely self-identify as one of these three factions, the country is roughly divided along three ethno-sectarian lines: Sunni Arab, Kurd, and Shi'ia.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, this study assesses the three major factions separately, in order to draw out the circumstances that made the Sunni alignment with the U.S. so unique.

CASE 1. Sunni Realignment - Sunni Arabs

CASE 2. Shi'ia Resistance - Shi'ia Arabs

CASE 3. Kurdish Partnership - Kurdish Iraqis

Each case is assessed in terms of the major political factions within and, year-by-year after the fall of Saddam Hussein, how those factions chose to align. Furthermore, this study will assess data on variables that affected the realignments and look for any new data that will shift that belief about the causal process. In order to do this, each case will be organized into a sequence of events and then those events will be linked given the interests of various groups and actors.<sup>57</sup>

## **Hypotheses**

The hypotheses on alliance building can be roughly divided into three main schools of thought: structural hypotheses, agent-based hypotheses, or a blend of the two. The structural hypotheses give less attention to the actor in the alliance process, but instead focus on the system. The abundance of international relations literature pertaining

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<sup>56</sup> The separatism between these three factions is clearly evident in how political and military factions are organized in the country.

<sup>57</sup> James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 47.



to the subject of alliances yields many structurally driven hypotheses, most notably from the neorealist discipline. The other set of hypotheses are derived from actions the actor undertakes in the alliance-building process, and these are typically derived from behavior science, which focuses on agency. The final set of hypotheses combine element of structure and agency in describing how alliances and alignments form.

*Structure: Neorealist Hypotheses*

The first is derived from the neorealist school of thought, which suggests that alliances form based on factors inherent in the “system” or structurally based considerations. The neorealist school of thought defines the system as the “international system of nation-states” in this case the system would be the amalgamation of factions and sub-state entities operating within Iraq.

Christia’s work on alliance formation in civil wars touches on the notion of political gains. She finds that power distribution is the driving force behind alliance formation.<sup>58</sup> This could hold true for military occupations as well; forces could realign based on a sense of changing power distribution and the advantages that come by aligning with the occupying force. From the neorealist school of thought, two major hypotheses are derived:

H1. Political factions facing a threat will align with others to oppose the factions posing the threat (balance).

H2. Political factions facing a threat will ally with the most threatening power (bandwagon).

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<sup>58</sup> Christia, *Alliance Formation*.

### *Structure: Comparative Politics – Coalition Hypotheses*

The second school of thought within the political science literature is derived from the comparative politics literature on coalitions. Riker's work on coalition suggests that political factions will realign to the point where they are just large enough to win. In the case of Iraq, this would mean political factions, tribes or other sub-state actors coalescing on an issue to the point where it gives them leverage on an issue then fracturing after the issue has been dealt with.

H3. Political momentum: Political factions will realign when doing so gives them a minimum winning coalition.

### *Agent-based Hypotheses*

The motivational and behavioral hypotheses considered here are taken at the individual level, or the agency-level. One hypothesis is that individuals will realign if they gain an economic advantage. This can also include money or economic gains from the sale of weapons or military support. In recent years, the United States has made policy decisions based on this theory. As an example, in a 2009 interview on Public Radio International, Senator Carl Levin spoke about the success of funds from the Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) that were used to pay Sunni insurgents in Iraq not to fight.<sup>59</sup> He advocated the position that it is not the responsibility for U.S. forces to surge in Afghanistan, but what is needed is for Afghans to take responsibility for their security. In October 2009, President Obama signed the 2010

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<sup>59</sup> Public International Radio, "Paying the Taliban to quit," *PRI's The World*, 29 October 2009, <http://www.theworld.org/2009/10/paying-the-taliban-to-quit/> (accessed 8 January 2015).

defense appropriations bill, which included a program to pay Taliban members to attract fighters to the side of the U.S. government. The measure, promoted by Senator Carl Levin, replicated the program used to neutralize the Sunni insurgency against Americans in Iraq a few years before. In 2010, the British Government, in conjunction with NATO and the Afghan government, developed a reintegration program in Afghanistan that paid the Taliban not to fight. The U.S. has also used foreign military sales and financing as an incentive for foreign militaries to align with U.S. objectives.

Another hypothesis within the motivational and behavioral field is that political factions will align based on identity considerations, where people will decide to align with others that are similar to them in terms of religion, ethnicity, or racial characteristics.<sup>60</sup> Likewise, individuals may be motivated to realign or ally with other factions based on ideological considerations. Or, individuals could be motivated to align with others based on shared grievances. In a 2011 study by RAND, 36 cases of reintegration in Afghanistan were studied and 71% of the cases cited “grievance” as a key factor for deciding to switch sides.<sup>61</sup> In the case of Iraq, factions often share identity, religion, ethnicity, or grievances against other armed factions.

#### Hypotheses:

H4. Economic: Political factions will align when monetary gains are assured.

H5. Identity: Factions will align based on racial, religious, or ethnic background.

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<sup>60</sup> See: Steven Hofmann, “Islam and Democracy – Micro-level indications of compatibility,” *Comparative Political Studies* 37 (2004), 652 – 676; Cindy Jebb, *Bridging the Gap: Ethnicity Legitimacy and State Alignment in the International System* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004); David Davis and Will Moore, “Ethnicity Matters: Transnational Ethnic Alliances and Foreign Policy Behavior,” *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (1997), 171 – 184.

<sup>61</sup> Seth Jones, “Reintegrating Afghan Insurgents.”

H6. Ideology: Political factions will align when they have a similar ideology.

H7. Grievance: Factions will align based on shared grievances (past and/or present)

*Combining Structure & Agency: Complexity Based Hypotheses*

This school of thought suggests that political factions will realign based on individual considerations that then develop into macro-level movements. These theories combine both agency (in terms of micro-behaviors) and structure (in terms of initial conditions). An important concept within the self-organization literature is the idea of “critical mass.” Theories of self-organization suggest that individual considerations aggregate to a point of critical mass in order to become macro-level movements. In the case of Iraq, there were individuals like Abu Abed and Sheikh Abu Risha who decided as individuals to align with the Americans, but the macro-level Awakening movement did not gain momentum until enough individuals had joined the Sons of Iraq. Both Abu Abed and Abu Risha were charismatic leaders, who propelled a wider social movement.

Hypotheses:

H8. Critical Mass: Political factions will align when a point of critical mass is achieved.

H9. Charisma: Political factions will align when a charismatic leader drives a social movement.

*Towards a New Theory for Alliance and Alignment Formation*

A new theory for alliance and alignment formation will also be proposed as part of this study. Given that the study of alliance and alignment between political factions operating beneath the state level of analysis, yet above the individual level of analysis is not completely understood, this study proposes a new hypothesis.

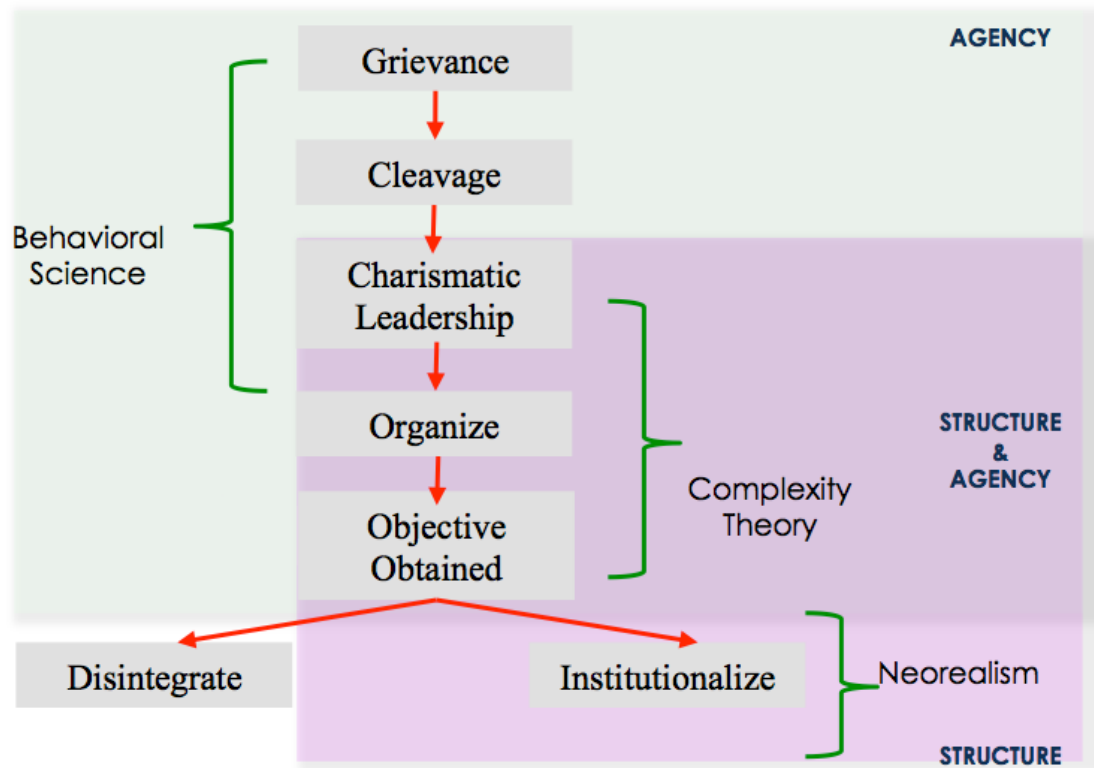


Fig. 4.1 Theoretical Causes of Alignment and Alliance Formation. In the formative stages, political factions typically behave in accordance with agent-based considerations. As the political groups mature, they typically follow a charismatic leader to the point of institutionalization. Once political groups mature to the point of institutionalization they are more likely to behave in accordance with structural theories from the neorealist literature. [Figure is the author's own].

This hypothesis suggests that alignment and alliance building is a process based on structural constraints only at the point of institutional maturity. When the political party or militant group is not institutionally mature, it will rely more upon charismatic leadership or agent-level motivations. Once the group has matured, it will behave more in accordance with the neorealist literature. This theory proposes at the point of

institutionalization it be predicted what alliances might occur, but only by looking at the leaders can it be predicted when those alliances will happen.

H10. Maturity: Political factions will typically align based on agent-based considerations at their foundation, but will progress towards structurally based, neorealist considerations as they mature.

TABLE 4.1

HYPOTHESIS TABLE

<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Proposition</b>	<b>Structure or Agency</b>	<b>Academic School</b>
Hypothesis 1	Political factions facing a threat will align with others to oppose the factions posing the threat (balance).	Structural	Neorealist
Hypothesis 2	Political factions facing a threat will ally with the most threatening power (bandwagon).	Structural	Neorealist
Hypothesis 3	Political momentum: Political factions will realign when doing so gives them a minimum winning coalition.	Structural	Comparative Politics
Hypothesis 4	Political factions will align when monetary gains/ military support is assured.	Agency	Behavioral Science
Hypothesis 5	Factions will align based on racial, religious, or ethnic background.	Agency	Behavioral Science
Hypothesis 6	Political factions will align when they have a similar ideology.	Agency	Behavioral Science
Hypothesis 7	Factions will align based on shared grievances (past and/or present).	Agency	Behavioral Science
Hypothesis 8	Political factions will align when a point of critical mass is achieved.	Structure & Agency	Complexity Theory

Hypothesis 9	Political factions will align when a charismatic leader drives a social movement.	Structure & Agency	Sociology
Hypothesis 10	Political factions will align using agent-based considerations at their founding, but will gravitate towards neorealist considerations as they mature.	Structure & Agency	Causal Mechanisms & Process Tracing

*Source:* [Table is the author's own]

### **Sources and Data**

The analysis presented in this dissertation draws upon several sources. First, a comprehensive history of Iraq's political dynamic after the fall of Saddam Hussein is developed using government documents, newspaper periodicals, first-person interviews, archival records, and autobiographical memoirs. Second, an analysis of Iraq's three parliamentary elections (2005, 2010, and 2014) is conducted looking at primary source data and secondary source analysis on the election outcomes. Finally, the information gathered on the political and military dynamics within Iraq and the election data is compared to the existing literature on alliance formation.

## CHAPTER 5. BACKGROUND ON IRAQI POLITICS

“Baghdad is determined to force the Mongols of our age to commit suicide at its gates.”

- Saddam Hussein, 2003<sup>62</sup>

Modern day Iraq is situated in the ancient region of Mesopotamia, along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. In times past, it was an important economic crossroad for the Chinese, Hindu, and Persian empires in the east, and to the Roman and Byzantine empires in the north and west. The advent of Islam, and subsequent unification of the tribes of Arabia created an expanding and increasingly powerful *ummah* or Islamic community. This community was ruled by the Abbasid caliphate, out of Baghdad, from 762AD until 1258AD. At its height, the caliphate extended from Northern Africa, to Europe and into Southwest Asia. The Abbasid caliphate was characterized by innovative scholarship, commerce, agriculture, and religious instruction.

The Abbasid era came to an abrupt end when Mongols from the east sacked the city of Baghdad in 1258AD. The subsequent end of the Abbasid caliphate and Islam’s “Golden Age” gave rise to an era of uncertainty and conflict in the region. The center of Muslim power relocated to Cairo, and for the next three centuries Baghdad was ruled by various Persian, Central Asian, and Mongolian conquerors.

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<sup>62</sup> Saddam Hussein quoted in *The Independent* 18 January 2003, in Susan Radcliffe, *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations by Subject* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 260.



## **Ottoman Iraq**

In 1534, Ottoman Turks conquered Baghdad from the Persians, gaining access to the Persian Gulf through the Shatt al Arab. The Ottomans controlled Mesopotamia for nearly four centuries, with the exception of a brief period in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Ottomans divided modern day Iraq into three *vilayets* (or provinces) based on religious and ethnic distinctions: Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra. The residents of Mosul were primarily Kurdish, non-Arabs with Assyrian Christian and Sunni religious beliefs. Baghdad was primarily Sunni Arab, but had a cosmopolitan mix, including sizable Jewish and Christian populations. The area around Basra was predominantly Shi'ia-Arab. Control over these provinces ensured access for trade passing from the Persian Empire in the east and Ottoman Anatolia in the north. The provinces also served as a buffer zone for Persian influence into Ottoman territories. The conquest of Baghdad enhanced the claims of the Ottoman Sultans to be the religious leaders of the Sunni Muslim world.

From an administrative standpoint, it was in the best interest of the Ottomans to keep the governments of provincial capitals weak because strong governments in outlying provinces could be a threat to their empire. The Ottomans appointed local governors and judges, and stationed Ottoman soldiers in key cities. Government officials in weak provincial capitals, like Baghdad, tended to give rural leaders in their *vilayet*

autonomy in decision-making. In Iraq, the rural tribesmen had the autonomy to implement the same tribal rules that they had for centuries.<sup>63</sup>



Fig 5.1 Ottoman Vilayets, circa 1910. Source: William Patten and J.E. Homas. New York: P.F. Collier and Son, 1909; *New Encyclopedic Atlas and Gazetteer of the World*. University of Alabama Map Library. Reprinted, with permission from the University of Alabama.

<sup>63</sup> Jwaideh Albertine, "Midhat Pasha and the Land System of Lower Iraq" in *St. Antony's Papers: Middle Eastern Affairs Number Three*. ed. Albert Hourani (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1963), 111.

In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottomans further strengthened the rural tribesmen by promising land titles in order to gain their allegiance and collect more taxes for the central government.<sup>64</sup> As a result, the tribal culture in Iraq remained very strong and an active political force.

### **Modern Iraq**

Iraq did not form as a modern nation state until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. During World War I, British forces from India deployed into Iraq via the southern port Basra, through the Shatt al Arab, to contain Ottoman troops, who were aligned with the Central Powers. After three years of fighting, in 1917 the British captured Baghdad, and from there they advanced northward, capturing the northern city of Mosul in November 1918. When the Ottomans surrendered in 1918, the British controlled the three major Mesopotamian provinces of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul. The British Empire established hegemony in the region.

Under the British Mandate of 1920, and with the approval of the newly formed League of Nations, the three very diverse Mesopotamian provinces became the state of Iraq. While the rulers of Iraq may have had *de facto* power, what truly endured were the tribal affiliations and religious centers of control. The British assigned land ownership in post-Ottoman Iraq to prominent tribal sheikhs and Baghdad elites, instead of local

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<sup>64</sup> Albertine, "Midhat Pasha and the Land System of Lower Iraq," 254.

cultivators.<sup>65</sup> This measure actually reinforced tribal authority, especially in rural areas. These social and political circumstances made Iraq the ideal environment for hierarchical, patriarchic governance. In 1921, the British crowned Faisal, the son of Hussein bin Ali, the Sharif of Mecca of the Hashemite familial clan, as Iraq's first king.

### **Ba'ath Party Politics**

In 1958, Iraqi Army Brigadier General Abd al-Karim Qasim overthrew Iraq's ruling monarchy in a military coup. Over the next several years, Iraq saw multiple coups and coup attempts by nationalists, communists, and socialists. By 1968, Iraq was ruled by the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party led by Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr. Despite the government turmoil, this period saw a vast rise in Iraqi gross national product and overall standard of living. By the late 1970's Iraq was demonstrating the capability to move beyond its peripheral status in the Middle East, and even demonstrated elements of regional hegemony. Oil revenues alone increased from \$476 million in 1968 to \$26 billion in 1980, and the economy was growing at a rate of 10% per year.<sup>66</sup> In the late 1970's and early 1980's the Iraqi government sought to diversify the economy using the proceeds from Iraq's oil wealth and state funds by creating a promising industrial sector. By the early 1980's Iraq boasted one of the most advanced economies in the Middle East. Although heavily dominated by the oil sector, it maintained a strong

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<sup>65</sup> David Pool, *From Elite to Class: The Transformation of Iraqi Political Leadership in the Integration of Modern Iraq* (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1979), 75.

<sup>66</sup> William Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), 400.

industrial zone, national transportation system, a robust middle class, and an intricate civil infrastructure.

Despite Iraq's comparatively developed status in the Middle East, the ruling Ba'ath party controlled the economy from Baghdad, and became dependant on oil revenue to fund Iraqi institutions. This pattern was most pronounced during regime of Saddam Hussein, whose Ba'ath party rule dictated a socialist-style, centrally directed, command economy with strong elements of crony capitalism. Iraq once had a sizable Jewish population in Baghdad, but most fled during the Ba'ath party's takeover of the 1970s. During most of the 1980's Iraq fought a prolonged war with its antagonistic and post-revolutionary neighbor to the east, Iran. The Iran-Iraq war began in 1980 and did not end until 1988.

The 8-year war with Iran nearly bankrupted the Iraqis who "owed nearly \$100 billion to overseas creditors and the cost of repairing the war damage to the country's infrastructure."<sup>67</sup> By the summer of 1990, the Iraqi economy was in a perilous state. Consequently, the Hussein regime issued a series of accusations against its southern neighbor, the oil-rich sheikdom of Kuwait. Hussein's main accusation was that the Kuwaitis stole oil from Iraq's southern most oil field and that its loans to Iraq in the 1980's were from oil profits due to overproduction.<sup>68</sup> According to a U.S. embassy cable, "bilateral talks between Iraq and Kuwait started at the Jeddah Conference [in Riyadh] on July 31, 1990...Izzat Ibrahim led the Iraqi delegation to the talks while Kuwaiti crown

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<sup>67</sup> Alastair Finlan, *The Gulf War 1991: Modern Warfare* (New York: Rosen Publishing Group), 14.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 25.

prince and Prime Minister Saad Al-Abdallah led his country's team."<sup>69</sup> During the meeting, the Iraqis demanded \$10 billion for the loss of oil. The Kuwaitis only offered \$9 billion, and afterwards the diplomatic efforts came to a sudden halt.<sup>70</sup> Less than 36 hours later, Iraqi forces launched an attack on Kuwait and quickly gained control over the entire country. This move prompted condemnation from the United Nations and a large-scale U.S. and Saudi Arabian-led coalition to thwart Iraq's advances in the Gulf.

Much of the industrial base created during the early years of the Hussein regime was destroyed during the Iran-Iraq war, the subsequent Gulf War of 1991 or through the degenerative effects of socialist-style mismanagement. By the mid-1990's, the Hussein regime was feeling the compounding effects of heavy borrowing, U.S.-led economic sanctions, and financial losses from both of the wars. The Hussein regime did all it could to maintain a strong power base amongst the Sunnis. This included greater autonomy for loyal tribal sheikhs as well as subsidies and access to luxury goods.<sup>71</sup> In addition, the regime turned a blind eye to Sunnis of Anbar province that used tribal connections in order to create smuggling routes for goods that were hard to access under the sanctions.<sup>72</sup> At the same time, the heavy sanctions turned many Sunnis against the Ba'ath party and towards religion. In order to appease the Sunnis, Hussein started a national "Return to Faith" campaign, which turned mosques into centers of

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<sup>69</sup> U.S. Diplomatic Cables Brower. "Iraq/Kuwait meeting in Jeddah." U.S. Embassy Riyadh. August 1, 1990. <http://cables.mrkva.eu/cable.php?id=378> (accessed 21 October 2014).

<sup>70</sup> Finlan, *The Gulf War 199*, 26.

<sup>71</sup> Gary Montgomery, "Setting the Conditions for Insurgency," in *Al-Anbar Awakening Volume II: Iraqi Perspectives* ed. Gary Montgomery and Timothy McWilliams (Quantico: Marine Corps University Press, 2009), 6.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

social activity. The result was a gradual increase in religious fervor and with some, radicalization.<sup>73</sup>

### **Salafism**

Concurrent to Hussein's "Return to Faith" campaign in Iraq, the region saw an increase in the number of Sunnis that became adherents to a movement called "*Salafism*." Salafism literally means "like our pious ancestors."<sup>74</sup> The Salafist movement called upon Sunni Muslims to adhere to a strict and literal interpretation of the Qur'an and advocated Hanbali school of Sunni jurisprudence, which relies on the Qur'an and Islamic *hadith* instead of legal precedent.<sup>75</sup> This strict and deeply conservative interpretation of Islamic teaching became prominent in Saudi Arabia when an 18<sup>th</sup> century religious reformer named Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab revived Islamic thought under a religious doctrine later known as Wahhabism.<sup>76</sup> While not all Salafists promoted violence, many advocated an Islamic political and legal order and espoused violent means to obtain it.<sup>77</sup> The Salafists were also part of a distinct and growing movement amongst the Sunni population of the entire Middle East, not just Iraq.

### **Iraqi Diaspora**

Meanwhile, outside Iraq, opposition grew to the Hussein regime amongst the Iraqi Diaspora operating in Europe and other Middle Eastern countries. The prominent

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<sup>73</sup> Montgomery, "Setting the Conditions for Insurgency," 7.

<sup>74</sup> Peter Mandaville, *Global Political Islam*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 152.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 248 – 249.

Shi'ia mathematician and banker, Ahmed Chalabi, lead on of the most important anti-regime efforts. Chalabi led the Iraqi National Congress (INC), a secret political organization covertly supported by the U.S. government. The INC's goal was to bring together anti-Ba'ath forces and coordinate their efforts, as well as create the conditions for the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. In the early 1990's, Ayad Allawi, another wealthy Shi'ia businessman, created the Iraqi National Accord (INA), which was seen by the U.S. as a counterbalance to the INC, and had similar intentions.

The only well-organized Sunni opposition to the Ba'ath party came from the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP), which was established in 1960, the secular Iraqi Communist Party, and Ayad Allawi's INA which included secular Sunnis. The IIP was banned in Iraq and for decades and it operated out of Great Britain. The IIP had evolved out the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Egypt, and espoused the strict Islamism of the prominent Egyptian Islamic scholar, Sayyid Qutb. The Iraqi Communist Party was in operation in Iraq since the 1930's but never gained widespread support in the country. Ayad Allawi's INA also included many former Ba'ath party members (both Sunni & Shi'ia) that had defected and wanted to effect regime change.

TABLE 5.1

MAJOR IRAQI POLITICAL PARTIES, PRE-2003

Saddam-Era Iraqi Political Party	Sect	Ideology	Founder	Year Founded	External Sup
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					port
Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP)	Sunni	Religiou s	Iyad al-Samara'i	1960	-
Iraqi Socialist Ba'ath Party	Sunni	Socialist	Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri	1968	-
Iraqi National Accord (INA)	Shi'ia/ Sunni	Secular	Ayad Allawi	1991	-
Islamic Dawa Party	Shi'ia	Religiou s	Najaf <i>hawzas</i>	1957	Iran
Islamic Supreme Council of Iraqi (ISCI)	Shi'ia	Religiou s	Baqir al-Hakim	1982	Iran
Iraqi National Congress (INC)	Shi'ia	Secular	Ahmed Chalabi	1992	U.S.
Kurdistan Democratic Party(KDP)	Kurdish	Secular	Massoud Barzani	1946	-
Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)	Kurdish	Secular	Jalal Talabani	1975	-
Kurdistan Islamic Union	Kurdish	Religiou s	Salaheddine Bahaaeddin	1994	Iran
Assyrian Democratic Movement	Christia n	Regiona l	Yonadam Kanna	1979	-

*Source:* Data compiled from a variety of sources, see Adeed Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 144, 191, 200, 249-252, Aram Roston, *The Man Who Pushed America to War* (New York: Nation Books, 2008), 12, 89-92, 153, 161, 322 – 324.

The Kurds also had political organizations that was operating for decades; most notably the secular Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) established in 1975 by Jalal Talabani and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) established in 1946 by Massoud Barzani. Before the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, the Kurdish, and Shi'ia-led opposition parties had grown into experienced (albeit illegal) political forces, with decades of leadership, international sponsorship, financing, and command structure.

## **Operation Iraqi Freedom and De-Ba'athification**

In 2002, the Bush administration made the argument that Saddam Hussein was harboring weapons of mass destruction. Believing an attack by the Hussein regime was imminent; the Bush administration launched a preemptive strike on the country the following spring.<sup>78</sup> As intelligence sources revealed later, the plausibility of an attack by Hussein was actually relatively low.<sup>79</sup> Unlike during the Gulf War a decade earlier, the U.S. did not have the authority of the UN Security Council to invade Iraq. The U.S. did create a “coalition of the willing,” which included Great Britain, Australia, South Korea, Italy, and Poland, among others.

The U.S. made several critical errors during the initial planning and execution phases of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). One error came during the planning phase. The U.S. did not mobilize enough troops in the early phases of the invasion to guarantee a smooth transition to stability operations. This is partially because of the U.S. military's overwhelming victory over Iraq's conventional defenses during the Gulf War, in conjunction with “revolutions” in military technology, provided the impetus for a culture that believed airpower served to offer quick, decisive victories through strike operations. In the decades that preceded the Iraq war, the U.S. military had developed superior

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<sup>78</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown, A Memoir* (New York: Penguin, 2011), 433 – 434. In an August 2002 briefing by the Deputy CIA Director, Iraq was believed to have reconstituted facilities for biological and chemical weapons and retained a significant nuclear capacity. The CIA believed Iraq had continued WMD programs, maintained missiles, and acquired fissile material from abroad.

<sup>79</sup> Jessica Tuchman Mathews and Jeff Miller, “A Tale of Two Intelligence Estimates,” *Carnegie Middle East Center*. March 25, 2004. <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=1489> (accessed 1 May 2015).

organization, training, and equipment for conventional combat, but did not promote the same level of preparation for counterinsurgency and stability operations.

In February 2003, U.S. Army Chief of Staff Erik Shinseki told the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) that hundreds of thousands of troops would be needed if the U.S. were to physically occupy post-war Iraq.<sup>80</sup> Former Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz contradicted Shinseki's estimates, and advocated for assessments that called for closer to 100,000 troops. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld sided with Wolfowitz's position on the issue and sent hundreds of thousands fewer troops than the Army initially requested. During the initial phases of the occupation, top political officials in Iraq insisted that more military forces were necessary to secure the country, but policy makers in Washington routinely denied their requests.<sup>81</sup>

During the years following the invasion, several requests for more troops were made. It wasn't until the "surge" of troops that was requested by the Multinational Force-Iraq (MNF-I) Commander, General David Petraeus in 2007 that more forces were sent to the region, but the total number of "boots on ground" never exceeded 168,000.

The second major error by the U.S. came after Iraq's Ba'athist regime fell, and the CPA administrator, Paul Bremer, disbanded the Iraqi military and police forces. In March and April of 2003, the power vacuum that consumed the country greatly challenged the rule of law and public order. Initially, coalition forces were not ordered to contain the violence that followed the air campaign, and this proved to be a critical error

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<sup>80</sup> "Army chief, Force to occupy Iraq massive" *USA Today*, February 25, 2003, A1.

<sup>81</sup> Larry Diamond, "What went wrong in Iraq?" *Foreign Affairs* 83, no. 5 (2004), 34.

in decision-making. The impact of the looting and lawlessness compounded the already dilapidated state of Iraq's infrastructure, making it difficult to provide basic services. The looting made it nearly impossible for the coalition forces to operate under the plans they had devised for the post-war occupation and recovery.

### **Post-Ba'athi Government**

INC Chairman Ahmed Chalabi and INA Chairman Ayad Allawi both ended up playing a prominent role in post-Ba'athist Iraq. In the years leading up to the U.S. invasion, the State Department paid several million dollars to the INC, and in turn Chalabi provided intelligence and the promise of democratic post-Ba'athist governance. Likewise, after the Gulf War of 1991, the U.S. and several other countries supported Allawi's INA and his attempts to overthrow Hussein's government.

TABLE 5.2

#### **IRAQI GOVERNING COUNCIL, 2003**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Sect</b>	<b>Party</b>
Yonadam Kanna	Christian	Assyrian Democratic Movement
Dara Nur Al-Din	Kurd	Independent
Jalal Talabani	Kurd	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)
Mahmoud Othman	Kurd	Kurdistan Socialist Party
Massoud Barzani	Kurd	Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)
Salahuddin Mohammad Bahuddin	Kurd	Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU)
Abdul Aziz al-Hakim	Shi'ia	Supreme Council for Islam. State in Iraq (SCIRI)

Ahmad Chalabi	Shi'ia	Iraqi National Congress (INC)
Abdul Karim al-Muhammadawi	Shi'ia	Iraqi Hezbollah
Ayad Allawi	Shi'ia	Iraqi National Accord (INA)
Ezzidin Salim	Shi'ia	Islamic Dawa Party
Ibrahim Jaafari	Shi'ia	Islamic Dawa Party
Hamid Majid Mousa	Shi'ia	Iraqi Communist Party
Mohammad Al-Uloun	Shi'ia	Independent
Mowaffak al-Rubaie	Shi'ia	Independent
Raja Habib Khuzai	Shi'ia	Independent
Salama al-Khafaji	Shi'ia	Independent
Shk. Ahmad Shayaa al-Barak	Shi'ia	Independent
Wael Abdul Latif	Shi'ia	Independent
Adnan Pachachi	Sunni	Ind. Democratic
Ghazi Ajil al-Yawar	Sunni	Independent
Mohsen Abdel Hamid	Sunni	Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP)
Naseer Kamel Chaderchi	Sunni	National Democratic Party (NDP)
Samir Shakir Mahmud al-Sumaidaie	Sunni	Independent
Songul Chapouk	Turkmen	Independent

*Source:* Data compiled from Sharon Otterman, Council on Foreign Relations. "Iraq's Governing Council" May 17, 2004. Data available from: <http://www.cfr.org/iraq/iraq-iraqs-governing-council/p7665> [Table is the author's own].

The first post-Ba'athist organization to lead Iraq was the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), which was created in the U.S. before the invasion. The commander of ORHA, Army Lieutenant General Jay Garner, refused to implement the strict de-Ba'athification being requested by policymakers in Washington. The organization quickly transformed into the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), a transitional governmental organization led by American policymaker L. Paul Bremer. The CPA took over in May 2003 and was administratively in charge of Iraq's governance

until June 2004. Under the CPA, an Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), which consisted of various Iraqi political leaders, provided advice and political leadership until the country regained sovereignty. Many of the IGC's members were working with U.S. officials in Washington before the invasion, and they were appointed in order to represent a cross-section of Iraqi society.

The council consisted of men, women, Shi'ia, Kurdish, and Sunni leaders as well as several political minorities. Likewise, the IGC consisted of the leaders from several existing Iraqi political parties including: the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), Kurdistan Islamic Union, Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP), National Democratic Party (NDP), Islamic Dawa Party, Iraqi Hezbollah, Iraqi National Congress (INC), the Iraqi Communist Party, Iraqi National Accord (INA), the Supreme Council on Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), as well as various independent politicians.

In a move that has been widely critiqued by academics and policy-makers, Bremer's first order as the CPA administrator was to implement the de-Ba'athification of the internal security police and military forces, which meant that members of the Ba'ath party were "removed from their positions and banned from future employment."<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> See: De-Ba'athification of Iraqi Society," Coalition Provincial Authority Order Number 1, 16 May 2003, <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB418/docs/9a%20-%20Coalition%20Provisional%20Authority%20Order%20No%201%20-%20205-16-03.pdf> (accessed 11 June 2015); "Dissolution of Entities," Coalition Provincial Authority Order Number 2, 23 May 2003, <http://www.dod.mil/dodgc/ia/docs/dissolution-English.pdf> (accessed 11 June 2015); Marina Ottaway, "Back from the Brink, A Strategy for Iraq," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 2005, [www.carnegieendowment.org/files/pb43.ottaway.FINAL.pdf](http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/pb43.ottaway.FINAL.pdf) (accessed 15 May 2015); Miranda Soissons and Abdulrazza al-Saiedi "Iraq a Bitter Legacy: Lessons of De-Ba'athification in Iraq. International Center for Transitional Justice. March 2013, <http://ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Report-Iraq-De-Baathification-2013-ENG.pdf> (accessed 15 May 2015); W. Andrew Terrill "Lessons of the Iraqi De-Ba'athification Program for Iraq's Future and the Arab Revolutions," (Carlisle Barracks: Strategic Studies Institute, May 2012).

Because the Ba'ath party was so fully integrated into all the facets of Iraqi security and society, this move only served to exacerbate the widespread lawlessness. Putting an Iraqi leader at the forefront of the transitional government did little to help the situation as many of the IGC's members had lived in exile for several decades, and were not seen as legitimate political actors by Iraqi society, nor did they have the cooperation of the police or militant factions.<sup>83</sup> Once de-Ba'athification took full effect, the U.S. and coalition forces were unable control the highly agitated Iraqi population. The security void was quickly filled by Shi'ia militias, Sunni insurgents, and radicalized Islamist groups like Al Qaeda Iraq (AQI).

In June 2004, the Iraqi Interim Government took over from the CPA under the lead of the INA Chairman, Ayad Allawi. Allawi was in charge of IGC and was chosen by the council to be the interim Prime Minister until democratic elections could be held. In May 2005, the Iraqi Transitional Government took over from the Iraqi Interim Government until the first permanent government took over in 2006.

TABLE 5.3

IRAQ'S GOVERNING BODY, 1534 – 2015

<b>Government</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Leader/Head of State</b>	<b>Period</b>
Ottoman Empire	Imperial Province	Multiple	1534 – 1921
British Mandate	British Protectorate	Sir Percy Cox	1920 – 1932

<sup>83</sup> Abdul Karim, interview with author, 14 May 2014.

Kingdom of Iraq	Monarchy	Hashemite Family	1921 – 1958
Sovereignty Council	Pan-Arab Nationalist	Muhammad Najib ar-Ruba'i	1958 – 1963
Iraqi Revolutionary Council	Arab Socialist Union	Abdul Salam Arif	1963 – 1966
Iraqi Revolutionary Council	Arab Socialist Union	Abd ar-Rahman al-Bazzaz	1966 – 1966
Iraqi Revolutionary Council	Arab Socialist Union	Abdul Rahman Arif	1966 – 1968
Revolutionary Command Council	Arab Socialist Ba'ath	Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr	1968 – 1979
Revolutionary Command Council	Arab Socialist Ba'ath	Saddam Hussein	1979 – 2003
Office of Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance (ORHA)	Occupation	Jay Garner	2003 – 2003
Coalition Provincial Authority (CPA)	Occupation	Paul Bremer	2003 – 2004
Iraqi Interim Government	Transitional	Ayad Allawi	2004 – 2005
Iraqi Transitional Government	Transitional	Ibrahim al Jaafari	2005 – 2006
Federal Government of Iraq	Parliamentary Democracy	Nouri al-Maliki	2006 – 2014
Federal Government of Iraq	Parliamentary Democracy	Haidar al-Abadi	2014 – Present

*Source:* Data compiled from a variety of sources, see: Marion Farouk-Sluglett & Peter Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship* (New York: Tauris, 2001) and Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). The above table lists the Presidents of Iraq from 1958 – 2003 and Prime Ministers from 2004 – present. Under the Arab Socialist Ba'ath party, the President of Iraq was the head of state. After the implementation of a Federal Government in Iraq, the Prime Minister controlled the government's agenda and policy. [Table is the author's own].

The CPA and subsequent transitional governments established the framework for a parliamentary republic in Iraq, with executive, legislative, and judicial branches. Iraq's



constitution outlined executive control over a Council of Ministers and the President; legislative control over Representatives and a Federation Council; as well as judicial control over courts and prosecution. Under Iraq's parliamentary system, the head of government is the Prime Minister, elected by a two-thirds majority of parliament.

### **2005 Elections**

In 2005, Iraq's first democratic elections were held. The elections used a closed-list parliamentary system, whereby voters can only vote for political parties, and the party then controls a proportion of seats in the parliament. Under Iraq's transitional law, a 275-member National Assembly was created to act as Iraq's parliament. Due to their political marginalization after the U.S. invasion, Arab Sunnis were encouraged to boycott the vote by the prominent leader of the Zoba tribe and Chairman of the Association of Muslim Scholars, Sheikh Harith Sulayman al-Dhari.<sup>84</sup> The majority Sunni Anbar province saw as little as 2% of eligible voters show up to the polls, and across the country disgruntled Sunnis voiced their opposition to the political situation by rejecting the legitimacy of the electoral process.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> See: Kenneth Katzman, "Iraq: Politics, Governance and Human Rights," *Congressional Research Service* September 15, 2014. <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS21968.pdf> (accessed 15 October 2014); Hay'at 'Ulama' al-Muslimin, "Statement Number (86) on the elections," February 2, 2005, <http://www.iraq-amsi.com/Portal/news.php?action=view&id=2242&7302cb75ee0a37c2cf9fc8e23416be04> (accessed 10 Jun 2015).

<sup>85</sup> Eric Herring and Glen Rangwala, *Iraq in Fragments: The Occupation and its Legacy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 36.

TABLE 5.4  
IRAQI ELECTIONS, 2005

PARTY/BLOC	LEADERS	SECT	R/S*	VOTES	%	SP**
Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan	Talabani, Barzani	Kurd	S	2,175,511	25.7	75
Islamic Group of Kurdistan	Abd-Al Aziz	Kurd	R	60,592	0.7	2
<b>Total Major Kurdish Parties</b>				<b>2,236,103</b>	<b>26.4</b>	<b>77</b>
United Iraqi Alliance	Hakim, Jaafari, Chalabi, Shahrastani	Shi'ia	R	4,075,292	48.2	140
Islamic Action Organization in Iraq	al Tamah	Sh'ia	R	43,205	0.5	2
National Independent Cadres & Elites	al-Sheikh	Shi'ia	R	69,938	0.8	3
<b>Total Major Shi'ia Parties</b>				<b>4,188,435</b>	<b>49.5</b>	<b>145</b>
Iraqi List	Allawi	Sunni/ Shi'ia	S	1,168,943	13.8	40
People's Union	Mousa	Sunni/ Shi'ia	S	69,920	0.8	5
National Democratic Alliance	al-Chaderchi	Sunni/ Shi'ia	S	36,795	0.4	1
The Iraqis (Iraqioun)	al-Yawer	Sunni	S	150,680	1.8	5
Reconciliation and Liberation Bloc	al-Juburi	Sunni	S	30,796	0.4	1
<b>Total Major Sunni/Secular Parties</b>				<b>1,457,134</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>52</b>
Iraqi Turkmen Front	Abdurrahman	Minority	S	93,480	1.1	3
National Rafidain List	Kana	Minority	S	36,255	0.4	1
Other				444,819	5.3	-
<b>Total Minorities/Others</b>				<b>574,554</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>4</b>

*Source:* Data compiled from a variety of sources, see: Kenneth Katzman, "Iraq: Elections and New Government" CRS Report for Congress, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/50254.pdf>; Reidar Visser, *A Responsible End? The United States and the Iraqi Transition, 2005 – 2010*, 2010. [Table is the author's own]. \*Religious/Secular, \*\*Seats in Parliament

The absence of Sunnis from the voting resulted in an overwhelming victory for the predominantly Shi'ia blocs, and the Shi'ia parties won nearly half of the votes in the country. Three major political blocs dominated the 2005 elections: the Shi'ia United Iraqi Alliance (UIA), the Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan (DPAK), and Ayad Allawi's secular Iraqi List. The UIA won a majority in the Shi'ia south, the DPAK won a majority in the Kurdish north, and the Iraqi List won in the Sunni west.

At the same time, disgruntled insurgent groups and former Ba'athists gained more ground and became increasingly effective at targeting coalition forces. The radical Islamist, Abu Musa'b al-Zarqawi is credited with integrating *Salafist* ideology into a cohesive fighting force to counter the American and coalition presence. In 2004, his network pledged allegiance to the broader Al Qaeda terrorist organization, and was known as Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI).

As such, by 2006, American policy makers feared that if U.S. forces pulled out of the region too soon, the nascent Iraqi government would be faced with overwhelming opposition from the insurgency and an ethnic civil war.<sup>86</sup> In order to counter AQI and radicalized elements of the Iraqi society, U.S. and coalition forces stayed in the country much longer than initially expected. The conundrum for Iraq was that in order for the nation to gain security, Iraqi-led forces had to generate enough control of their own territory, but without U.S. and coalition forces in the region the nation would have quickly spiraled into civil chaos.

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<sup>86</sup> Ottaway, "Back from the Brink."

## CHAPTER 6. SUNNI REALIGNMENT AND MARGINALIZATION

*“We lost our area. It became a battle zone between Al Qaeda and the Shi’ia militias.”*

-Sa’ad Ghaffoori, 2007<sup>87</sup>

### Background

For macro-level political reasons, in 2006 and 2007, Iraq’s Sunnis realigned with U.S. forces to battle Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI).<sup>88</sup> Concurrent to the surge of U.S. forces in the region and the U.S. military’s doctrinal change in late 2006, Sunni tribal leaders in the western Anbar province of Iraq experienced a “*Sahwa*” or “Awakening” movement, which led them to side with U.S. and coalition forces. Later, as more leaders joined the movement, these “Sons of Iraq” were organized into a formal program and paid by the U.S. forces to fight insurgent groups.

Explanations of the alliance that formed between U.S. forces and the tribal sheikhs of Anbar province as well as the broader Sons of Iraq (SOI) movement in 2006 and 2007 are often attributed to monetary factors, or relative economic gains. Several policymakers have argued that the reason the Sunnis aligned with the U.S. is because the

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<sup>87</sup> Sa’ad Ghaffori, quoted in Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, “Meet Abu Abed: the US’s new ally against al-Qaida” *The Guardian*, 10 November 2007, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/nov/10/usa-al-qaida> (accessed 17 January 2015).

<sup>88</sup> Dale Kuehl, interview by author, Rock Island Arsenal, IL, 2 May 2014.

U.S. military paid them to do so.<sup>89</sup> This aligns with the hypothesis that alliances are formed because of individual, agent-level considerations, and political factions will align when economic gains are assured. To the contrary, the Sunni Awakening shows that economic considerations are secondary to ideological and other structural constraints.

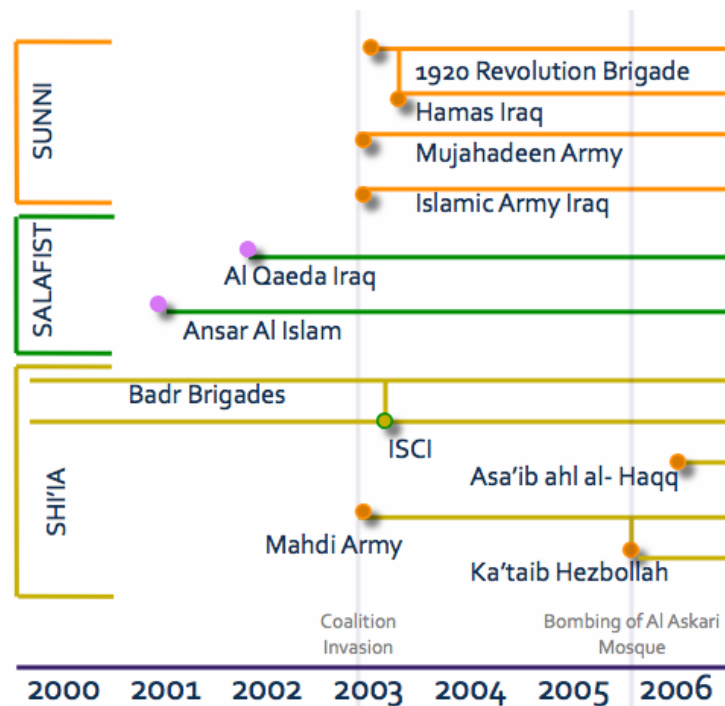


Fig. 6.1. Major Iraqi Militant Groups, 2000 – 2006. Data compiled from a variety of sources see: Stanford University, *Mapping Militant Organizations: Iraq*, available from: <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/> and Azeem Ibrahim. *The Resurgence of Al Qaeda in Syria and Iraq*, Strategic Studies Institute: U.S. Army War College Press, 2014. [Figure is the author's own].

<sup>89</sup> Public International Radio, "Paying the Taliban to quit," *PRI The World* October 29, 2009, <http://www.theworld.org/2009/10/paying-the-taliban-to-quit> (accessed October 20, 2014), for additional background on how the Army uses money as a weapon system see: Center for Army Lessons Learned, "Commander's Guide to Money as a Weapon System" April 2009 <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/call/docs/09-27/09-27.pdf>; David Petraeus, "Multinational-Force Iraq Commander's Counterinsurgency Guide," *Military Review* (2008).

### **Al-Askari Mosque**

From the U.S. perspective, in 2006 the violence in Iraq appeared to be along sectarian lines, and many journalists, policymakers, and scholars characterized Iraq as being a state of civil war.<sup>90</sup> Radicalized Sunni factions such as AQI, the Islamic Army, Hamas Iraq, and the 1920s Revolution Brigade were in open conflict with the Shi'ia militias like the Badr Brigades, Hezbollah Iraq, and the Mahdi Army (JAM). Likewise, all the militant groups were posing a threat to U.S. and coalition forces as well as the nascent Iraqi government's attempts to restore security and order.

There were also divisions and fractures that took place within the various religious and ethnic sects. For many Sunnis, the bombing of the al-Askari Mosque, an ancient Shi'ia holy site in the Iraqi city of Samarra, in February 2006, was the catalyst for the ideological divide between nationalistic Sunni insurgents and the radicalized Salafist fighters. After the bombing of the mosque, retaliatory killings, torture, and kidnappings greatly increased across the country, and by late 2006 there was a growing cleavage between the Sunnis and an even larger rift between the Sunni and Shi'ia factions. Many of the mainly Arab Sunni former Ba'ath party loyalists, the Muslim Brotherhood/ Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP), and military men also sought to distance themselves from the advances made by Salafist groups like AQI.<sup>91</sup> According to one former military officer under Saddam Hussein, the bombing of the al-Askari mosque not only incited a dramatic

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<sup>90</sup> For example see: John Burns, "If Its Civil War Do We Know It?" *New York Times* 24 July 2005 <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/24/weekinreview/if-its-civil-war-do-we-know-it.html> (accessed 9 April 2015).

<sup>91</sup> Sa'ad Ghaffoori, interview by author, Eskilstuna, Sweden, 25 July 2014.

increase in sectarian violence, but also because it was such an important national landmark, its destruction dramatically altered the psyche of many moderate Iraqis.<sup>92</sup> In 2006, Iraq fractured further along sectarian lines, but also between radicalized elements within each sect.

### **The Surge**

Despite the fact that neither troop density nor changes in military doctrine have ever played a systematic role in the theoretical literature on how to fight insurgency,<sup>93</sup> in order to counter the massive insurgency ongoing in Iraq, in 2006 U.S. policy makers deployed a “surge” of U.S. military forces to region. Nearly simultaneously, the U.S. Army published Field Manual 3-24, which revised the doctrine on how to counter insurgencies. The new doctrine advocated “population-centric” tactics and the use of small maneuver units. Field commanders were also encouraged to engage the civilian population by leaving forward operating bases and dispersing forces throughout urban centers and villages.

The surge proved to be successful in the short run, yet it is difficult to distinguish which surge component—the military reinforcement or the doctrinal change—was most effective in Iraq, primarily because there was such little variation in force employment during this period.<sup>94</sup> Military historian Stephen Biddle carefully noted that, “the modest

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<sup>92</sup> Ghaffoori, interview by author.

<sup>93</sup> Stephen Biddle, Jeffrey A. Friedman and Jacob Shapiro, “Testing the Surge: Why Did Violence Decline in Iraq in 2007?” *International Security* 37, no. 1 (2012), 8.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

scale of reinforcements in 2007 suggests that doctrine may actually have been the decisive factor. Without observing independent variation in troop density and doctrine, however, it is impossible to make a definitive statement as to their relative causal impact.”<sup>95</sup> Yet, a third factor, a massive Sunni political and military realignment, proved to be another important (and often overlooked) component in the success of the surge.

### **Sunni Political and Military Realignment**

The Sunni Awakening (or *Sahwa*) movement was actually connected to a much larger movement within Iraq at the time, fed by the Sunnis’ widespread discontent of the central government as well as the rise in Al Qaeda’s criminal activities in their sectors and villages. The central government could not keep pace with the spread of the criminal organizations and by late 2005, Al Qaeda had complete control over many Sunni areas, especially in west Baghdad and the western provinces of Salahuddin, Tamim, Ninewah, Diyala and Anbar.

The *Sahwa* developed along three distinct levels of Iraqi society (see Fig 6.2). At the elite level in the society, Sunni politicians stood by the formation of Sunni police forces and local groups to counter terrorist activity. At the tribal level, leaders joined the movement and served as an example for others. Tribal leaders also encouraged young men to join the *Sahwa*. Finally, at the local level, former military officers and Ba’ath party loyalists were brought into the fight. At all levels, religious leaders played an important role in supporting the alignment.

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<sup>95</sup> Biddle, et. al., “Testing the Surge,” 39.



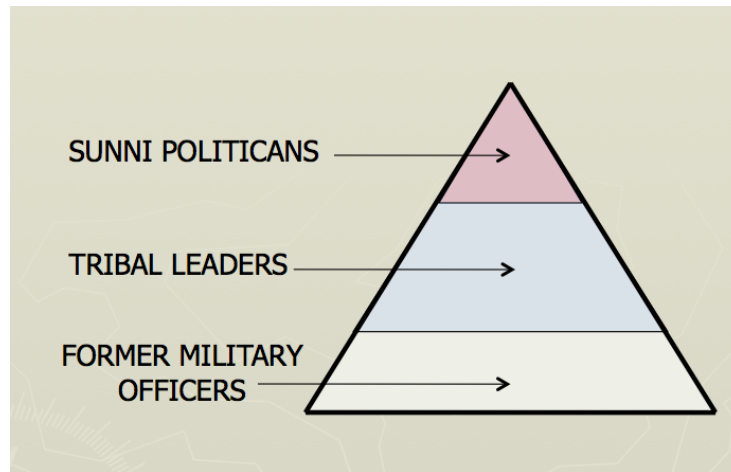


Fig. 6.2. Sahwa – Levels of Iraqi Society [Figure is the author's own].

### Case 1: Tribal Leaders

In the beginning, the Sunni political and military realignment was largely tribal. From the onset, Sunni tribal leaders viewed the Shiite-led Iraqi government with distrust,<sup>96</sup> and by 2005, Anbar's tribal leaders were enduring years of social, religious, and economic conflict with AQI. AQI leaders posed a direct threat to the traditional power of the sheikhs and openly challenged their rulings in religious and social matters.<sup>97</sup> Sheikh Ali Hatim al-Suleiman, of the 3 million strong al-Dulaymi confederation, wanted to strike back on AQI in 2005, but realized that such an effort would provoke an even

<sup>96</sup> Alissa Rubin and Stephen Farrell, "Awakening Councils by Region," *New York Times*, 22 December 2007 <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/22/world/middleeast/23awake-graphic.html?pagewanted=all> (accessed 7 April 2015).

<sup>97</sup> Norman Cigar, "Al-Qaida, the Tribes, and the Government: Lessons and Prospects for Iraq's Unstable Triangle," *Middle East Studies Occasional Papers* (Quantico: Marine Corps University Press, 2011) [http://www.mcu.usmc.mil/Lists/MES%20Occasional%20Paper%20Series/Attachments/3/MESOPS\\_2\\_Iraq UnstableTriangle.pdf](http://www.mcu.usmc.mil/Lists/MES%20Occasional%20Paper%20Series/Attachments/3/MESOPS_2_Iraq%20UnstableTriangle.pdf) (accessed 15 April 2015).

stronger retaliatory response.<sup>98</sup> He also realized that the tribal leaders needed American support to be effective, but openly cooperating with the Americans would not garner popular support with the general Sunni population.<sup>99</sup> By mid-late 2005 the tribes were already in open warfare against Al Qaeda, but they did not have support from the U.S. forces in the area.<sup>100</sup>

In Anbar province, Sheikh Abdul Sattar Abu Risha is often credited as the founder of the Anbar *Sahwa* movement. Like al-Suleiman, Abu Risha was another prominent sheikh from the al-Dulaymi tribe. For most of his life he had lived as an opportunist. This was compounded during the strict economic sanctions imposed by the U.S. after the Gulf War. He was well known for smuggling oil and conducting highway robberies along the vast stretch of desert highway that separates Iraq from Syria.<sup>101</sup> In 2006 he approached U.S. Marine forces operating in Anbar province to build an alliance to fight AQI. His move couldn't have been more appropriately timed; the commander there, Lieutenant Colonel Sean McFarland, was facing a rapidly deteriorating security situation. Earlier that year, the U.S. Marine's headquarters-level intelligence staff had concluded that, "there was little the U.S. could do to stifle the insurgency in Anbar."<sup>102</sup> Extraordinary measures would be needed in order to secure the area.

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<sup>98</sup> Cigar, "Al-Qaida, the Tribes, and the Government."

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Gary Montgomery, "Setting the Conditions for Insurgency," in *Al-Anbar Awakening Volume II: Iraqi Perspectives* ed. Gary Montgomery and Timothy McWilliams (Quantico: Marine Corps University Press, 2009), 12.

<sup>101</sup> Dhafir Abdul Karim, interview by author, Alexandria, VA, May 14, 2014.

<sup>102</sup> Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq from George W. Bush to Barack Obama* (New York: Vintage Books, 2012), 248.

Abu Risha was the first tribal leader to encourage his followers to join the local police forces in Anbar Province to fight against the insurgency. Other tribal leaders followed suit, and the *Sahwa* spread throughout the province. Later, U.S. forces discovered the killing of his three brothers and his father by AQI had motivated Abu Risha to switch sides.<sup>103</sup> As his movement grew, he founded a formal council for *Sahwa* matters, including dozens of Sunni tribal leaders from his region. The collaborative pattern “spread rapidly through the province”<sup>104</sup> and thousands of young Sunni men joined the local police forces.

The Anbar Awakening was particularly successful because the Sunnis knew exactly where the AQI fighters lived and how to target them.<sup>105</sup> The legitimacy of Anbar’s tribal leaders was instrumental in the recruitment and retention of young Sunni men. Because it was so successful, the Anbar Awakening became the model for exploiting the fissure between Sunni insurgent groups and the general Sunni population.<sup>106</sup> The integration and focus on tribal leaders was also important, because they ended up providing the critical link between Sunni politicians in Baghdad and former military officers working at the local level.

## **Case 2: Former Military Officers**

When then the commander of the U.S. Army’s 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment,

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<sup>103</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *The Inside Struggle*, 251.

<sup>104</sup> Wilbanks and Karsh, “How the Sons of Iraq Stabilized Iraq,” 59.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, “Sons of Iraq Program: Results are Uncertain and Financials Controls Were Weak,” 2011 [www.sigir.mil/files/audits/11-010.pdf](http://www.sigir.mil/files/audits/11-010.pdf). (accessed 12 July 2014).

then-Lieutenant Colonel Dale Kuehl, arrived in western Baghdad in late 2006, he recalled there was no rule of law, no municipal services, and violence was very high.<sup>107</sup> Over the next several months, the violence did not abate. By May 2007, a succession of improvised explosive device (IED) attacks over the course of two weeks killed over a dozen of Colonel Kuehl's soldiers. Like Colonel McFarland had done in Anbar province, Colonel Kuehl took extraordinary measures to redirect the momentum of the campaign.

One of the first leaders of the Awakening movement in Baghdad, Sa'ad Ghaffoori (aka Abu Abed), had worked as an Iraqi Army intelligence officer under Saddam Hussein. By late 2006, AQI was controlling the population in his upper class neighborhood of Ameriyah in western Baghdad through kidnapping, torture, and murder.<sup>108</sup> Tactically speaking, Ameriyah was in an ideal position to hit Radwaniyah Palace Complex, the biggest coalition base in Iraq, with Katyushas and other Soviet-era artillery pieces stolen by AQI fighters. After the fall of Saddam Hussein, AQI fighters had vowed to protect Ameriyah's residents from Shi'ia militias and American soldiers. Without the rule of law, however, AQI grossly abused their power and the residents of the neighborhood, which was deemed by many AQI operatives as the capital of the Islamic State in Iraq. Abu Abed's own brothers were tortured and beheaded by Shi'ia militias because of the lack of security in the area.

Encouraged by the success of the Anbar Awakening, and with the help of a local sheikh, in May 2007 Abu Abed took charge of the *Sahwa* movement in Ameriyah. Over

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<sup>107</sup> Kuehl, interview.

<sup>108</sup> Dale Keuhl, "Galula and Ameriya," *Military Review* (March/April 2009), 77.

the course of the next several months, Abu Abed worked with the U.S. military to gain control over the neighborhood. The collaboration aided both sides: Abu Abed's men gained military support from the U.S. Army and the U.S. Army gained critical intelligence. The new intelligence aided operators in targeting AQI members and helped U.S. forces find their weapons caches.<sup>109</sup> The Awakening movement then spread to other provinces. In 2007, former Ba'ath party members Baqubah aligned with U.S. forces and provided intelligence on AQI strongholds in the city.<sup>110</sup>

### *Sons of Iraq*

The SOI's intimate knowledge of the local population, insurgent strongholds, and access to reliable intelligence facilitated the efficiency and success of the *Sahwa* movement. With the help of U.S. forces and momentum gained from tactical successes, the *Sahwa* quickly spread to Baghdad's other sectors, including: Hayy Al-Jamia, Adhimiya, Dora, and Khadra. By early 2008, the SOI had grown to a force of over 100,000.<sup>111</sup> Many of the SOI leaders were former Iraqi officers and soldiers under Saddam Hussein.<sup>112</sup> The men were familiar with formal military doctrine as well as unconventional, small arms, and guerilla tactics. Once the U.S. formalized the program, SOI members were paid the equivalent of \$300 USD per month for providing security

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<sup>109</sup> Ghaffoori, interview.

<sup>110</sup> Kagan, *The Surge*, 118.

<sup>111</sup> Farooq Ahmed, "Backgrounder #23: Sons of Iraq and Awakening Forces," *Institute for the Study of War*, 21 Feb 2008 2-5. <http://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/sons-iraq-and-awakening-forces> (accessed 13 December 2014).

<sup>112</sup> Ghaffoori, interview.

services.<sup>113</sup>

TABLE 6.1  
FORMER IRAQI ARMY OFFICERS IN SOI LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

Name	Baghdad Neighborhood
Sa'ad Ghaffoori (Abu Abed)	Ameriyah and Khadra
Ra'ad al Sumariae	Adimiyah
Salah al Mofrejaj	Sayiddah
Ahmed Abu Karam	Jihad
Abu Azzam al Tamimi	Abu Ghraib
Hashem Abu Omar	Suburbs of Abu Ghraib
Adel al Mashhadani	Fadhil
Ra'ad Ali Hassan	Ghazaliyah
Ali Abu Ahmed	Al Adil
Ahmad al Naimi	Rusafah

*Source:* Data compiled from a interviews with Sa'ad Ghaffoori and Dhafir Abdul Karim. [Table is the author's own].

#### *Commander's Emergency Response Program*

In the summer of 2007, U.S. Forces were authorized to appropriate funds from a Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) for security projects, like the SOI, however the initial negotiations took several months. Colonel Kuehl intended for CERP to pay local militiamen and volunteers a salary for their time spent aiding coalition forces. During the intense fighting period of May 2007 through August 2007, Abu Abed's

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<sup>113</sup> Greg Bruno, "Finding a Place of the Sons of Iraq" *Council on Foreign Relations* 9 January 2009 <http://www.cfr.org/iraq/finding-place-sons-iraq/p16088> (accessed 23 October 2014).

militiamen were *not* paid, and from the perspective of the U.S. commander on the ground in Ameriyah, money did not appear to be the motivating factor behind the realignment.<sup>114</sup>

Three months after the initial collaboration and noteworthy tactical successes, the U.S. Army signed a security contract with 300 of Abu Abed's militiamen.<sup>115</sup> However, Colonel Kuehl notes that August 2007 was really the tipping point for the rapid downturn in violence in Ameriyah. In early August 2007, Colonel Kuehl and several members of the 1/5 CAV were invited to the wedding ceremony of Abu Abed's ranking intelligence officer. During the ceremony, in the heart of western Baghdad, the officers were comfortable enough with the security situation to remove their arms, helmets, and flak vests. Between late August 2007 and January 2008 when 1/5 CAV left Iraq, Colonel Kuehl's battalion only experienced small arms fire.<sup>116</sup>

Equally important to gaining security was the ability to restore municipal services to the people. Colonel Kuehl recounted that reconstruction projects were just as important in helping the Iraqis regain a sense of normalcy.<sup>117</sup> It is impossible to assess the success of the surge, without also looking at the simultaneous reconstruction efforts by the U.S. Army's Civil Affairs units, the U.S. Army's Corps of Engineers, and the State Department's Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). Billions of U.S. taxpayer dollars were spent on CERP projects, which went directly towards civil capacity

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<sup>114</sup> Kuehl, interview.

<sup>115</sup> Kuehl, "Galula and Ameriya," 78.

<sup>116</sup> Kuehl, interview.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

building. General Petraeus himself outlines the importance of civil capacity building in Army Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*:

Most valuable to long-term success in winning the support of the populace are the contributions land forces make by conducting stability operations. Stability operations is an overarching term encompassing various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the United States in coordination with other instruments of national power to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment, provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief. Forces engaged in stability operations establish, safeguard, or restore basic civil services. They act directly but also support government agencies. Success in stability operations enables the local populace and HN [host nation] government agencies to resume or develop the capabilities needed to conduct COIN operations and create conditions that permit U.S. military forces to disengage.<sup>118</sup>

### **Case 3: Sunni Politicians**

At the elite level of the Sunni society, once the SOI movement gained initial successes, Sunni political leaders stood by the formation of *Sahwa* forces. They also took steps to encourage the U.S. military to accept their legitimacy. This was an important political move, and it was one that did not last for the entire duration of the program.

One example of the political support by ranking Sunni politicians was when they advocated for the SOI in Abu Ghraib. By late 2006, the Awakening was spreading throughout Anbar province. Abu Azzam al Tamimi, an Islamic Army commander from Abu Ghraib, approached the U.S. Army battalion stationed there with offers to help control the area. At the time, the Sunni militants in Abu Ghraib, situated on the outskirts of west Baghdad in Anbar province, were being squeezed on two fronts. On one front,

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<sup>118</sup> David Petraeus, et. al *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 2-5



AQI was terrorizing the area. On the other, the Iraqi Army 6<sup>th</sup> Division's famed Muthanna Brigade, which was charged with protecting the area, was actually exploiting the sectarian strife.<sup>119</sup> The commander of the Muthanna Brigade, Lieutenant Colonel Nassir al-Hiti was one of Prime Minister Maliki's favorite Army officers, and was sent at Maliki's behest to keep the peace.<sup>120</sup> Instead, there was major tension between the SOI and the Muthanna Brigade, and each side suspected the other had a sectarian agenda.<sup>121</sup> In early 2007, three senior Sunni politicians: Tariq al-Hashimi, Mahmoud al-Mashhadani, and Adnan Dulami met with coalition military leaders in order to convince them that arming local Sunni forces in Abu Ghraib would not be a threat to the Shi'ia-led government in Baghdad.<sup>122</sup> Their support of the movement was critical in receiving broader acceptance of the SOI. The support of many Sunni politicians was short-lived, however. In late 2007, Iraqi Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi came to Ameriya in Baghdad to check on the security situation, and SOI soldiers holding the area fired upon his convoy. Some SOI soldiers perceived him as trying to take credit for their hard-earned successes and promote his own political agenda through the Iraqi Islamic Party.<sup>123</sup> The Sunni politician perceived the SOI to be a political and a security threat.<sup>124</sup> The SOI had a complete monopoly on the use of force in the west Baghdad sectors, alienating GOI politicians. This sentiment grew over time, and by early 2008 there was widespread

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<sup>119</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *Endgame*, 385.

<sup>120</sup> Linda Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008), 260; also, Abdul Karim, interview, Ghaffoori, interview.

<sup>121</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *Endgame*, 385.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 386.

<sup>123</sup> Ghaffoori, interview.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

concern amongst both Sunni and Shi'ia politicians that the SOI program was out of control.<sup>125</sup>

### **Post-Stability**

The Awakening movement allowed the U.S. to take advantage of the internal cleavages amongst Sunni forces, seize the momentum, and provide stability. The combination of the surge in U.S. forces, Army doctrinal changes *and* the Sunni Awakening led to a decrease in violence and a strategic pause which enabled the U.S. forces to negotiate a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with the Iraqi government and develop a plan to withdraw from the region. In addition, the decrease in violence led to a gradual improvement in the ability of the Iraqi Army to control and hold ground during operations. The successes allowed coalition forces to transfer security responsibilities to the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and focus on capacity building.<sup>126</sup>

Once a modicum of stability was achieved, the Americans planned to integrate the SOI into the newly organized ISF and the Iraqi Police Service (IPS).<sup>127</sup> At the time of the handover of the SOI program from the United States to the Iraqi government in 2009, the movement “could boast 118,000 personnel, grouped in over 130 Sahwa councils.”<sup>128</sup> The Shi'ia-led government in Baghdad, though, was not enthusiastic about the SOI, and neither were many Sunni politicians who saw the program as being disorganized and a

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<sup>125</sup> Ghaffoori, interview.

<sup>126</sup> Hamid Ahmed, e-mail message to author, July 15, 2008. Dr. Hamid Ahmed worked for the 10th Mountain Division (U.S. Army) at Iskandaria, Iraq in Babil to establish training bases.

<sup>127</sup> Wilbanks and Karsh, “How the Sons of Iraq Stabilized Iraq,” 65 – 67.

<sup>128</sup> Cigar, “Al-Qaida, the Tribes,” 56.

threat to security.<sup>129</sup> Shi'ia and Sunni politicians were both wary of the disparate groups and feared that the SOI's power could grow into a movement that would threaten their power base.<sup>130</sup>

In October 2008, the U.S. began to transition the SOI program to the Government of Iraq (GOI). In order to facilitate the transparency of the program, coalition forces had agreed to hand over a biometric database they had created of all the SOI participants. The transition of the SOI program to the GOI was marked with uncertainty and concern, as well as funding issues.<sup>131</sup> The GOI was reluctant to make significant political concessions to the Sunnis because they saw their organization as a threat to GOI's monopoly on the legitimate use of force. Many of the SOI had also been apart of Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath party and police forces. The Sunni political leadership and tribal sheikhs suspected that the GOI would use information about the SOI to make arrests and leverage their power.

Although there was doubt that the program would transition well, over the next few years many of the SOI were integrated into the ISF or IPS, or were given civilian jobs.<sup>132</sup> Unfortunately, many SOI were also killed or were forced to leave the country. Some Awakening leaders have been involved in politics at the provincial and national

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<sup>129</sup> Ahmed Dulaymi, interview by author, September 3, 2014. Ahmed Dulaymi was elected as the governor of Anbar province in 2013.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Dhia al Dherzi, email to author, July 28, 2008. Dhia al Dherzi worked for the Civilian Police Assistance Training Team (CPATT), in the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior (MOI) Finance section.

<sup>132</sup> Kenneth Katzman, "Iraq: Politics, Governance, and Human Rights," *Congressional Research Service* 13 Dec 2012. [www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS21968.pdf](http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS21968.pdf) (accessed 14 December 2014)

level since the drawdown of coalition forces in the region, but most have been forced to leave the political arena.<sup>133</sup>

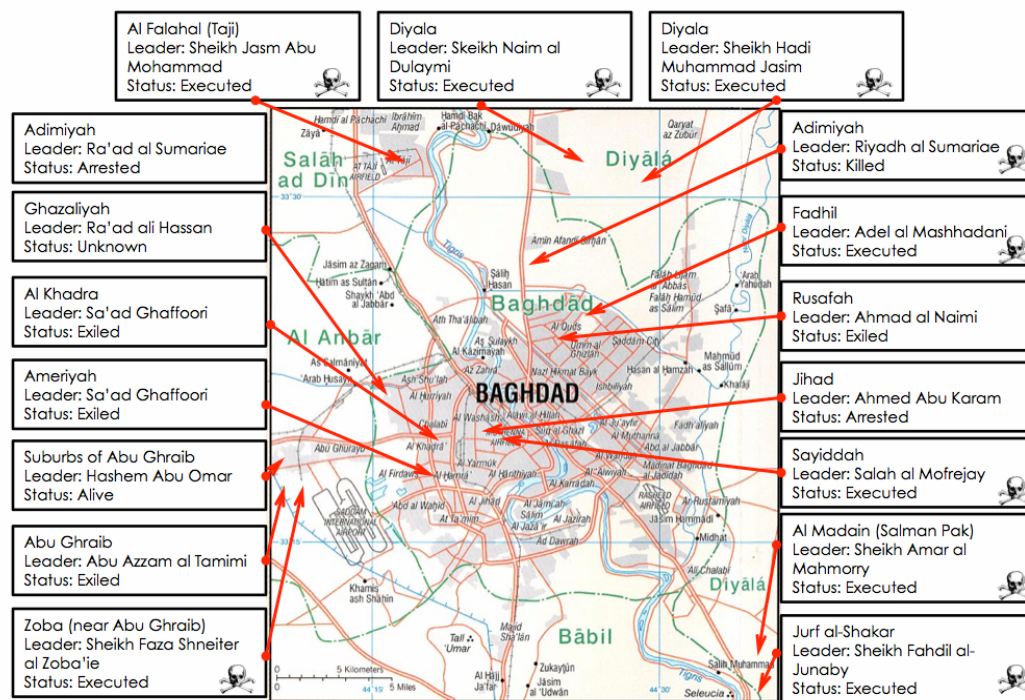


Fig. 6.3. Greater-Baghdad SOI leaders and status a/o May 2015. Data compiled from interviews with Sa'ad Ghaffoori and Dhafir Abdul Karim. See also: "Iraq Executes 26 men on 'terrorism' charges." *BBC News*. 21 January 2014. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25832> [Figure is the author's own].

## Iraqi Political Parties and Militant Groups

In Iraq, political parties and militant groups are often intertwined. Because Iraq's security situation is so dire, most individuals seeking power are forced to have two faces:

<sup>133</sup> Katzman, "Iraq: Politics."

one political and one that is militant.<sup>134</sup> This complex interplay between politicians and militant groups is readily apparent when assessing Iraqi politics over the past decade. Most Shi'ia political parties are associated with a major militant group, and it is oftentimes difficult to separate the two.

TABLE 6.2

IRAQI MILITANT GROUPS AND ASSOCIATED POLITICAL PARTY

Sect	Militant Group	Political Party
Kurdish	Kurdish Islamic Movement	Islamic Movement of Kurdistan
Sunni	Islamic Army Iraq	Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP)
Sunni	Daesh (ISIS, ISIL)	Islamic State
Shi'ia	Badr Brigades	Supreme Council on the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI)
Shi'ia	Iraqi Supreme Council on Islam	Supreme Council on the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI)
Shi'ia	Asa'ib ahl al-Haq	<i>associated with</i> Islamic Dawa Party
Shi'ia	Mahdi Army (JAM)	Sadrist Trend
Shi'ia	Saraya al Salam	Sadrist Trend
Shi'ia	Promised Day Brigades	Sadrist Trend
Shi'ia	Ka'taib Hezbollah	Iraqi Hezbollah

*Source:* Data compiled from a variety of sources, see: Adeed Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 144, 191, 200, 249-252, Aram Roston, *The Man Who Pushed America to War* (New York: Nation Books, 2008), 12, 89-92, 153, 161, 322 – 324 [Table is the author's own].

It is important to note that the Sunni and Kurdish militant groups are perceived by the Iraqi government as much more of a threat than the Shi'ia militant groups, which are

<sup>134</sup> Ghaffoori, interview.

often portrayed as militias that keep the peace.<sup>135</sup> Because the SOI was perceived to be “legitimate” by the U.S. forces in Iraq, and marginally supported by some senior politicians in Baghdad, it may have only exacerbated the fear that the SOI would eventually become a threat to the Shi’ia-dominated government in Baghdad.

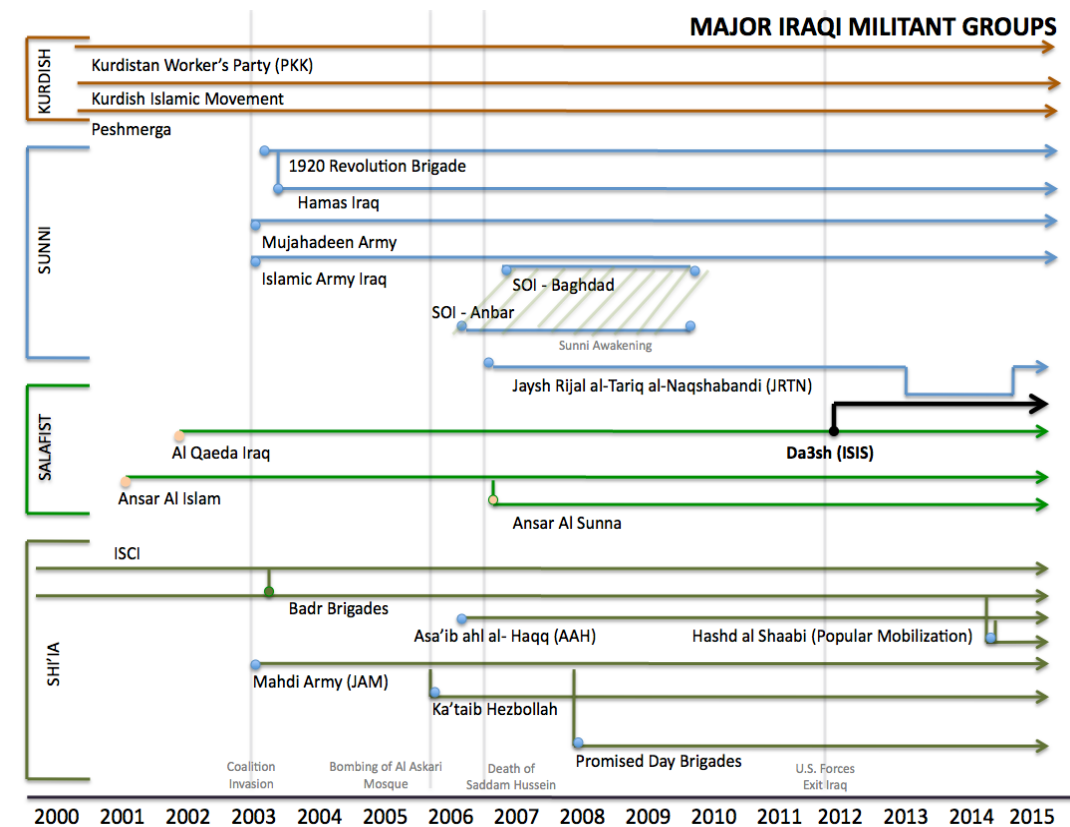


Fig 6.4 Major Iraqi Militant Groups 2000 – 2015. Data compiled from: Stanford University, *Mapping Militant Organizations: Iraq*, available from: <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/> and Azeem Ibrahim. *The Resurgence of Al Qaeda in Syria and Iraq*, Strategic Studies Institute: U.S. Army War College Press, 2014. [Figure is the author’s own].

<sup>135</sup> Abdul Karim, interview.

Likewise, organized Sunni militants could have been a major threat to only other major Sunni militant group, the Islamic Army, which was led by Tariq al-Hashemi. In the eyes of many Iraqi politicians, a popular, legitimate armed group, like the SOI, could have easily become a powerful political party. And, their fears were not unfounded; in the wake of their military successes, Abu Abed and his followers began a secular political party named al-Hal, but it was quickly overtaken by entrenched Sunni politicians.<sup>136</sup>

On the political front, the central issue for Iraq's Arab Sunni population their marginalization in the political arena after the removal of Saddam Hussein. The marginalization prompted the Association of Muslim Scholars in Iraq (AMSI) to call for a Sunni boycott of the 2005 elections. With the exception of Ayad Allawi's INA, the Iraqi Communist Party, and the IIP, most of the Sunni parties were created after the U.S. invasion, and did not have the institutional depth or historical legacy that Kurdish and Shi'ia parties had built over the past several decades. In addition, de-Ba'athification laws severely hampered their ability to put their strongest leaders at the forefront of politics. This left secular-leaning Arab Sunnis at a great political disadvantage. In 2005, the major Shi'ia bloc, the United Iraqi Alliance got 48.2% of the Iraqi vote. The Kurdish bloc got 25.7% and the more secular bloc led by Allawi only got 13.8% of the vote.

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<sup>136</sup> Ghaffoori, interview, Abdul Karim, interview.

TABLE 6.3  
IRAQI ELECTION OUTCOMES, 2005

PARTY/BLOC	LEADERS	SECT	R/S	VOTES	%	PS
Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan	Talabani, Barzani	Kurd	Secular	2,175,511	25.7	75
Islamic Group of Kurdistan	Abd-Al Aziz	Kurd	Religious	60,592	0.7	2
<b>Total Major Kurdish Parties</b>				<b>2,236,103</b>	<b>26.4</b>	<b>77</b>
United Iraqi Alliance	Hakim, Jaafari, Chalabi, Shahrastani	Shi'ia	Religious	4,075,292	48.2	140
Islamic Action Organization in Iraq	al Tamah	Sh'ia	Religious	43,205	0.5	2
National Independent Cadres & Elites	al-Sheikh	Shi'ia	Religious	69,938	0.8	3
<b>Total Major Shi'ia Parties</b>				<b>4,188,435</b>	<b>49.5</b>	<b>145</b>
Iraqi List	Allawi	Sunni/ Shi'ia	Secular	1,168,943	13.8	40
People's Union	Mousa	Sunni/ Shi'ia	Secular	69,920	0.8	5
National Democratic Alliance	al-Chaderchi	Sunni/ Shi'ia	Secular	36,795	0.4	1
The Iraqis (Iraqiun) Reconciliation and Liberation Bloc	al-Yawer	Sunni	Secular	150,680	1.8	5
	al-Juburi	Sunni	Secular	30,796	0.4	1
<b>Total Major Sunni/Secular Parties</b>				<b>1,457,134</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>52</b>
Iraqi Turkmen Front	Abdurrahman	Minority	Secular	93,480	1.1	3
National Rafidain List	Kana	Minority	Secular	36,255	0.4	1
Other				444,819	5.3	-
<b>Total Minorities/Others</b>				<b>574,554</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>4</b>

*Source:* Data compiled from a variety of sources see: Kenneth Katzman, "Iraq: Elections and New Government" CRS Report for Congress, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/50254.pdf>; Reidar Visser, *A Responsible End? The United States and the Iraqi Transition, 2005 – 2010*, 2010. [Table is the author's own].



The graphic below (Fig 6.5) depicts how in the 2005 elections Iraqi political parties tended to form coalitions on two axes. The first axis is a spectrum of religiosity in politics.

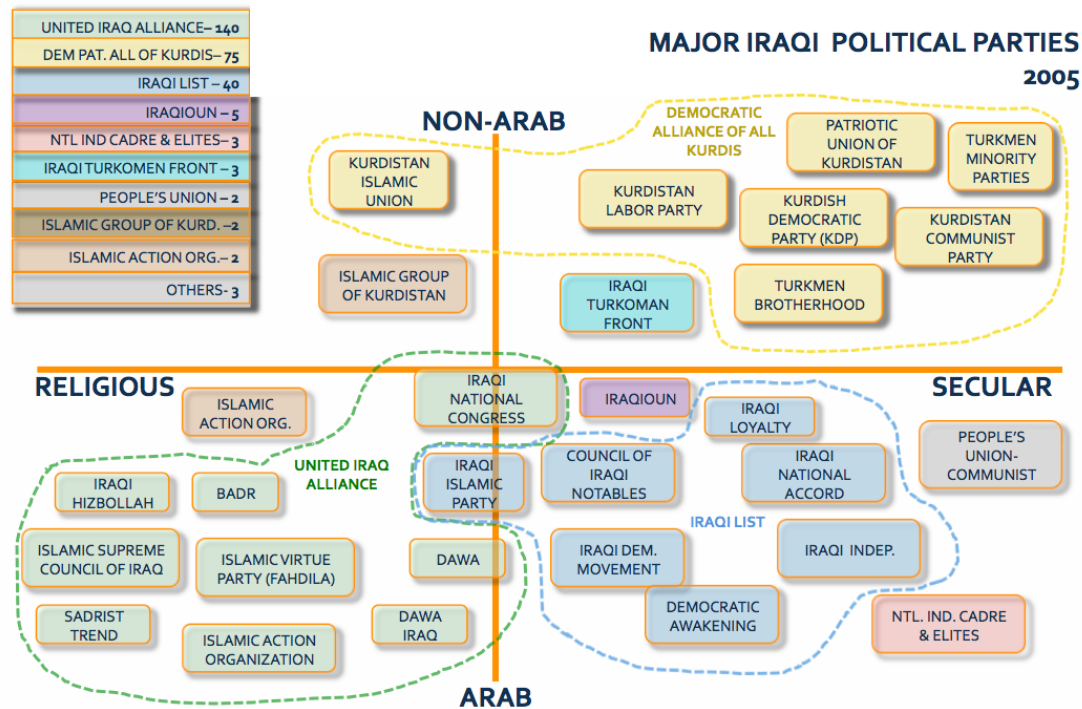


Fig. 6.5 Spectrum of Major Iraqi Political Parties, 2005. The figure above gives a general depiction of how political parties in the 2005 election aligned along the spectrum of Arab vs. non-Arab and religious vs. secular. Data compiled from a variety of sources see: Kenneth Katzman, “Iraq: Elections and New Government” CRS Report for Congress, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/50254.pdf>; Reidar Visser, *A Responsible End? The United States and the Iraqi Transition, 2005 – 2010*, 2010. [Figure is the author’s own].

On the far left you have parties like the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) and the Sadrists, who want to fully integrate Shi’ia Islam into political life. On the

opposite end of the spectrum are more secular-leaning parties and the communist parties. The religious-leaning Shi'ia political parties and the more moderate Shi'ia parties tended to align together. Likewise, the more secular Kurdish and Sunni parties tended to form alliances. Within the Kurdish parties, there was a split between secular Kurds and pro-Islamist Kurds, but a significant majority of Kurds aligned with the secular DPAK.

The second axis is a spectrum of ethnicities, where Kurds and Arabs are split. The Kurds habitually form coalitions together, whereas Arab Sunnis and Arab Shi'ia split on sectarian lines. The Kurds and Arabs didn't form coalitions together, nor did Sunni and Shi'ia Arabs. The one exception was Allawi's Iraqi List, which included a diverse group of Sunni, Shi'ia, and minority political parties.

### **2010 Elections**

For many Sunni Arabs, the 2010 elections were a chance at regaining their place in the political arena. After the surge, the country was relatively stable, and violence was at an all time low. The decrease in violence and reconciliation efforts led to wider acceptance of the new political processes. The table below shows the primary Sunni Arab political parties that were operating in Iraq during the 2010 elections.

TABLE 6.4

## PRIMARY SUNNI ARAB POLITICAL PARTIES IN IRAQ

Party	Religious/ Secular	Leader	Year Founded	2010 Bloc
Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP)	Religious	Tariq Al-Hashemi, Ayad al-Sumarai	1990	Iraqi National Movement
Assembly of Independent Democrats	Secular	Adnan Pachachi	2005	Iraqi National Movement
Iraqi Front for Nat'l Dialogue	Secular	Saleh al-Mutlaq	2005	Iraqi National Movement
Iraqoun	Secular	Ghazi al-Yawer	2005	Iraqi National Movement
Iraqi Arab Gathering	Secular	Abdul Karim Aftan al-Jibouri	2008	Iraqi National Movement
Al Hadba	Secular	Atheel al-Nujafi	2009	Iraqi National Movement
Al Hal	Secular	Jamal al-Karboli	2009	Iraqi National Movement
National Future Gathering	Secular	Rafi al-Issawi	2010	Iraqi National Movement
Renewal List	Secular	Tariq al-Hashemi	2010	Iraqi National Movement

*Source:* Data compiled from a variety of sources, see: Adeed Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 144, 191, 200, 249-252, Aram Roston, *The Man Who Pushed America to War* (New York: Nation Books, 2008), 12, 89-92, 153, 161, 322 – 324. [Table is the author's own].

TABLE 6.5

## IRAQI ELECTION RESULTS, 2010

PARTY/BLOC	LEADER	SECT	R/S	VOTES	%	SP*
Kurdistan List	Salih	Kurd	Secular	1,681,714	14.6	43

Gorran (Change)	Mustafa	Kurd	Secular	476,478	4.1	8
Kurdistan Islamic Union	Faraj	Kurd	Religious	243,720	2.1	4
<b>Total Major Kurdish Parties</b>				<b>2,554,442</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>57</b>
State of Law Coalition	Maliki	Shi'ia	Religious	2,792,083	24.2	89
Iraqi National Alliance	Jaafari	Sh'ia	Religious	2,092,066	18.2	70
<b>Total Major Shi'ia Parties</b>				<b>4,884,149</b>	<b>42.4</b>	<b>159</b>
Iraqi National Movement	Allawi	Sunni/ Shi'ia	Secular	2,849,612	24.7	91
Unity Alliance of Iraq	Zaid	Sunni/ Shi'ia	Secular	306,647	2.7	4
Iraqi Accord	Tikriti	Sunni	Religious	298,226	2.6	6
<b>Total Major Sunni/Secular Parties</b>				<b>3,454,485</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>101</b>
Minorities				61,153	0.5	8
Others				572,183	5	-
<b>Total Minorities/Others</b>				<b>633,336</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>8</b>

*Source:* Data compiled from a variety of sources, see Shak Bernard Hanish, "The Post 2003 Iraqi Electoral Laws" *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol 1 No. 17, 2011; The Independent High Electoral Commission, [www.ihed.iq](http://www.ihed.iq); and Reidar Visser, *A Responsible End? The United States and the Iraqi Transition, 2005 – 2010*, 2010. [Table is the author's own]. \*Seats in Parliament

By 2009, the main Sunni Arab political parties in Iraq were leaning more towards secular policies, but there was still a large rivalry with the Islamist IIP. In the run up to the 2010 elections, the main Sunni Arab parties included: the Iraqi National Accord (INA), al-Hal, Al Hadra, the Iraqi Arab Gathering, the Iraqi Front for National Dialogue, IIP, and the non-Arab Iraqi Turkmen Front. Smaller Sunni Arab parties included the Iraqi Communist Party and the Independent Iraqi Alliance. During the 2010 election, nearly all the major Sunni Arab parties, even the IIP, joined the Iraqi National Movement, a political bloc led by Ayad Allawi's secular Iraqiyya party.

Because of differences in the Shi'ia political spectrum, the Islamic Dawa Party broke from the more fundamental Islamist parties, and formed a more secular leaning Shi'ia coalition called "State of Law" (SOL). Therefore, instead of three major blocs like Iraq saw in 2005, four major lists won seats in the Iraqi parliament in 2010: two Shi'ia lists, Ayad Allawi's secular Sunni/Shi'ia Iraqiyya list, and a Kurdish list.

The inclusion of Sunni voters and the break in the Shi'ia political spectrum contributed to a huge electoral shift from the 2005 elections. Former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's bloc, who was seen as pro-Sunni, gained the most seats in parliament with 91. Shi'ia Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's SOL was next with 89 seats. The fundamentalist National Alliance of the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council (ISCI) and the Sadrists got 70 seats, followed by the Kurdistan List, which got 43. There were also several minor parties, including the Kurdish opposition groups that gained seats. These included the Gorran (Change) List with 8 seats, the Kurdistan Islamic Union with 4 seats, and the Kurdistan Islamic Group with 2 seats. The Accordance Front finished with only 6 seats, despite being a major player in 2005, and Interior Minister Jawad Bolani's Unity of Iraq list got 4 seats. There were also five seats set aside for minority Christians in Baghdad, Dohuk, Irbil, Ninewa, and Tamim.

As shown on the figure below, the spectrum of major political parties in Iraq grew and shifted in the lead up to the 2010 elections. The Kurds largely remained a solid non-Arab, secular front, however there was a significant increase in the number of Kurds aligning with non-secular factions. Ayad Allawi was again successful in gaining a large cross-section of Iraqi society, both Arabs, minorities, secular and religious,

Sunni and Shi'ia. The fundamentalist-nationalist Shi'ia Islamist parties broke from the more moderate Islamist Dawa Party led by Maliki. This led to four major blocs on the Iraqi political spectrum, instead of three.

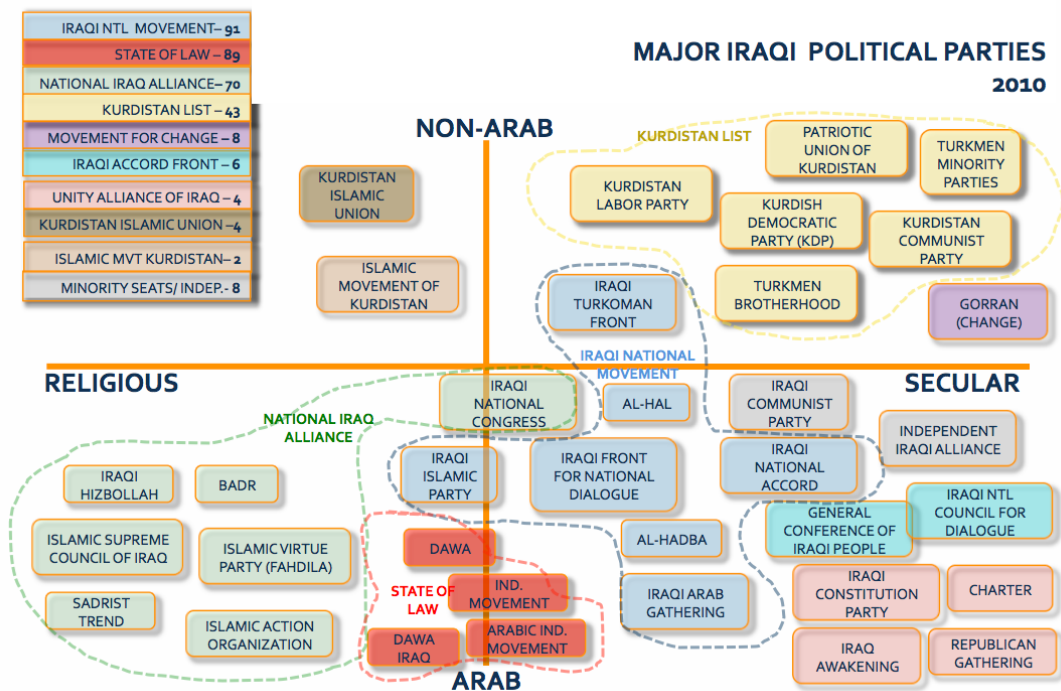


Fig. 6.6 Major Iraqi Political Parties – 2010. The figure above gives a general depiction of how political parties in the 2010 election aligned along the spectrum of Arab vs. non-Arab and religious vs. secular. Data compiled from a variety of sources, *Source*: Data compiled from a variety of sources, see Shak Bernard Hanish, “The Post 2003 Iraqi Electoral Laws” *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol 1 No. 17, 2011; The Independent High Electoral Commission, [www.ihed.iq](http://www.ihed.iq); and Reidar Visser, *A Responsible End? The United States and the Iraqi Transition, 2005 – 2010*, 2010. [Figure is the author’s own].

During the summer of 2010, various concessions and deals were brokered in

order to form a government, but a final decision on the status of the government could not be reached. U.S. Vice President Joe Biden and the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Christopher Hill insisted on having Prime Minister Maliki remain in power.<sup>137</sup> Hill likened Allawi, a Shi'ia politician with the support of secular Sunnis, to a black front man for the [South African] Afrikaner party.<sup>138</sup>

An Allawi/Maliki coalition was promoted as being in the best interest for U.S. policy makers because in theory they thought the coalition would suppress Islamist fundamentalist influences. The logical coalition between Maliki's SOL and Allawi's al-Iraqiyya ended up being unobtainable, though, in large part due to Allawi's accusations that Iran's Shi'ia fundamentalists were heavily influencing Maliki's decision making. Equally, Iraqi Shi'ia feared that a Sunni-leaning al-Iraqiyya government would facilitate the return of exiled Ba'ath party members and reinstate a Hussein-style dictatorship.

In November 2010, after months of political jockeying by the U.S. and the Iraqis, there was a breakthrough in negotiations. Maliki's SOL coalition, Allawi's Iraqiyya, and the Kurdish list agreed to give Maliki the premiership, the Kurds the presidency and promised to create a special organization, the National Council for Strategic Policies, for former Prime Minister Allawi. The National Council was concessionary move, and it was created as an amalgamation of political players, which would make strategic decisions in the realm of foreign affairs, national security, and economics.

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<sup>137</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *Endgame*, 628 – 651.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 615.

## Analysis

On the one hand the *Sahwa* was about gaining power and putting the Sunnis back into the political fold, while on the other, it is hard to imagine the *Sahwa* forming without the more moderate-leaning Sunnis' motivation to balance the threat from the Salafist AQI.<sup>139</sup> Many of the leading scholars and practitioners of the U.S. Army's doctrine on counterinsurgency have argued that counterinsurgency takes place at the small unit level. Although initially U.S. forces were not ideally postured to fight the insurgency in Iraq, the SOI had the autonomy to execute the small unit tactics that were successful against the insurgents in their sectors. In essence, it was the SOI that reflected the counterinsurgency doctrine of population-centric, rapidly adapting, tactical-level resistance. The Sunni realignment also demonstrates that the impetus to "change sides" often happens on a personal level before it grows into an ideological movement. Likewise, the Sunni Awakening shows that realignment is often initialized because of betrayal and opportunities for advancement, and not necessarily by monetary gain. As the Awakening movements grew, it became a way for former military members and jobless men to find meaningful employment.<sup>140</sup> So, while the initial recruitment was ideologically driven, over time it became a security business.<sup>141</sup>

There is disagreement on whether or not a single personality can shape an entire movement. Colonel Simon Gardiner, an Army Civil Affairs Officer that served in Iraq during the surge, points to the importance of personal leadership in countering

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<sup>139</sup> Kuehl, interview.

<sup>140</sup> Ray Chakmakchi, interview by author, August 11, 2014.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.



insurgency.<sup>142</sup> Equally important during the *Sahwa* was the role of a leading figure, like Abu Risha or Abu Abed, who had charisma and leadership capabilities, as well as the ability to convince others to “switch sides.”

On the other hand, then-Major General John Kelly, who was the Multi-National Force-West commander during the height of the surge, states that “[n]o single personality was the key in Anbar...[i]t was a combination of factors, not the least of which...was the consistent command philosophy.”<sup>143</sup> It is important to understand that under the previous regime in Iraq there was a cult of personality that promoted the adulation of Saddam Hussein. Likewise, a leading figure in Arab politics often dominates, which is common in authoritarian governance.<sup>144</sup> So, it is not surprising, from a cultural standpoint, that the actions of one person would be celebrated by elements of the Iraqi populace.

The social scientist, Max Weber, stressed the importance of charismatic leadership in his analysis of power and legitimate authority.<sup>145</sup> The importance of charismatic leadership as a source of legitimate authority was seen during the Sunni Awakening, but perhaps underappreciated by coalition forces, which were more accustomed to legal-rational and traditional sources of authority. The rapid rise of Abu Abed as a charismatic leader is especially important, as his power rested on his image of being able to perform heroic deeds, often by what were seen as irrational or untraditional

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<sup>142</sup> Simon Gardiner, interview by author, 11 May 2014.

<sup>143</sup> John Kelly, “Foreword,” *Al-Anbar Awakening Volume II: Iraqi Perspectives* ed. Gary Montgomery and Timothy McWilliams (Quantico: Marine Corps University Press, 2009), vii.

<sup>144</sup> Joseph Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein’s Ba’ath Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 175.

<sup>145</sup> Max Weber, *The Vocation Lectures* ed. David Owen, et. al. (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2004), 38.

means. Yet, throughout the Middle East and in Islamic culture, the charismatic leader appears quite often in both politics and religion. Going all the way back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, the Prophet Muhammad is regarded as the Muslim charismatic leader. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century the region saw a succession of political leaders who were typically deemed to be a source of legitimate authority after a *coup d'état* or social revolution. Yasser Arafat, Gamel Abdul Nasser, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the Ayatollah Khomeni, and even Saddam Hussein were all viewed (or sought to be viewed) as charismatic leaders.

The figure below shows how realignment occurred in the case of Abu Risha and Abu Abed. First, the individuals had a grievance. In the case of Abu Risha, it was AQI's lack of respect for tribal authority and the fact they murdered his family members. In the case of Abu Abed, it was AQI's indiscriminate use of violence and the lack of security in his neighborhood. Both men sensed an opportunity for advancement, both in terms of security for their area and in political opportunity.<sup>146</sup> Over time, this led to their individual realignment with U.S. forces. The next steps in the realignment process were significant battlefield successes against AQI, leading to their rise as popular figure. Only then did the realignment happen at a macro-level, across a sector of the society. It is important to note that within that sector of society, many have the same grievances as the popular figure. Once a macro-level alignment took place, U.S. forces were able to institutionalize the program. It is important to note that the bulk of the realignment process is ideological. Most of the steps involved are not economic in nature. Only when

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<sup>146</sup> Ghaffoori, interview.

an ideological shift occurred, buffered by an opportunity for economic and political security, did realignment take place.

Realignment in the case of the Sunni Awakening, was typically brought on by personal grievances and an opportunity to gain security. The issue for host nation and coalition forces is that in order for the realigned factions to aid in counterinsurgency, they must be able to self-organize and protect themselves, as well as their communities. The realigned factions also had a leading figure, which convinced others to join the cause. The problem is that self-organization by militant groups, especially those with a leading figure, are perceived as a threat to the state and entrenched politicians. There was also a problem with the legitimacy of the organization. While the U.S. and many Iraqi citizens appreciated the efforts of the SOI, they were never truly seen as a legitimate organization. Ironically, the Sunni Awakening movement had the effect of securing the Shi'ia-led government in Baghdad, but Sunni Awakening leaders were later abandoned, targeted, and forced into political exile by Baghdad politicians.

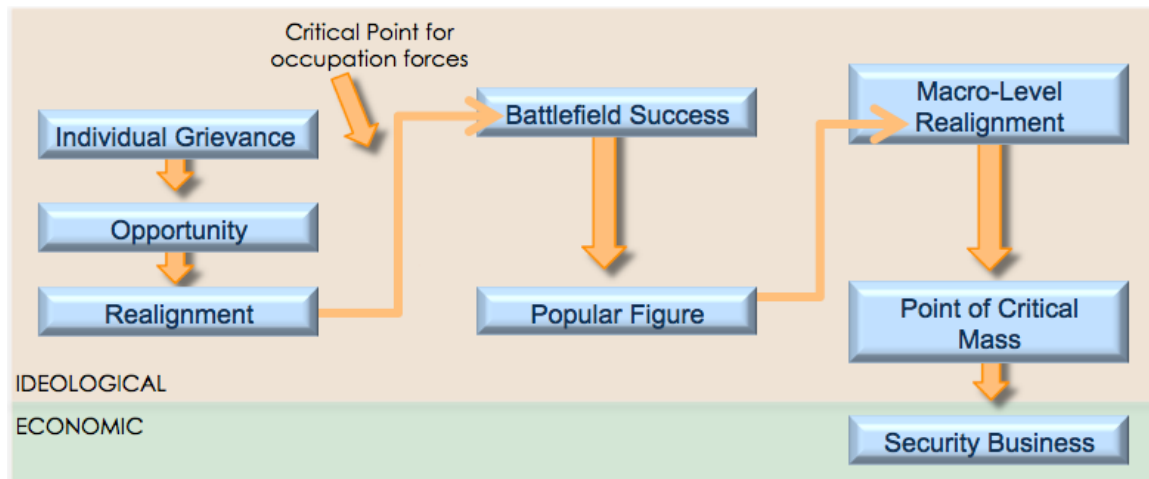


Fig. 6.7 Phases of Realignment: Ideological vs. Economic. The figure above gives a general depiction the phases of alignment during the Sunni Awakening and the critical juncture for occupation forces. [Figure is the author's own].

## Hypotheses

The theoretical literature on alliance formation reveals several key insights for both the Sunni Awakening and the formation of coalitions across the spectrum of Iraqi politics. The first set of hypotheses, derive from the political science literature on neorealism, shows that structural constraints were an important factor in the Sunni Awakening. The two primary hypotheses are that political factions facing a threat will align with others to oppose the factions posing the threat (balance) or that political factions facing a threat will ally with the most threatening power (bandwagon). In the case of the Sunni Awakening, the political factions within Iraq's Sunni community chose align with the U.S. to balance against the greater threat, which was Al Qaeda.

A second school of thought within the political science literature is derived from the comparative politics literature on coalitions, where political factions will realign when

doing so gives them a minimum winning coalition. The comparative politics literature is important here as well because Sunni political parties did come together in the bloc led by Iraqiyya in the 2010 elections in order to form a minimum winning coalition.

A third school of thought on alliance building comes from the behavioral science field, which looks at individual motive. In the case of the Sunni Awakening, it is important to look at individual motives because it was individuals that were the catalyst for the larger movement. In the case of Abu Risha and Abu Abed, two of the first leaders to “switch sides,” it was their personal grievances with AQI and their ideological differences that provoked them into aligning with U.S. forces. Economic considerations came later. Identity considerations were not as important, as many of the AQI fighters were from the same ethnicity and religion. Likewise, most of the U.S. and coalition forces did not share the same ethnic or religious identity as the Sunnis. The behavioral science literature on identity considerations, though, is important when looking at the political parties. Parties and militant factions tended to align based on ethnic and religious identity more often than on political ideology. The only exception was both of the political coalitions led by Ayad Allawi, where ideology took precedence over identity considerations. Likewise, political factions facing a threat tended to align in ways to balance that threat, versus bandwagon.

Finally, the hypotheses from the complexity and sociology literature play a part in the Sunni Awakening as well, as we see that political factions will align when a point of critical mass is achieved. This is very well demonstrated in the case of the “macro” level realignment that gained momentum after significant battlefield victories. The point of

critical mass is hard to pinpoint, but in each case the movements experienced exponential growth at the point of a macro-level realignment. Likewise, each movement was driven by charismatic leaders who used their personality as a form of authority.

TABLE 6.6  
HYPOTHESES SUPPORTED BY SUNNI ARAB ALIGNMENTS

Supported	H	Proposition	Structure or Agency	Academic School
YES	H1	Political factions facing a threat will align with others to oppose the factions posing the threat (balance).	Structural	Neorealist - Balance
X	H2	Political factions facing a threat will ally with the most threatening power (bandwagon).	Structural	Neorealist-Bandwagon
YES	H3	Political momentum: Political factions will realign when doing so gives them a minimum winning coalition.	Structural	Comparative Politics
YES	H4	Political factions will align when monetary gains are assured.	Agency	Behavioral Science
YES	H5	Factions will align based on racial, religious, or ethnic background.	Agency	Behavioral Science
YES	H6	Political factions will align when they have a similar ideology.	Agency	Behavioral Science
YES	H7	Factions will align based on shared grievances (past and/or present).	Agency	Behavioral Science
YES	H8	Political factions will align when a point of critical mass is achieved.	Structure & Agency	Complexity Theory

YES	H9	Political factions will align when a charismatic leader drives a social movement.	Structure & Agency	Sociology
YES	H10	Political factions will align using agent-based considerations in the beginning, but will gravitate towards neorealist considerations as they mature.	Structure & Agency	Causal Mechanisms & Process Tracing

Source: [Table is the author's own].

TABLE 6.7

MOST PROBABLE HYPOTHESES SUPPORTED BY SUNNI ARAB ALIGNMENTS

Year	Party/ Militant Faction	Alignment With	Alignment Against	Threat Is	H	Most Probable Hypothesis
1980	Ba'ath Party	U.S.	Iran	External	H1	Neorealism – Balance Threat
2003	Islamic Army	-	U.S./coalition	Internal	H1	Neorealism – Balance Threat
2006	Anbar SOI	U.S.	Al Qaeda- Iraq	Internal	H9	Charismatic Leadership
2007	Baghdad SOI	U.S.	Al Qaeda- Iraq	Internal	H9	Charismatic Leadership

Source: Data compiled from a variety of sources. The table shows the primary alliances and the most probable hypothesis that supports the alignment. [Table is the author's own].

### Application to Theoretical Model

In the case of the Sunni Awakening, the realignment should be viewed a social

movement, that follows a unique life cycle. This particular social movement was a result of the cleavage between politically moderate Sunnis and the radicalized *Salafist* factions that supported AQI. The catalyst and success of this particular social movement can be linked to the charismatic leadership of both Abu Risha, who initiated the tribal realignment, and with Abu Abed, who initiated the Awakening in Baghdad. The emerging theory for explaining the political realignment that took place during the Sahwa looks follows the theoretical model proposed in Chapter 1.

In both the cases of the SOI in Baghdad and the SOI in Anbar, there was a grievance. For both Sahwa groups, this grievance was with AQI and their desire to exert their authority and rule of law, as well as retribution for the murder of family members. Next there was a political cleavage between the Salafists and relatively politically moderate Sunni Arabs, former Ba'athists and the IIP. Under the charismatic leadership of Abu Risha in Anbar province and Abu Abed in Baghdad, the masses were quickly organized into a fighting force. Once the political objective of ousting AQI from Sunni Arab territories was achieved, the groups could have either institutionalized or disintegrated. Due to political pressure from Baghdad and opposition parties, the SOI was not able to institutionalized, and instead the group disintegrated.



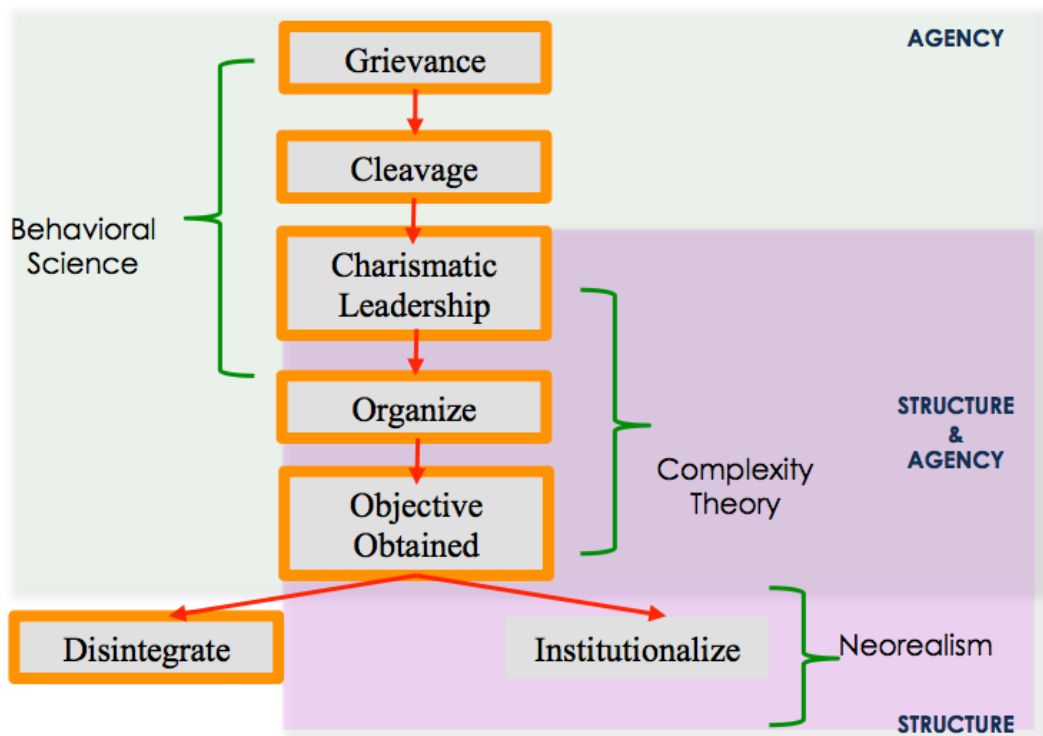


Fig. 6.8. Phases of Political Realignment during the Sahwa. The figure above gives a general depiction of the causes behind the alignment process during the Sahwa. The process is outlined in orange. [Figure is the author's own].

## Conclusion

There are several theories that come to play at different stages in the realignment process. Both agency and structure are important, as well as the notion of complexity. In the beginning of the realignment theories from behavioral science help explain why individuals initially choose to realign in the early phases of the process. Once the realignment begins to take place amongst a wider body of individuals, the theories from neorealism explain it on a larger scale, while simultaneously the rise of the popular figure

and the points of critical mass are best explained through complexity theory and sociology's charismatic leadership. Finally, if a security business is established (if the security operation becomes a business), behavioral science once again explains why individuals will realign.

While the theoretical literature appears to explain different stages of the Sahwa, none of them explains it fully. Therefore, an integrated theory is needed to do so. Because no one single theory from the academic literature above fully explains how alliances occur, this work proposes a new theory on how to address the question of why the Sunnis realigned against AQI. This theory suggests that in order for realignment to occur, instead of looking at alliance formation through the lens of behavioral science, political science, sociology or even complexity theory alone, the alignment needs to be seen as a multistage process, where both structure (in terms of initial conditions) and agency (in terms of leadership) play complimentary roles, depending on the maturity of the organization.

The case of the Sunni Awakening shows us that competing politico-military factions formed alliances with the U.S. based on agent-level and structural-level constraints. In order to balance against the threat of AQI, the Sunnis joined the side of the U.S., which supports the neorealist hypothesis. Likewise, the Sunnis came together on the political front to form a minimum winning coalition when they supported Allawi's Iraqi National Accord in 2010. From the behavioral science literature we see that ideological differences and grievances played a large role at the individual-level and at the onset of the realignment. Finally, the complexity literature is supported because at the point of

critical mass, the movement went from a micro-level to macro-level.

The relationship between realignment and the occupying force's policies in facilitating realignment is also important. In the aforementioned cases, the U.S. didn't approach Abu Risha or Abu Abed with the notion of realignment or switching sides. To the contrary, the U.S. military's role was to gain them battlefield success, which in turn gave them more legitimacy and popular support. So, the critical point in realignment for the U.S. military is really the point between the individual's realignment and the battlefield successes.

## CHAPTER 7. SHI'IA RESISTANCE

*"We will not stop resisting the occupation until liberation or martyrdom."*

Moqtada al-Sadr, 2005<sup>147</sup>

### Background

In order to fully understand the dynamics of the Shi'ia resistance in Iraq after the fall of the Ba'ath party, it is important to understand the history of how the Shi'ia came to be the majority faction within Iraq, as well as their history of oppression in the country. It is also important to understand historical context of Iraq's Shiite theocratic neighbor to the east, Iran, as well as the religious context of the rivalry between two major Islamic factions.

The Sunni-Shi'ia split is one of the most important events in the history of Islam. After the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632AD, a council of elders selected the next ruler of the faith, Muhammad's father-in law, Abu Bakr. Abu Bakr was caliph for a little over two years, when he died of a sudden illness. The next three successors, who along with Abu Bakr make the *Rashidun*, or Rightly Guided Caliphs (in Sunni Islam), were murdered. Abu Bakr's successor, Umar<sup>148</sup> was assassinated by Persians; Uthman was

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<sup>147</sup> Moqtada al-Sadr quoted in, "New Sadr Army to Fight U.S.," *Gulf Daily News* 14 June 2008 <http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/NewsDetails.aspx?storyid=220221> (accessed 16 April 2015).

<sup>148</sup> Those who adhere to Shi'ia Islamic doctrine do not consider Umar to be a legitimate caliph.

killed by mutinous soldiers; and the fourth rightly guided caliph, Ali, was killed by extremist factions. It is the murder of the fourth caliph, Ali, which split the Islamic *ummah*. After Ali's death, given the years of turbulence within the faith, there was great dissention on who should succeed him. One of Uthman's cousins, Muawiya, the governor of Damascus, filled the power vacuum, and moved to consolidate his political power with the burgeoning religion. Many in the faith rejected Muawiya's claim, and believed that the root of the political problems within the faith were in how succession to the Prophet was determined. This sect came to believe that man could not choose the Prophet's successor, and only the will of Allah would determine the successor to the Prophet through his progeny.<sup>149</sup> These early Shi'ia split from the faith and rejected the three Rightly Guided Caliphs that followed the Prophet. They determined that it was actually Mohammad's son-in-law Ali, not Abu Bakr that should have been the Prophet's first successor.<sup>150</sup> Since that time, within Shi'ia Islam, descendants of the Prophet are entitled to the honorific "Sayyid," a distinction for male progeny.

Because the Sunnis rapidly fused the religion to politics, the Shi'ia were seen as an errant, minority faction that operated outside the political spectrum. Over the next several centuries, the Sunnis dominated the politics of much of the Islamic world. This changed, however, during the Safavid dynasty in modern-day Iran. Over the centuries following death of the Prophet Muhammad, the Persians slowly converted to Islam though the influence of dynastic rulers, imperial politics, and intermarriage. By the late

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<sup>149</sup> Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabatab'i, *Shi'ite Islam*, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, trans. and ed. (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1975), 174 – 89.

<sup>150</sup> Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006), 37.

middle ages, descendants, and those claiming to be descendants, of the Prophet Muhammad had become powerful political players in Iran. When the Safavids, a wealthy and powerful Shi'ia clan, defeated Mongol invaders in 1501, they became the rulers of the country, establishing Shi'ia Islam as the official religion of the state. For the next five centuries, the eminence of Shi'ia Islam dominated the culture on the Iranian plateau, and directly countered the Sunni empires to the west.<sup>151</sup>

In contrast to Iran, Iraq's demographics and religious preferences are varied, and have been for centuries. In 1920, at the beginning of the British Mandate, Iraq was formed out of three Ottoman *vilayets*: Basra in the south, Baghdad in the center and Mosul in the north. Basra was predominantly Shi'ia, and remains so to the present day. Mosul, in the north, is predominantly Sunni with a sizable Kurdish population. In the center, at the crossroads of many civilizations, both ancient and modern, sits Baghdad. Baghdad itself was predominantly Sunni Arab under the Ottoman Empire, but there were large minority factions in the city. Being at the crossroads for so many great civilizations, Baghdad had a cosmopolitan atmosphere that tolerated many faiths.

During the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, most of Iraq's Shi'ia were concentrated in the south. This changed in 1958, when Abdul Karim Qassim, Iraq's Prime Minister at the time, imported impoverished Shi'ia laborers from the south to work in Baghdad's modernizing economy. The Shi'ia were moved in to the northeast quadrant of the city, to an area known as al-Thawra. Later, its residents took the name Sadr City, after a prominent Shi'ia cleric.

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<sup>151</sup> Nasr, *The Shia Revival*, 66 – 67.

## **Iranian Revolution**

During this period, Iran and the West enjoyed a symbiotic relationship. Great Britain and the United States supported the shah who facilitated Western oil interests in the country. Yet, during the 1950's and 1960's, Iran's traditional Muslim clerics and religious leaders started believing that the Western-backed, secular shah was encroaching on their long-established power base. Two of Iran's most prominent 20<sup>th</sup> century Islamist thinkers, Ali Shariati and Ruhollah Khomeini, became well known for their unique blend of traditional Islamic teaching and revolutionary rhetoric. Both men advocated the destruction of the opulent, Westernized Iranian regime and a new government based on Islamic law.

The French-educated Shariati advocated a socio-political order centered upon traditional Shiite religious dogma. Furthermore, his experiences in French universities led him to believe that "all the liberation movements of the Third World were struggling against the same colonialist and neocolonialist oppressors."<sup>152</sup> Shariati's teachings gained popular support with Persian university students during the early 1970's, and Khomeini's revolutionary movement embraced Shariati's message. In 1978, inspired by the fundamentalist message, the nation experienced an Islamic revolution, whereby dissident groups overthrew the shah. By 1979, revolutionary Iranians had ousted the pro-Western shah and facilitated the rapid rise of an anti-American, pro-Shi'ia theocratic government. Once in political power, Khomeini rejected the tenets of the shah's monarchy, and provided a platonic social order in which clerics would rule as the guardians of the

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<sup>152</sup> W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Fundamentalism and Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1988), 134.

community. In doing this, Khomeini believed that the rule of the cleric would also protect Shi'ism.<sup>153</sup> Khomeini's government fused religion and politics together, a revolutionary moment for modern Shiites.

The pro-revolutionary, Islamist academics of this period were highly regarded by Iraq's disenfranchised, Shi'ia underclass, many of which suffered under the Ba'ath party. Under Khomeini, the Iranians saw a way to appeal to Iraq's oppressed Shi'ia majority to counter Iraq's secular, Ba'athist, totalitarian regime. In doing so, Saddam Hussein saw Iran's revolutionary government as a major threat to his control over the Iraqi people, mainly because the Shi'ia constituted such a large sector of Iraq's population. In Iraq, the Ba'ath party successfully quelled any Shi'ia uprisings, but throughout the 1980's there was a growing undercurrent of discontent. Within Iraq, this period also saw the rise of prominent Shi'ia thinkers like Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, who critiqued the Marxist ideology of economic development from an Islamic point of view. Sadr's writings made direct allusions to Shariati, who also critiqued Marxist ideology and advocated a classless, post-capitalist society.

During most of the 1980's, Saddam Hussein fought a prolonged war with its antagonistic and post-revolutionary neighbor to the east. The Iran-Iraq war is often compared to World War I. The bloody conflict made use of chemical weapons, trench warfare, and massive attrition.<sup>154</sup> In order to exacerbate the cleavage between the Shi'ia

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<sup>153</sup> Nasr, *The Shi'ia Revival*, 130.

<sup>154</sup> Estimates range from 120,000 – 800,000 killed from Iran, and 100,000 – 375,000 in Iraq; see: Dilip Hiro, *The Longest War: The Iran-Iraq Conflict* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Christian Koch and David Long,



of Iraq and Iran, Ba'athist propagandists denounced Persians and extolled the Arab ethnicity. Saddam also made many references to the importance of the Iraqi nation, as well as the Arabic heritage of Islam.<sup>155</sup> The conflict ended when the UN brokered a peace deal between the two sides in 1988.

Iran's religious leaders have been able to maintain control of the population through a revolutionary ideology of theocracy and hostility against opulent external regimes. Behind the fundamentalist's religious rhetoric also lays the ambition for absolute political power and regional hegemony. The state has routinely supported terrorist factions and resistance groups across the Middle East like Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Islamic Resistance Movement (HAMAS), and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) in the Levant. For this reason, Iran is on the list of countries that sponsor terrorism, and since the fall of the shah, the West has had a tenuous relationship with the regime.

### **Shi'ia Political and Military Groups**

Traditionally, political parties and militias were outlawed in Iraq, even before the coalition invasion of 2003. Despite this, two major Shi'ia political factions gained prominence before the fall of Saddam Hussein within Iraq: the Islamic Dawa Party and the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). Both political factions gained more traction after the Iranian revolution and are two of the main drivers of Iraqi politics today. Outside Iraq, prominent Shi'ia businessmen that were exiled from the

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*Gulf Security in the Twenty-First Century* (Abu Dhabi: Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 1997).

<sup>155</sup> Adee Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 234.

Hussein regime founded secular political parties, the Iraqi National Congress (INC) and the Iraqi National Accord (INA).

### **Case 1: Shi'ia Militias**

The Islamic Dawa party was the first Shi'ia party in Iraq to organize and gain prominence within the Iraqi political arena. Formed in 1957, the Dawa party focused on Islam as the basis of legislation through the *ummah*, or the people. After the overthrow of Iraq's monarchy in 1958, the Dawa party gained momentum under the leadership of the famous Iraqi clerics Mohammed Baqr al-Sadr and Mahdi al-Hakim, the eldest son of the Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Tabataba'i al-Hakim. When the new Prime Minister, Abdul Karim Qassim began instituting land reforms, he earned the enmity of many Shi'ia clergy and traditional landlords. Over the following decades, the party attracted disenfranchised Shi'ia youth and clerics, as well as prominent Shi'ia academics. By the 1970's the organization had grown to the point that it was a threat to the standing Ba'athist regime. Because of this, Dawa members were routinely targeted, arrested, and killed by the Ba'ath party. Dawa members generally supported the religious revolution in Iran, and for decades the party was considered to be a terrorist organization in the west.

SCIRI didn't organize until nearly a quarter of a century later, in 1982. During the Iran-Iraq war, prominent Iraqi Shi'ia clerics, living in exile in Tehran, formed a council aimed at the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and the establishment of an Islamic state, similar to the one in Iran. The leader of the council, Mohammad Baqr al-Hakim, had worked closely with al-Sadr and the Dawa party in the 1960's and 1970's to advocate for

the Shi'ia people of Iraq. The primary point of departure between SCIRI and Dawa leaders was centered upon whether political power lied with the *ulema* (clerics) or the *ummah* (people). A key ideological issue, Dawa's leaders believe that the "legitimacy of a government in an Islamic state comes from the people"<sup>156</sup> not from religious leaders, like SCIRI advocates. Operationally, SCIRI formed a military wing much earlier than Dawa. SCIRI's military wing, known as the Badr Brigade, formed alongside the political organization. In contrast, Dawa's closest military wing, Asa'ib al Ahl Haqq (AAH), wasn't officially recognized until 2006.<sup>157</sup>

The third major Shi'ia political party didn't gain organizational success until the coalition invasion of 2003. During this period, urban Shi'ia were threatened by the impact of the looting and widespread lawlessness. A young, firebrand religious cleric named Moqtada al-Sadr quickly moved to fill the security vacuum in his native Sadr city, by providing assistance, aid, and rule of law. His organization grew, and formalized its military wing, which became known as Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM). Sadr's unique blend of charisma and religious authority quickly made him one of the most talked about Iraqi politicians in the world.

Moqtada al-Sadr hails from the famous Sadr family of religious theologians. He is the son of the former Iraqi Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Mohammad Sadeq al-Sadr, cousin to the academic Musa al-Sadr, and the son-in-law of the prominent Dawa party

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<sup>156</sup> Sama Haddad, "Iraq: The Development of Shi'ite Political Theory" in *Dissent and Reform in the Arab World* ed. Jeffrey Azarva, et. al. (Washington, D.C.: AEI Press, 2008), 34.

<sup>157</sup> The Badr Brigade remained SCIRI's militant wing until 2003, when it broke off into its own political organization. SCIRI later developed its own independent militant wing in 2011, which was named the "Knights of Hope."

member and theologian, Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr. Over the years, the Sadr family cultivated numerous works and philosophical ideas on the nature of jurisprudence, theology, economics, and Islamic history. Central to their work is the Shi'ia religious belief in twelve divine imams, one of which, the Mahdi, disappeared into occultation in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The Twelvers have a messianic belief that the Mahdi will return again at the end of time to rid the world of evil. Moqtada al-Sadr's military front, Jaysh al Mahdi, literally means "Army of the Mahdi" or "Mahdi Army," paying reverence to the hidden imam.

After the fall of Saddam, elements within Iran's Shiite political class saw a chance to assert their authority in Iraq, but the focus that Islamic clerics placed on *jihad* became a major friction point for Western policymakers.<sup>158</sup> The Iranians overtly supported the religious parties, notably providing arms and assistance to Dawa, SCIRI, and elements within the Sadrist movement.<sup>159</sup> Outside Iraq, the INA, led by Allawi and the INC, led by Chalabi, both saw a chance to reclaim power within the country and legitimize their decades of work in exile. The Americans, who had worked with both Allawi and Chalabi in the past, included them, as well as representatives from Dawa and SCIRI, in the Iraqi Government Council, which was designed to provide interim political leadership after the fall of the Ba'ath party.

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<sup>158</sup> Rudolph Peters, *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2009), 29.

<sup>159</sup> See: 9/11 Commission Hearing, "Statement of Mark Gasiorowski," [http://www.9-11commission.gov/hearings/hearing3/witness\\_gasiorowski.htm](http://www.9-11commission.gov/hearings/hearing3/witness_gasiorowski.htm) (accessed 23 February 2015); Nimrod Raphaeli, "Understanding Moqtada al-Sadr," *Middle East Quarterly* (2004), 39 – 42 <http://www.meforum.org/655/understanding-muqtada-al-sadr> (accessed 18 February 2015); Kenneth Katzman, "Iran's Influence in Iraq," *CRS Report for Congress*, 29 September 2006, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/73938.pdf> (accessed 18 February 2015).

Moqtada al-Sadr, on the other hand, became the Shi'ia voice of opposition in the country, and publicly denounced the legitimacy of the IGC. While his rhetoric offended many sensible politicians, his message gained traction with the disenfranchised, urban poor, many of whom lived in Sadr city, and firmly ascribed to the belief that political legitimacy comes from the Islamic *ummah*. The U.S., coalition partners, and the Iraqi political elite sought to temper Sadr's movement and his popular appeal, but during the spring of 2004, JAM went on the offensive in several cities considered to be holy places by Shi'ia Muslims. The coalition was hesitant in directly countering Sadr himself, fearing an even more massive Shi'ia resistance.<sup>160</sup> JAM fought the U.S. and coalition partners until August 2007, when Sadr declared a ceasefire. From all the major Shi'ia parties, only the Sadrists took an openly active role in resisting the coalition presence. To the contrary, the Dawa Party and SCIRI encouraged their members to join the reconstituted Iraqi Army, police forces, and ministries; and both the INA and INC worked closely with the Americans.

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<sup>160</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *Endgame*, 51.

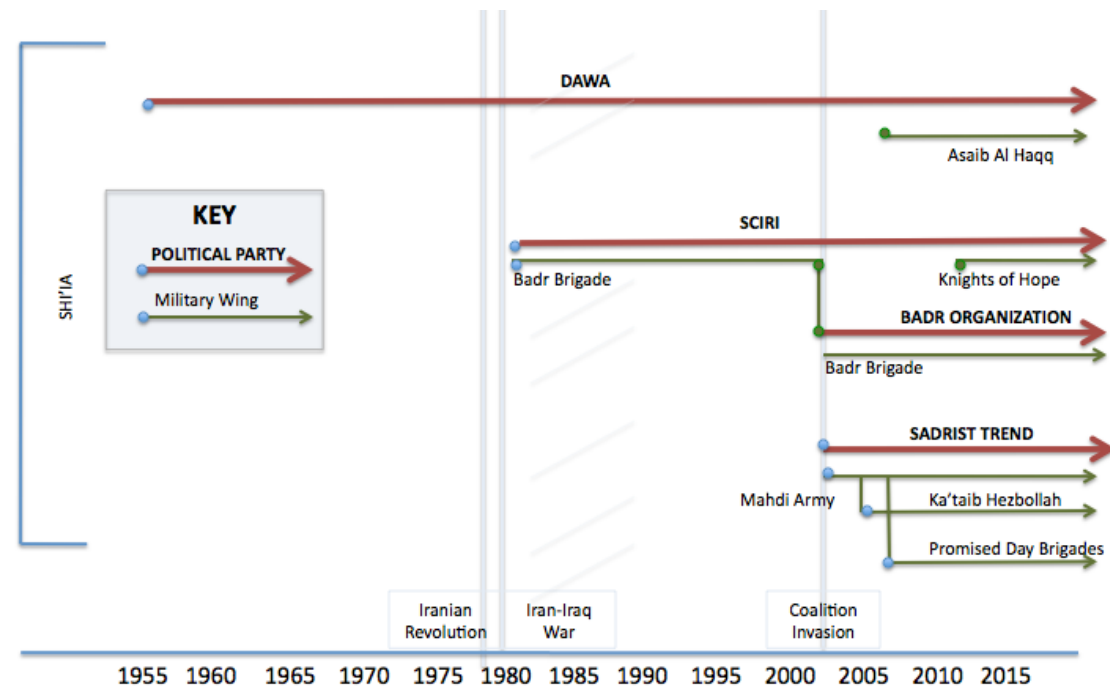


Fig. 7.1 Major Shi'ia Political Parties and Military Groups in Iraq, 1955 – 2015. The figure above gives a general depiction the major Shi'ia political groups and military wings. Data compiled from a variety of sources, see Stanford University, *Mapping Militant Organizations: Iraq*, available from:

<http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/> and Azeem Ibrahim. *The Resurgence of Al Qaeda in Syria and Iraq*, Strategic Studies Institute: U.S. Army War College Press, 2014. [Figure is the author's own].

## 2005 Elections

Iraq's first national elections after the fall of the Ba'ath party were held in 2005. These elections were designed to allocate parliamentary seats to the winners from the largest blocs. Later that year, after the ratification of the new Iraqi Constitution, a second parliamentary election was held to elect permanent members to the National Assembly.



TABLE 7.1  
IRAQI ELECTIONS, 2005

PARTY/BLOC	LEADERS	SECT	R/S*	VOTES	%	SP **
Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan	Talabani, Barzani	Kurd	S	2,175,511	25.7	75
Islamic Group of Kurdistan	Abd-Al Aziz	Kurd	R	60,592	0.7	2
<b>Total Major Kurdish Parties</b>				<b>2,236,103</b>	<b>26.4</b>	<b>77</b>
United Iraqi Alliance	Hakim, Jaafari, Chalabi, Shahrastani	Shi'ia	R	4,075,292	48.2	140
Islamic Action Organization in Iraq	al Tamah	Sh'ia	R	43,205	0.5	2
National Independent Cadres & Elites	al-Sheikh	Shi'ia	R	69,938	0.8	3
<b>Total Major Shi'ia Parties</b>				<b>4,188,435</b>	<b>49.5</b>	<b>145</b>
Iraqi List	Allawi	Sunni/ Shi'ia	S	1,168,943	13.8	40
People's Union	Mousa	Sunni/ Shi'ia	S	69,920	0.8	5
National Democratic Alliance	al-Chaderchi	Sunni/ Shi'ia	S	36,795	0.4	1
The Iraqis (Iraqioun)	al-Yawer	Sunni	S	150,680	1.8	5
Reconciliation and Liberation Bloc	al-Juburi	Sunni	S	30,796	0.4	1
<b>Total Major Sunni/Secular Parties</b>				<b>1,457,134</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>52</b>
Iraqi Turkmen Front	Abdurrahman	Minority	S	93,480	1.1	3
National Rafidain List	Kana	Minority	S	36,255	0.4	1
Other				444,819	5.3	-
<b>Total Minorities/Others</b>				<b>574,554</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>4</b>

Source: Data compiled from a variety of sources, see BBC News "Guide to Iraqi Political Parties" 20 January 2006, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4511450.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4511450.stm); Kenneth



Katzman, "Iraq: Elections and New Government" CRS Report for Congress, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/50254.pdf>; Reidar Visser, *A Responsible End? The United States and the Iraqi Transition, 2005 – 2010*, 2010. [Table is the author's own]. \*Religious or Secular, \*\*Seats in Parliament

It is important to note that Sunni Arabs boycotted 2005 elections, many of who were ideologically aligned with the INA or other parties on the Iraqi List. The boycott of the Sunnis, and the endorsement of Iraq's highly influential Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani, led to a sweeping victory for the United Iraq Alliance (UIA) that year.

### **Case 2: Sadr's Opposition**

After the 2005 elections, many Sunnis felt that they didn't have political representation. The Sunnis saw themselves as being immersed with many threats. First, there was the problem of the coalition forces. Most Sunni Arabs resented the changes that occupation brought, both big and small. On a macro-scale, de-Ba'athification upset the decades long standing political hierarchy, but day-to-day life was a challenge as well. There were roadblocks, military clear and hold campaigns, as well as curfews and changes to how everyday business was done. The second threat to the Sunni Arabs came from the Iraqi government and the newly empowered Shi'ia militias that exacted revenge. Many former Ba'athists or Ba'athist sympathizers were targeted once the Shi'ia government was in power. Finally, the Sunni Arabs faced the threat from Al Qaeda, a growing *jihadist* movement that attracted criminals, gangsters, and terrorists to the areas where security was lacking. Eventually, many Sunni Arabs came to realize that out of the

three, AQI was the most implacable. This realization, or “Awakening,” prompted their move to balance AQI and align with U.S. forces.

For the Shi’ia, the political circumstances within Iraq were completely different. First, the Shi’ia did not suffer as much from the de-Ba’athification or revenge attempts by Shi’ia militias, and while there was a threat from AQI, AQI was operating in predominantly Sunni areas. After the 2005 elections, the Shi’ia saw that they had a role in the new government. The coalition occupation was a major issue for the Sadrists, but Dawa, SCIRI and the other parties worked with the coalition, not against it. When the coalition was a problem, JAM took the lead in fighting them. For many Iraqis, JAM was nothing more than a criminal element, operating on the fringes of society, but for the urban poor, JAM was operating as security and protection against all criminal elements.<sup>161</sup>

During the remainder of the U.S. and coalition occupation, Sadr remained steadfastly opposed to the political order led by the Dawa party. Maliki’s harsh treatment of JAM and Shi’ia militias only exacerbated this split. From 2005 until 2008, there was jockeying between the two for political power, which resulted in frequent clashes between Sadr’s JAM and Dawa’s aligned militant arm, Asa’ib a al Haqq (AAH).<sup>162</sup> Many Shi’ia were reluctant to fight JAM because unlike AQI, the Sadrist trend had become a powerful political movement with religious doctrine and a robust security apparatus. By late 2007 the hostility between JAM and the coalition had ceased, and many of the

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<sup>161</sup> Abdul Karim, interview.

<sup>162</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *Endgame*, 596.

Sadrists were seeking amnesty and integration into the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). Sadr officially disbanded JAM in 2007, but later reorganized as the Promised Day Brigades.

### **Case 3: Shi'ia Sons of Iraq**

The original Sons of Iraq (SOI) program was largely a Sunni-led initiative; there was an attempt to use the Sunni *Sahwa* as a model for a similar program in predominantly Shi'ia areas. In 2008, the U.S. government contracted security in Sadr City to locals, and paid them \$300 per month to patrol the sectors.<sup>163</sup> Despite the fact that many of the new recruits were affiliated or a member of JAM, the U.S. still provided arms, training and monetary incentives.<sup>164</sup> The initiative was dubbed a “neighborhood watch” to discern it from the broader Sunni *Sahwa* movement. At the behest GOI, the SOI program grew to incorporate more Shi'ia sectors, and whose numbers would eventually be incorporated into the ISF.<sup>165</sup> During the 2007 – 2008 time period, across the greater-Baghdad area and Baghdad belts, there was a surge in ‘concerned local citizen groups’ many of whom were split between Sunni and Shi'ia, and cooperated with the U.S. on security initiatives.<sup>166</sup> In total approximately 15,000 Shi'ia citizens were recruited, trained, and integrated into the

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<sup>163</sup> Amit Paley, “U.S. Enlists and Arms Patrols in Sadr City,” *Washington Post*, 12 June 2008 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/06/11/AR2008061103494.html> (accessed 27 March 2015).

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Michael Pregent, email to author, 22 June 2015.

<sup>166</sup> See: Kristen Noel, “Security Promotes Sunni-Shiite Reconciliation,” *Armed Forces Press Services*, 28 January 2008 <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=48778> (accessed 25 March 2015); Jim Garamone, Brigade Continues to Work with Shi'ia, Sunni Groups, *Armed Forces Press Services*, 27 November 2007 <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=48223> (accessed 25 March 2015).

SOI, many of whom came from Shi'ia militias.<sup>167</sup>

## **2010 Elections**

On March 7, 2010 the GOI successfully held its second, quadrennial national election for the 325 seats of parliament. During this period, there was a split in the Shi'ia coalition. Maliki, the leader of the Dawa party, formed his own coalition, named "State of Law" which split from the Sadrist-leaning bloc, the Iraqi National Alliance (INA), composed of SCIRI, the Sadrists, and the other fundamentalist Shi'ia parties. Maliki's State of Law coalition won 89 seats, whereas the INA only won 70. The Kurdish bloc won 43, and the surprise winner, the secular al-Iraqiyya bloc headed by Allawi won 91 seats. The cleavage between the Sadr and Maliki, and the participation of the Sunnis in the election, gave room for Allawi to gain a majority faction.

Initially, none of the four major blocs were willing to combine to constitute a majority of the seats, which was needed to form the government. The Kurdish bloc remained steadfast, and initially the Sadrists refused to join Allawi or Maliki. The INA refused to give in because of Maliki's harsh treatment of Sadrist militias and their refusal to put Sadr into a position of power.<sup>168</sup> The resulting impasse left the country at a political standstill with no policy decisions for several months. That spring, Iran brokered a series of meetings with the two parties.<sup>169</sup> In exchange for their cooperation, the

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<sup>167</sup> Michael Pregent, email to author, June 22, 2015.

<sup>168</sup> Abdul Karim, interview; Hamdani, interview.

<sup>169</sup> See: Reidar Visser, "Muqtada al-Sadr preparing His Supporters for the Dirty Game of Politics," *Gulf Analysis*, 29 September 2010 <https://gulfanalysis.wordpress.com/2010/09/29/muqtada-al-sadr-preparing->

Sadrists demanded ministry representation as well a major role in the new government.<sup>170</sup>

In May 2010, the INA and the SOL coalition announced a merger, essentially making Sadr the “kingmaker” of Iraqi politics that year.

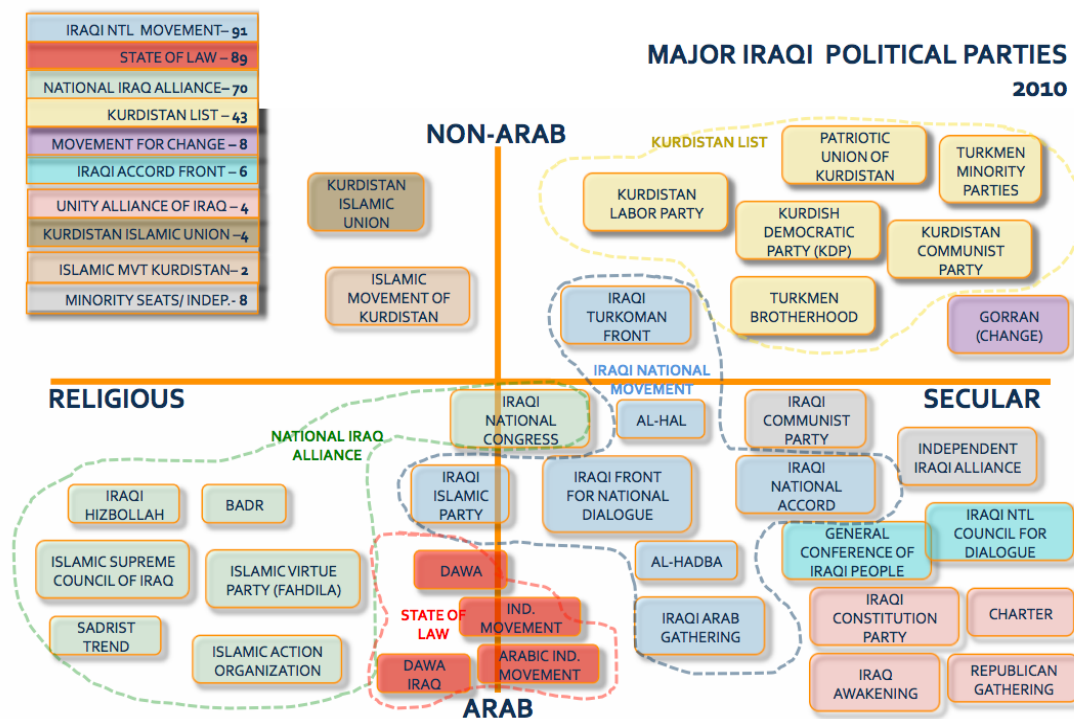


Fig. 7.3 Major Iraqi Political Parties, 2010. The figure above gives a general depiction of how political parties in the 2010 election aligned along the spectrum of Arab vs. non-Arab and religious vs. secular. The figure above gives a general depiction of how political parties in the 2005 election aligned along the spectrum of Arab vs. non-Arab and religious vs. secular. Data compiled from a variety of sources, see Shak Bernard Hanish,

his-supporters-for-the-dirty-game-of-politics/ (accessed 16 September 2014); Martin Chulov, “How Iran Brokered a Secret Deal to Put Its Ally in Power in Baghdad,” *The Guardian*, 17 October 2010 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/oct/17/iran-secret-deal-political-power-iraq> (accessed 16 September 2014); Martin Chulov, “Iraq Brokers Behind-the-Scenes Deal for the Pro-Tehran Government in Iraq,” *The Guardian*, 17 October 2010 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/oct/17/iraq-government-iran-tehran-deal> (accessed 16 September 2014).

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

“The Post 2003 Iraqi Electoral Laws” *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol 1 No. 17, 2011; The Independent High Electoral Commission, [www.ihed.iq](http://www.ihed.iq); and Reidar Visser, *A Responsible End? The United States and the Iraqi Transition, 2005 – 2010*, 2010. [Figure is the author’s own].

The Shi’ia political parties operating in Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein had the advantage of decades of institutionalization and popular support. Because the de-Ba’athification and the targeting of Sahwa fighters intimidated or eliminated most potential Sunni rivals, the only major players on the Iraqi political scene after 2003 were from the Shi’ia parties. This is not to say there were no major Arab Sunni politicians. There were several politicians that escaped de-Ba’athification and emerged into positions of leadership, however, they lacked the institutional capacity or mass political support that the Shi’ia parties had. The Shi’ia parties were either: external to Iraq, internal to Iraq, or internal to Iraq and radically opposed to concession with coalition forces.

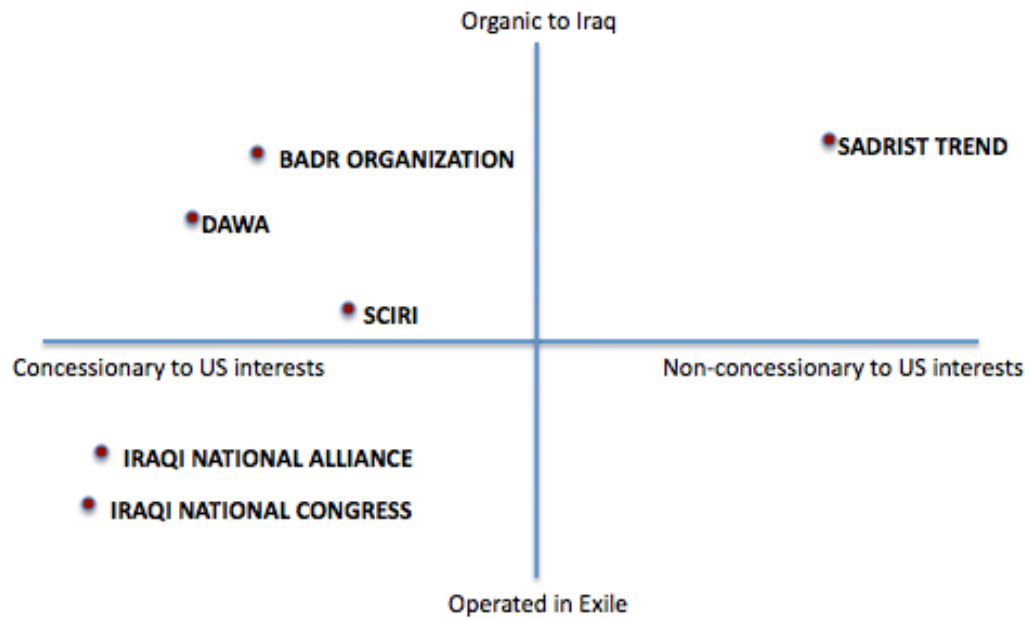


Fig. 7.4 Spectrum of Major Shi'ia Political Parties, Exile vs. Concession. The figure above gives a general depiction of Shi'ia political parties along the spectrum of organic to Iraq/operated in exile; concessionary to the U.S. interests/non-concessionary to U.S. interests. [Figure is the author's own].

Figure 7.4 depicts the spectrum of the major Shi'ia parties. From the graphic, it is clear why the Sadrist trend was able to attract such a large populist movement. The Sadrist Trend was the only political party that was both organic to Iraq and non-concessionary to U.S. interests. To the contrary, the other parties were perceived as being illegitimate due to operating in exile for so long, too secular, or too concessionary to U.S. interests.

## Hypotheses

Shi'ia politics in Iraq exemplify several hypotheses from the theoretical literature. First, Shi'ia political factions tended to align together, which supports the hypotheses from the literature on behavioral science that religious and ethnic considerations matter in political alliances. This sort of political alliance making is clearly seen in the formation of political blocs in both the 2005 and the 2010 elections. The Shi'ia political factions also aligned in a way that gave them a minimum winning coalition, which supports the “Minimum Winning Coalition” hypothesis from comparative politics. This was most clearly demonstrated when the Sadrist Trend joined the State of Law coalition in 2010. Despite the fact that Dawa was a political rival, it would have been politically implausible for the Sadrists to align with the secular Iraqiyya bloc, or the ethnically disparate Kurds. So, Sadr's alignment with the State of Law coalition was just a matter of time, and he used that time to his political advantage.

TABLE 7.2  
IRAQI ELECTIONS, 2010

PARTY/BLOC	LEADER	SECT	R/S	VOTES	%	SEATS
Kurdistan List	Salih	Kurd	Secular	1,681,714	14.6	43
Gorran (Change)	Mustafa	Kurd	Secular	476,478	4.1	8
Kurdistan Islamic Union	Faraj	Kurd	Religious	243,720	2.1	4
<b>Total Major Kurdish Parties</b>				<b>2,554,442</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>57</b>
State of Law Coalition	Maliki	Shi'ia	Religious	2,792,083	24.2	89
Iraqi National	Jaafari	Sh'ia	Religious	2,092,066	18.2	70



Alliance						
<b>Total Major Shi'ia Parties</b>				<b>4,884,149</b>	<b>42.4</b>	<b>159</b>
Iraqi National Movement	Allawi	Sunni/Shi'ia	Secular	2,849,612	24.7	91
Unity Alliance of Iraq	Zaid	Sunni/Shi'ia	Secular	306,647	2.7	4
Iraqi Accord	Tikriti	Sunni	Religious	298,226	2.6	6
<b>Total Major Sunni/Secular Parties</b>				<b>3,454,485</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>101</b>
Minorities				61,153	0.5	8
Others				572,183	5	-
<b>Total Minorities/Others</b>				<b>633,336</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>8</b>

*Source:* Data compiled from a variety of sources, see Shak Bernard Hanish, "The Post 2003 Iraqi Electoral Laws" *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol 1 No. 17, 2011; The Independent High Electoral Commission (Iraq), [www.ihed.iq](http://www.ihed.iq); and Reidar Visser, *A Responsible End? The United States and the Iraqi Transition, 2005 – 2010*, 2010. [Table is the author's own].

The Shi'ia political process also demonstrates the importance of charismatic leadership. Moqtada al-Sadr quickly mobilized and organized a political and security apparatus. This rapid mobilization is a function of several factors, which are quite similar to the Sunni case of mobilizing around the popular figure of Abu Abed and Sheikh Abu Risha. First, many of the members of JAM were disenfranchised, lower class Shi'ia males, vice the more politically sophisticated SCIRI and Dawa parties. Sadr didn't have the luxury of longevity or an institutionalized political party. He did have a well-regarded family name and legitimate religious connections. The people that supported Sadr legitimized his movement, directly affirming the religious doctrine of political legitimacy

being determined by the *umma*.

The Shi'ia government in Baghdad took on a more neorealist tone as it matured by balancing and bandwagoning with and against threatening powers. After the 2010 elections, Prime Minister Maliki secured his place in the government. His main threats came from disenfranchised Sunnis with popular appeal, a resurgent Ba'ath party, and internal disputes with other Shi'ia political players. In order to counter these threats he used his militias to quell uprisings and eliminate Sunni political players, but in doing so he also aggravated the Sunni Arab population. Another method he used to balance against the Sunni threat was to alternate military and political alliances with Iran, Russia, and the United States. For instance, Maliki made use of Iran's military support and organization but occasionally pandered to U.S. interests by making concessions or alternated between the U.S. and Russia on the purchase of defense equipment.

The theoretical literature can explain various elements of the Shi'ia political process in Iraq after the fall of the Ba'ath party. The Shi'ia political bloc was much more organized and institutionalized than that of the Sunnis. Therefore, it is not unusual that institutionalized Shi'ia political parties operated in a way that supported the more advanced political theories on parliamentary coalition formation and the structural considerations of neorealism when balancing against internal threats.

TABLE 7.3

## HYPOTHESES SUPPORTED BY SHI'IA POLITICAL PROCESSES

Supported	H	Proposition	Structure or Agency	Academic School
YES	H1	Political factions facing a threat will align with others to oppose the factions posing the threat (balance).	Structural	Neorealist - Balance
X	H2	Political factions facing a threat will ally with the most threatening power (bandwagon).	Structural	Neorealist - Bandwagon
YES	H3	Political momentum: Political factions will realign when doing so gives them a minimum winning coalition.	Structural	Comparative Politics
YES	H4	Political factions will align when monetary gains are assured.	Agency	Behavioral Science
YES	H5	Factions will align based on racial, religious, or ethnic background.	Agency	Behavioral Science
YES	H6	Political factions will align when they have a similar ideology.	Agency	Behavioral Science
YES	H7	Factions will align based on shared grievances (past and/or present).	Agency	Behavioral Science
X	H8	Political factions will align when a point of critical mass is achieved.	Structure & Agency	Complexity Theory
YES	H9	Political factions will align when a charismatic leader drives a social movement.	Structure & Agency	Sociology
YES	H10	Political factions will align using agent-based considerations in the beginning, but will gravitate towards neorealist considerations as they mature.	Structure & Agency	Causal Mechanisms & Process Tracing

Source: [Table is the author's own].

The table below lists the most probable hypothesis for each major Shi'ia alignment. The SCIRI/Badr alignment with Iran is noteworthy in that it was propelled by ideological similarities and the promises of monetary assistance. Unlike the Sadrist Trend, charismatic leadership did not appear to be the initial driving force behind the split. Dawa, on the other hand, changed alignment due to a number of factors. In 2005, Dawa was politically aligned with U.S. interests, which aligns with neorealist theories on balancing threats. When Dawa aligned with SCIRI and Badr to form the UIA in 2005, they acted in accordance with the comparative politics theories on Minimum Winning Coalitions. Their actions after the departure of U.S. forces to counter Sunni extremists within Iraq could be seen as a balancing act; aligning with Iran to garner support.

TABLE 7.4  
MOST PROBABLE HYPOTHESES SUPPORTED BY SHI'IA POLITICAL  
PROCESSES

Year	Party/ Militant Faction	Alignment With	Alignment Against	Threat Is	H	Most Probable Hypothesis
1982	SCIRI/Badr	Iran	Ba'ath Party	Internal	H4	Ideological/ Monetary Gain
2004	JAM	Iran	U.S./coalition	External	H9	Charismatic Leadership
2005	Dawa	U.S.	Sunni Parties	Internal	H1	Neorealism – Balance Threat
2005	Dawa	SCIRI/UIA	Sunni Parties	Internal	H3	Minimum Winning Coalition

2006	Sadrist Trend	-	Dawa/SCIRI	Internal	H9	Charismatic Leadership
2008	Shi'ia SOI	U.S.	AQI/ JAM	Internal	H4	Ideological/ Monetary Gain
2011	Dawa	Iran	Sunni Parties	Internal	H1	Neorealism – Balance Threat

*Source:* [Table is the author's own].

### **Application to Theoretical Model**

The only major Shi'ia political party that did not have the longevity or institutionalization of the others was the Sadrist trend, which was only organized after the coalition invasion. The Sadrist trend and JAM essentially followed the same trajectory as the Sahwa, only foremost they were countering the coalition forces and Shi'ia government, not AQI. Like the Sahwa, Sadr had a grievance. Ideologically, there was a major cleavage between his followers Dawa and SCIRI loyalists. Under his charismatic leadership, his ideology spread to the masses. Once the political objective of coalition forces leaving Iraq was met, Sadr retired from political life. The Sadrist Trend clearly shows the importance of charismatic leadership in the early stages of group formation. Arguably, the other Shi'ia parties did not need the leadership of a charismatic leader because they were already institutionally mature.

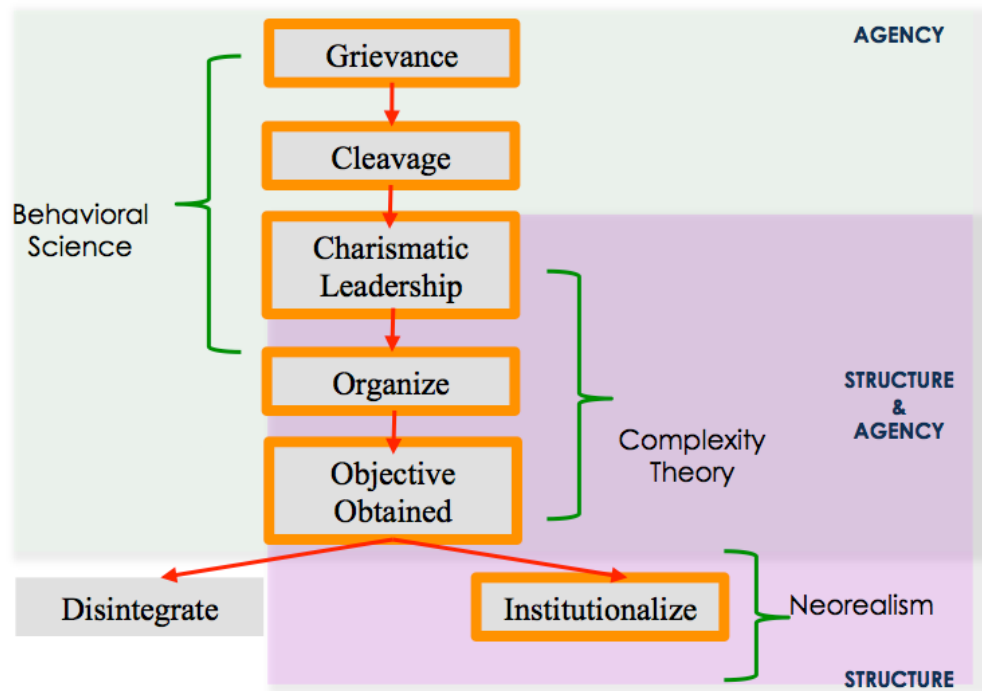


Figure 7.5 Causal process of the Sadrist Trend's alliance and alignment formation (highlighted in orange). [Figure is the author's own].

To the contrary, the two other major trends on Iraq's Shi'ia political spectrum, Dawa and SCIRI, were operating for decades. By the time the Ba'ath Party disbanded, their actions could not be explained through the lens of individual grievances or agent-based considerations. Instead, the actions of Dawa and SCIRI are best explained through the lens of neorealism. But, like the Sadrist Trend, in their formative stages, Dawa and SCIRI grew because of an ideological affinity with the theological teachings of Shi'ia Islam.

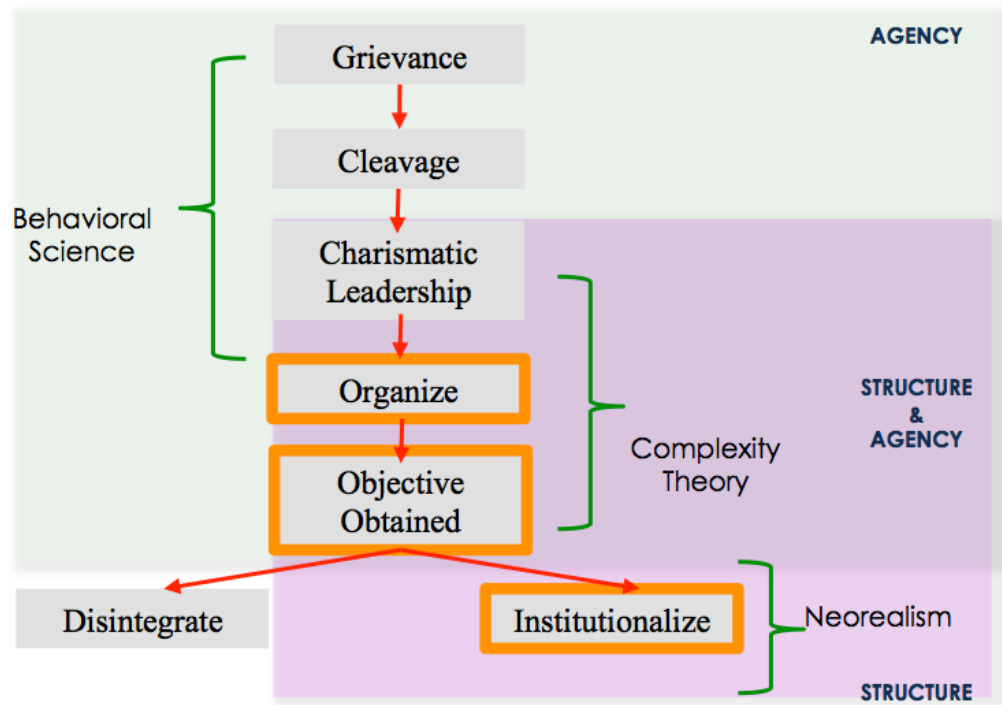


Fig 7.6. Alignment of Dawa and SCIRI (highlighted in orange). [Figure is the author's own].

## Conclusion

The Shi'ia case demonstrates that once again, political alignment and alliance building is best explained by looking at the maturity of the political institution, vice a single theory from the academic literature. The Sadrist Trend, as a new political organization, acted differently than Dawa and SCIRI, which were relatively more mature. As the Sadrist Trend matured, and became a viable political institution, its actions could be better explained through the structural framework of analysis.

## CHAPTER 8. KURDISH PARTNERSHIP

*“The Kurdish people have the right of self-determination...”*

Jalal Talabani, 2002<sup>171</sup>

### Background

The Kurdish people are often referred to as the largest ethnic population without a sovereign homeland. The 24 – 27 million strong<sup>172</sup> Kurdish people live in a mountainous region that comprises of parts of Turkey, Syria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iraq, and Iran. Iraqi Kurdistan encompasses the three northern Iraqi governorates of: Erbil, Dohuk, and Sulaymaniyah. Iraqi Kurds also comprise a significant portion of Diyala, Ninewa, and Kirkuk provinces. The Kurdish people are ethnically, culturally, and linguistically distinct from Iraqi Arabs. The Kurdish regions in Iraq are predominantly Sunni, but also contain significant numbers of minority religious groups such as Christians and Yazidis.

### Historical Framework

Under the Ottoman Empire, the Kurds lived in the six vilayets of: Sivas, Trebizond, Erzurum, Mamuret-ul Aziz, Diyar-I Bekr, Mosul, and Van. Only Mosul is

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<sup>171</sup> “Talabani: American air protection safeguards the freedom enjoyed by the Kurds,” *Kurdistan Newsline*, Special Dispatch, 21 August 2002, <http://www.kurdmedia.com/article.aspx?id=2812> (accessed 15 November 2014).

<sup>172</sup> David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2005), 3.



in modern-day Iraq. Like many of the subjects under Ottoman rule, the Kurdish tribes of Mosul maintained some autonomy, but tended to be underestimated by Ottoman authorities as legitimate political players.<sup>173</sup>

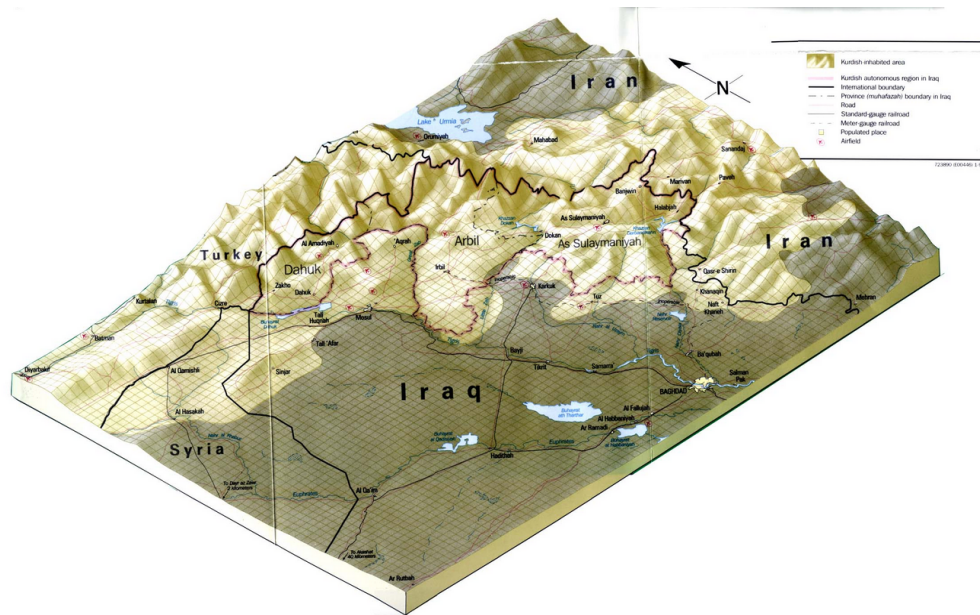


Fig 8.1 Topographic Map of Kurdish Controlled Areas. Source: University of Texas, Perry Castaneda Library Map Collection [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/kurdish\\_lands\\_1992.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/kurdish_lands_1992.jpg) Kurdish Lands in Iraq: A Map Folio, CIA, 1992. Reprinted, by permission from University of Texas Libraries.

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the occupying British forces opted to include the southern Kurdistan vilayet of Mosul into the Mesopotamian sphere with

<sup>173</sup> McDowall, *A Modern History*, 47 – 48.

Baghdad and Basra. The Mosul question lingered over British foreign policy in Iraq during their occupation of the country. Initially, the British rallied the Kurdish tribes against Turkish oppression. The Kurds of Mosul were not keen on Arab rule, but the British offered protection, order, and quasi-independence.<sup>174</sup>

Tensions between the Kurds and Arabs of Iraq have ebbed and flowed over the past century. The initial revolts against Arab governance were led by prominent sheikhs from the large Barzani tribe in the Irbil governorate, who rejected the primacy of Baghdad's governance. During the first three decades after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the Barzanis conducted several insurrections and attempts at secession from the newly established Iraqi state. In 1946, Sheikh Mustafa Barzani created the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), as a political entity to counter the weight of Iraq's ruling regime. During the 1960's the Kurds fought the Iraqi Army for nearly 10 years. The fighting ended with an autonomy agreement that resulted in the founding of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), which governs through a parliamentary democratic political process.

Despite the autonomy agreement between the Kurds and the Iraqis, in 1974, with the help of the Shah of Iran, the KDP revolted again. After the violence subsided, the KDP leadership was forced to flee the country. The ensuing power vacuum gave rise to the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), founded in 1975 in the city of Sulaymaniyah, by Jalal Talabani.

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<sup>174</sup> McDowall, *A Modern History*, 151 – 181.



Fig. 8.2. Kurdish Areas of Northern Iraq. Source: University of Texas Perry Castaneda Library Map Collection [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/iraq\\_kurdish\\_areas\\_2003.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/iraq_kurdish_areas_2003.jpg) From Iraq: Country Profile [map] CIA, January 2003. Reprinted, by permission, from University of Texas Libraries.

The PUK served as an umbrella group for many Kurdish factions, predominantly from Sulaymaniyah, that were unsatisfied with KDP governance. Later that year, Iraq's leader, Saddam Hussein and Iran's Reza Shah Pahlavi came to an agreement over the Iran-Iraq border and the Kurdish rebellion. Known as the Algiers Accord, the agreement settled the disputes in the short-term, but Hussein abolished it in

1979 when Iran's new revolutionary leadership threatened to destabilize the Ba'athist regime.

Tensions between Kurdistan and Baghdad remained high under the Ba'athist regime of Saddam Hussein. Despite the fact that the KDP and PUK distrusted each other, in 1986 leaders from both sides met in Tehran to form a coalition against the Hussein regime. During the 8-year Iran-Iraq war, some of the border areas in eastern Kurdistan fell under *de facto* Iranian control; some with assistance from the KDP and the PUK.<sup>175</sup> In response, Hussein committed two major genocidal attacks against Kurdish people. The first was the *al-Anfal* campaign, from 1987 – 1989, which is said to have killed and/or displaced hundreds of thousands of people in the region.<sup>176</sup> The second, the Halabja chemical attack, targeted civilians from the city of Halabja, who supported the Kurdish resistance movement and pro-Iranian forces.

After the U.S.-led Gulf War in 1991, a wave of violence spread throughout northern Iraq, and Kurdistan fell into civil war, with the PUK and KDP fighting against each other for control of the region. Kurdish areas remained protected under the U.S. air campaigns Operation Provide Comfort (1991 – 1996) and Operation Northern Watch (1997 – 2003), which instituted a no-fly zone above the 36<sup>th</sup> parallel. Despite the initial chaos, the U.S.'s military protection afforded the region the chance to develop a robust economy independent of Hussein's politicking and the strict sanctions

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<sup>175</sup> Marion Farouk-Slugett and Peter Slugett, *Iraq Since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship* (London-New York, I.B. Tauris Publishers), 268 -9.

<sup>176</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Genocide in Iraq: The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds*, July 1993, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1993/iraqanfal/> (accessed 15 May 2015).

being leveraged by UN on the central government. During this period, several Kurdish leaders from both the PUK and the KDP joined the Iraqi National Congress (INC), a U.S.-backed opposition group led by the Shi'ia mathematician and political dissident Ahmed Chalabi.<sup>177</sup>

### **Kurdish Militant Factions**

The Kurds have three major types of armed factions operating within their territory. The *Peshmerga* are the oldest and, arguably, the most legitimate armed organization in Kurdistan. The Peshmerga were founded in the early 1920's by the prominent Barzani family, and initially operated as group of guerilla-like organizations. Peshmerga literally means, "facing death" in Kurdish. The term has been broadly used to describe any military soldier, but is also how the Kurds define their own defense forces.

The second type of armed faction comes from the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK). The PKK operates as a fringe group of Kurdish guerrillas who claim to represent the Kurdish nation and have waged a decades-long campaign for the establishment of a Kurdish state. Their main objective is to push back against Turkish oppression in the Western parts of Kurdistan, and the group mainly exists along the border between Turkey and Iraq. Most of the region's Kurds condemn the PKK's violent tactics. The PKK has targeted Turkish soldiers and taken hostages. Their actions typically result in heightened

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<sup>177</sup> Kenneth Katzman, "The Kurds in Post-Saddam Iraq," *Congressional Research Service* (2010) <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS22079.pdf> (accessed 15 April 2015).

tensions between Turkey and Iraq, and /or the KRG. Historically, the KRG has been unwilling to take steps to uproot the PKK.

The third major type of armed faction operating in Kurdistan comes from the Islamist organizations, many of which joined under an umbrella organization known as the Islamic Movement of Kurdistan (IMK) during the 1980's. In the early 1990's, the IMK directly challenged the secularism and governing tactics of the PUK in areas around Halabja, south of Sulaymaniyah. During the 1990's the IMK was purported to have received funding from neighboring Iran, and advocated for the creation of an Islamic state in northern Iraq.<sup>178</sup> The IMK also acted as a double-dealer during the Iraqi Kurdistan Civil War in the 1990's, aligning with the PUK or KDP at convenience. After the PUK and KDP came to a political power-sharing agreement in 1997, more Islamist groups emerged. Some of the Islamist organizations have demonstrated violence, but they have never been able to garner the support of a significant portion of the Kurdish population.

### **Kurdish Political Factions**

The PUK and KDP have grown into the two largest political entities within Kurdistan. As institutions, each has decades of experience and political legitimacy. The KDP was officially recognized as a political party in 1946, but has been operating as a political entity since the British occupation of Iraq. The PUK was officially recognized as a political organization in 1975.

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<sup>178</sup> Michael Gunter, *Historical Dictionary of the Kurds*, (Washington, D.C.: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 146.

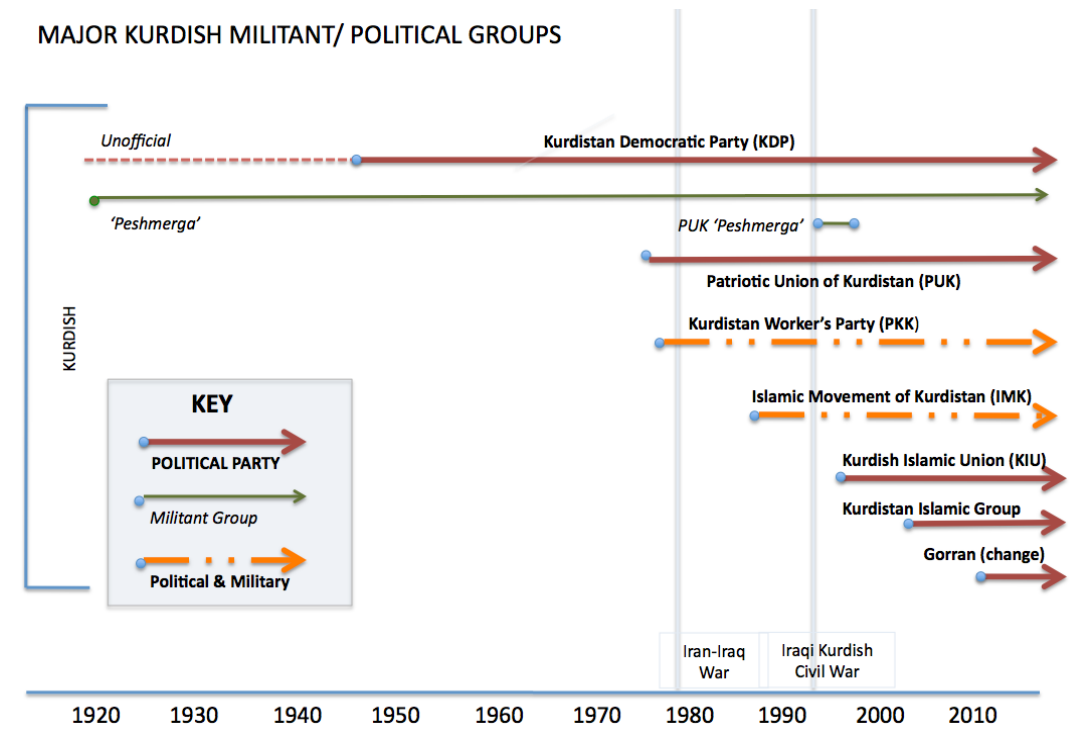


Fig. 8.3 Major Kurdish Political and Militant Groups, 1920 – 2015. The figure above gives a general depiction of the major Kurdish political and militant groups operating in Iraq. Data compiled from a variety of sources, see David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 2005 and Stanford University, *Mapping Militant Organizations: Iraq*, available from: <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/> [Figure is the author's own].

By the mid-1990's the main political challengers to the PUK and the KDP came from Islamist political groups and a small splinter group of the KDP known as the Kurdistan Socialist Democratic Party. The most prominent of the Islamist groups, the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU), was founded in 1994 by Salah al-Din Muhammad Baha al-Din. Other Islamist groups include: the Islamic Group of Kurdistan and the political

wing of the IMK. After the U.S. and coalition occupation, the secular Gorran (change) party emerged. The Gorran party advocates the secularism of the PUK and KDP, but insists on new political leadership.

Like Iraqi Shi'ia and Sunni Arab political groups, which are split between religious and secular affiliations, the Kurdish political parties also have a cleavage between Islamist parties and secular parties. In the graph below, the PKK, KDP, Gorran, and the PUK are all on the secular side of the political spectrum. The much smaller and disparate IMK, KIU, and the Kurdistan Islamic Group take up the religious side of the spectrum. The more important cleavage in Kurdish politics is regional. The KDP is the oldest Kurdish party, and adherents are from tribes in Dohuk, Irbil, and Ninewah provinces. The PUK is largely representative of the Kurds living in the provinces of Sulaymaniyah and Kirkuk.



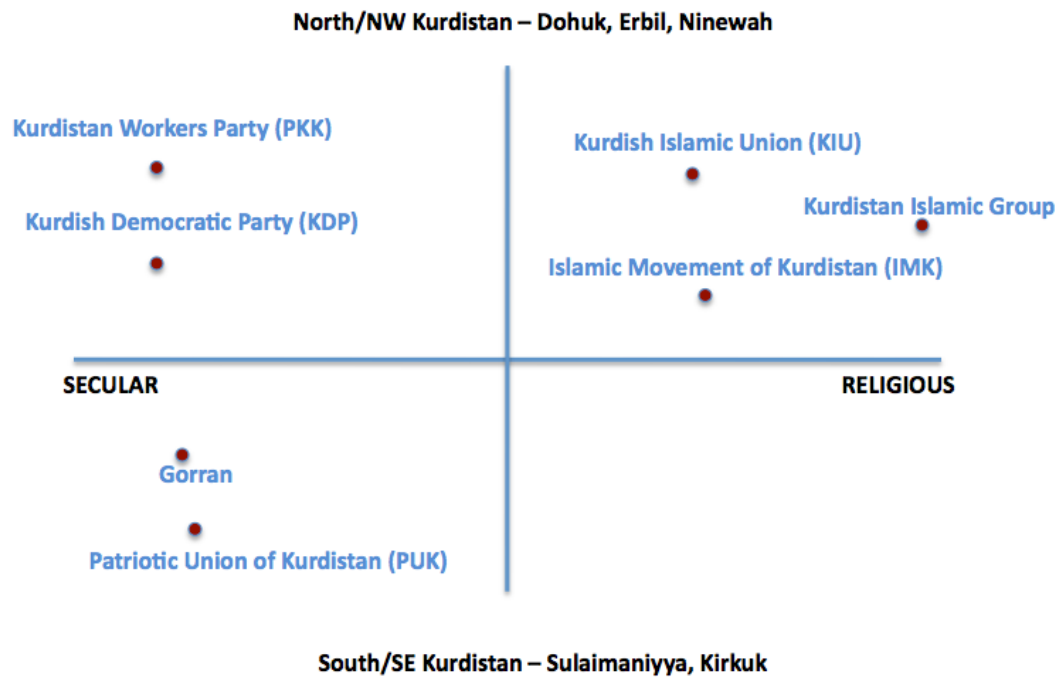


Fig. 8.4 Spectrum of Kurdish Political Parties. The figure above gives a general idea of how Kurdish political parties are distributed on a spectrum of secular/religious vs. geographic location. [Figure is the author's own].

### Fall of Saddam

During the U.S. and coalition invasion and occupation, the Kurds were generally pro-American and welcomed the fall of the Hussein regime. The Kurds recognized early on that by working with the U.S., they could balance against the Ba'ath party.<sup>179</sup> Armed Kurdish fighters from both the PUK and KDP fought alongside coalition forces to topple the regime, and there was “virtually no combat” between the Kurds and coalition forces

<sup>179</sup> Ray Chakmakchi, interview by author, 14 August 2014.

during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF).<sup>180</sup> Both Barzani and Talabani were included in the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), along with members of the Kurdistan Socialist Party and the Islamist KIU. Under the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), the Kurds retained autonomy under the KRG as well as the right to field the Peshmerga.<sup>181</sup> The only major issue for the Kurds after the CPA established governance was question of who would control the ethnically divided, oil-rich city of Kirkuk. Nearly equally split between Kurds and Arab Sunnis (as well as several minority factions), the city sits in an oil-rich region of the country.

### **2005 Elections**

In 2005, the two dominant Kurdish parties, the KDP led by Barzani, and the PUK led by Talabani, as well as a few of the Islamist and Socialist parties, came together to form the Kurdistan Alliance (KA). The KA dominated the 2005 elections in Kurdistan, gaining over 25% of the entire Iraqi vote (75 seats). The only challenger to the KA in Kurdistan was the religious-leaning Islamic Group of Kurdistan, which gained less than 1% of the vote (2 seats). The Iraqi National Assembly (Council of Representatives) elected Talabani as the President, and he served in the office until 2014.

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<sup>180</sup> Katzman, "The Kurds in post-Saddam Iraq," 2.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 3.

TABLE 8.1  
IRAQI ELECTIONS, 2005

PARTY/BLOC	LEADERS	SECT	R/S*	VOTES	%	SP **
Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan	Talabani, Barzani	Kurd	S	2,175,511	25.7	75
Islamic Group of Kurdistan	Abd-Al Aziz	Kurd	R	60,592	0.7	2
<b>Total Major Kurdish Parties</b>				<b>2,236,103</b>	<b>26.4</b>	<b>77</b>
United Iraqi Alliance	Hakim, Jaafari, Chalabi, Shahrastani	Shi'ia	R	4,075,292	48.2	140
Islamic Action Organization in Iraq	al Tamah	Sh'ia	R	43,205	0.5	2
National Independent Cadres & Elites	al-Sheikh	Shi'ia	R	69,938	0.8	3
<b>Total Major Shi'ia Parties</b>				<b>4,188,435</b>	<b>49.5</b>	<b>145</b>
Iraqi List	Allawi	Sunni/ Shi'ia	S	1,168,943	13.8	40
People's Union	Mousa	Sunni/ Shi'ia	S	69,920	0.8	5
National Democratic Alliance	al-Chaderchi	Sunni/ Shi'ia	S	36,795	0.4	1
The Iraqis (Iraqiun)	al-Yawer	Sunni	S	150,680	1.8	5
Reconciliation and Liberation Bloc	al-Juburi	Sunni	S	30,796	0.4	1
<b>Total Major Sunni/Secular Parties</b>				<b>1,457,134</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>52</b>
Iraqi Turkmen Front	Abdurrahman	Minority	S	93,480	1.1	3
National Rafidain List	Kana	Minority	S	36,255	0.4	1
Other				444,819	5.3	-
<b>Total Minorities/Others</b>				<b>574,554</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>4</b>

*Source:* Data compiled from a variety of sources, see: Data compiled from a variety of sources see: Kenneth Katzman, "Iraq: Elections and New Government" CRS Report for Congress, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/50254.pdf>; Reidar Visser, *A Responsible End? The United States and the Iraqi Transition, 2005 – 2010*, 2010. [Figure is the author's own]. \*Religious or Secular, \*\*Seats in Parliament

The only Islamist political party from the KA to gain seats in the Iraqi Parliament was the Kurdish Islamic Union (KIU). Like the Islamic Group of Kurdistan, the KIU sought to establish an Islamic government, which recognized the rights of all Kurds. Unlike the Islamic Group of Kurdistan, the KIU typically enjoyed good relations with the PUK and the KDP. The KIU had a record of welfare work for the Kurdish poor and peaceful political campaigning, and maintained close ties with the Egyptian-based Muslim Brotherhood, a Sunni Islamist political opposition movement. In 2005, the KIU won 5 seats in the Council of Representatives, but this number was reflected in the larger bloc shared by the KA.

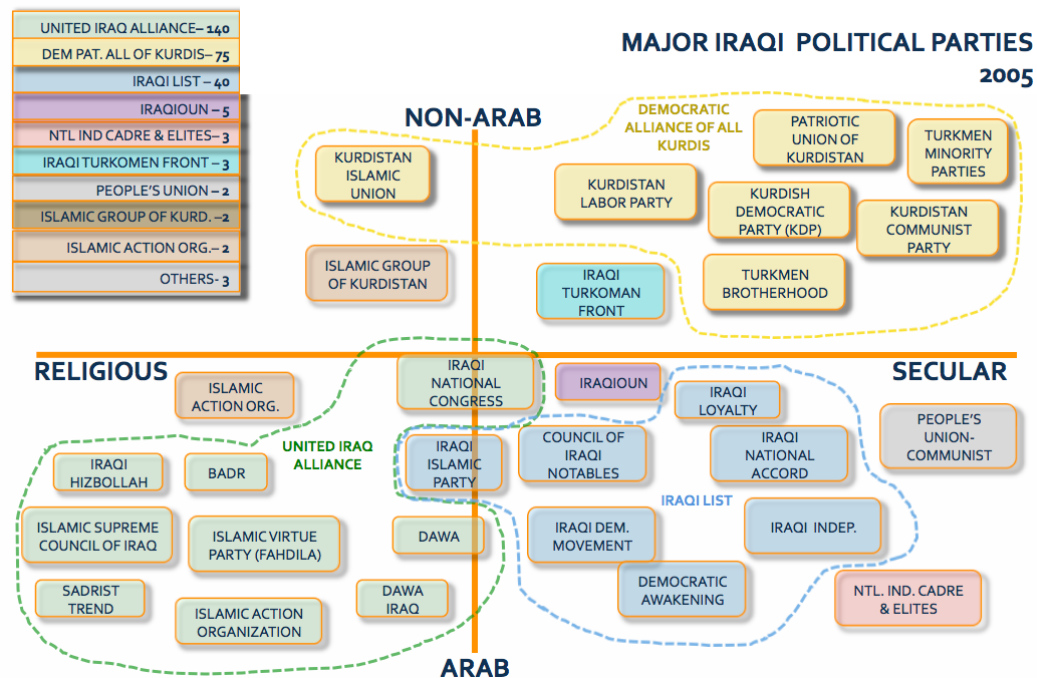


Fig. 8.5 Major Iraqi Political Parties – 2005. The figure above gives a general depiction of how political parties in the 2005 election aligned along the spectrum of Arab vs. non-

Arab and religious vs. secular. Data compiled from a variety of sources, see BBC News “Guide to Iraqi Political Parties” 20 January 2006, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4511450.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4511450.stm); Kenneth Katzman, “Iraq: Elections and New Government” CRS Report for Congress, 2005 <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/50254.pdf>; Reidar Visser, *A Responsible End? The United States and the Iraqi Transition, 2005 – 2010*, 2010. [Table is the author’s own].

In 2005, the KA formed the second largest bloc in the Iraqi Council of Representatives, with 75 seats. Smooth cooperation between the Kurdish parties after 2005 made their technical separation irrelevant at a national level. The KA sought to represent and advance Kurdish interests, such as greater regional autonomy and greater Kurdish revenue from Iraqi oil sales. Their cooperation essentially made them the kingmaker of Iraqi politics that year, and they formed a coalition government with the Shi’ia-dominated political bloc, the United Iraq Alliance (UIA).

In 2005, the KRG also held its first elections for the Kurdistan National Assembly (KNA), a 111-member parliament operating in Kurdistan. The KNA chose Barzani as its President. The next five years were relatively calm for the KRG. The KDP and PUK formed a political alliance, and together they dominated the Kurdish Regional Parliament. Al Qaeda in Iraq was not active inside Kurdish controlled areas, but during the 2006 – 2007 timeframe, the ethnically mixed eastern Iraqi province of Diyala contained numerous AQI strongholds, most notably in Baqubah, which was outside Kurdish control.<sup>182</sup> By 2007, AQI was slowly being pushed into northern Iraq. The oil-rich city of

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<sup>182</sup> Kimberly Kagan, “Iraq Report, February 11, 2007 – April 25, 2007,” The Weekly Standard and the Institute for the Study of War (2007), <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/reports/IraqReport04.pdf> (accessed 15 May 2015).

Kirkuk remained under dispute, and AQI cells were regrouping in Mosul. In 2008 and 2009, coalition forces worked directly with Kurdish tribal leaders in the area to clear sectors and find weapons caches.

The other issue facing the KRG was with how to deal with the PKK and Turkey. In October 2008, cross border tensions between the PKK and Turkey erupted. The tensions were quickly resolved, as access to coalition intelligence gave Turkey additional tools to fight the PKK. The KRG had itself embarked on new efforts to stem activity of the PKK operating on Iraqi soil, and the Turkish government worked to solve the issue through diplomatic channels, versus military channels.

In 2009, the KRG again held elections for its autonomous, 111-seat National Assembly.<sup>183</sup> The KRG elections exposed a new cleavage in Kurdish politics, the emergence of a secular challenger to the long-standing KDP and PUK. The Gorran (change) party, was led by a former PUK leader, Nechirvan Mustafa, and generated 25% of the votes within Kurdistan.<sup>184</sup>

## **2010 Elections**

By 2010, there were a few shifts in Kurdish politics. The Islamic Group of Kurdistan still ran independent of the other parties and generated 1.3% of the votes (2 seats). The KIU broke away from the secular Kurds, and generated 2.1% of the votes (4 seats) on their own. The Kurdistan List, which was the umbrella organization for secular

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<sup>183</sup> Katzman, "The Kurds in post-Saddam Iraq," 4.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

parties, only generated 14.6% of the votes (43 seats). This was largely because of the emergence of the other secular challenger to the long standing KDP and PUK: the Gorran (change) party, which generated a surprise 4.1% of the votes (8 seats). Taken together, the major Kurdish parties only generated 22% of the Iraqi vote, and 57 seats in the Iraqi Council of Representatives, down from 26% and 77 seats five years before.

TABLE 8.2  
IRAQI ELECTIONS, 2010

PARTY/BLOC	LEADER	SECT	R/S	VOTES	%	SEATS
Kurdistan List	Salih	Kurd	Secular	1,681,714	14.6	43
Gorran (Change)	Mustafa	Kurd	Secular	476,478	4.1	8
Kurdistan Islamic Union	Faraj	Kurd	Religious	243,720	2.1	4
<b>Total Major Kurdish Parties</b>				<b>2,554,442</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>57</b>
State of Law Coalition	Maliki	Shi'ia	Religious	2,792,083	24.2	89
Iraqi National Alliance	Jaafari	Sh'ia	Religious	2,092,066	18.2	70
<b>Total Major Shi'ia Parties</b>				<b>4,884,149</b>	<b>42.4</b>	<b>159</b>
Iraqi National Movement	Allawi	Sunni/Shi'ia	Secular	2,849,612	24.7	91
Unity Alliance of Iraq	Zaid	Sunni/Shi'ia	Secular	306,647	2.7	4
Iraqi Accord	Tikriti	Sunni	Religious	298,226	2.6	6
<b>Total Major Sunni/Secular Parties</b>				<b>3,454,485</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>101</b>
Minorities				61,153	0.5	8
Others				572,183	5	-

<b>Total</b>			
<b>Minorities/Others</b>	<b>633,336</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>8</b>

*Source:* Data compiled from a variety of sources, see Shak Bernard Hanish, “The Post 2003 Iraqi Electoral Laws” *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol 1 No. 17, 2011; The Independent High Electoral Commission, [www.ihed.iq](http://www.ihed.iq); and Reidar Visser, *A Responsible End? The United States and the Iraqi Transition, 2005 – 2010*, 2010. [Table is the author’s own].

In both 2005 and 2010, the Kurds demonstrated some of the elements of neorealist behavior in that they chose to align together to balance against the most significant threat to their power: a resurgent Sunni Arab political bloc. In 2005, the Kurdish parties aligned together and then chose to form a coalition government with the Shi’ia bloc. Likewise, their solidarity provided a coalition that would gain a significant advantage in the parliamentary elections. Kurdish factions did align based on ethnic background, ideology and shared grievances within Kurdistan, but outside Kurdistan the Kurds aligned with the UIA, a non-Sunni, non-Arab bloc. Like the Shi’ia and Sunni parties, the Kurds also aligned under charismatic leadership, but were able to form alliances with other political players inside the country well.



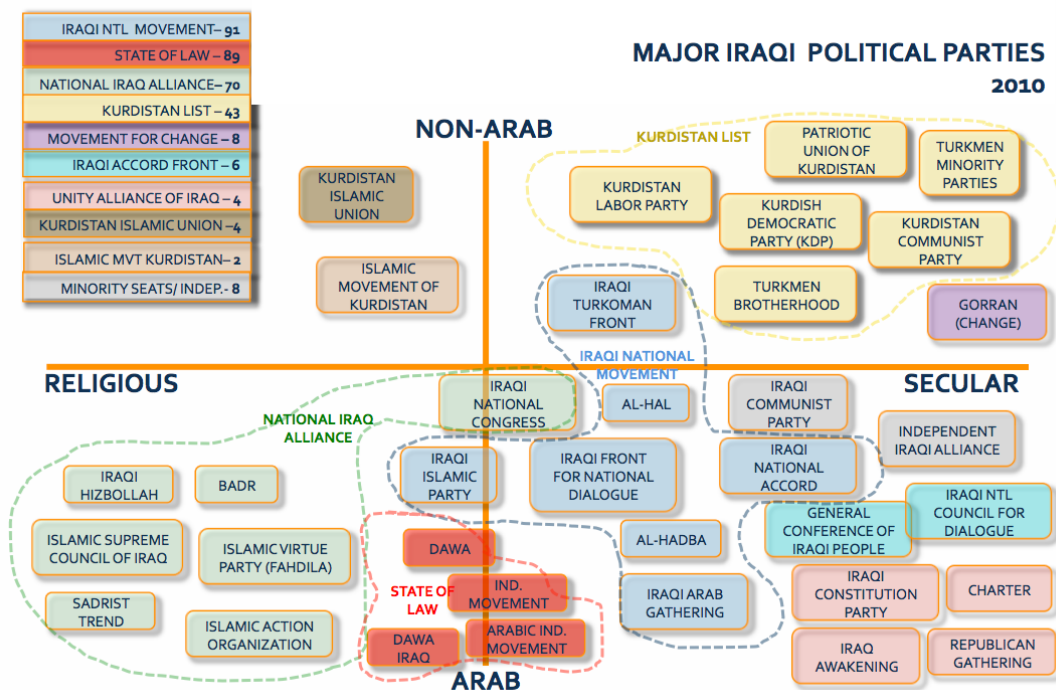


Fig. 8.6 Spectrum of Major Iraqi Political Parties, 2010. The figure above gives a general depiction of how political parties in the 2010 election aligned along the spectrum of Arab vs. non-Arab and religious vs. secular. *Source:* Data compiled from a variety of sources, see Shak Bernard Hanish, “The Post 2003 Iraqi Electoral Laws” *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol 1 No. 17, 2011; The Independent High Electoral Commission, [www.ihed.iq](http://www.ihed.iq); and Reidar Visser, *A Responsible End? The United States and the Iraqi Transition, 2005 – 2010*, 2010. [Figure is the author’s own].

In 2010, the secular Kurdish parties faced more opposition from the Islamist parties within the region. One of the most important shifts was that the KIU refused to join the Kurdish bloc led by Barzani and Talabani like it had in 2005. In addition, an internal cleavage had developed between entrenched PUK and KDP politicians and those advocating new political leadership under the Gorran party. But, despite a loss of 20 seats in the Iraqi Council of Representatives from 2005, the Kurds still maintained

important political positions in Baghdad, including the office of the Presidency, one Deputy Prime Minister slot and the position of Foreign Minister. The Kurds were not united under one charismatic leader, nor did they align based on ethnicity or shared grievances alone. Instead, by 2010, alignments within Kurdish political groups appeared to be more along ideological lines. While internally there appeared to be more fractures, the Kurds were successful providing a united front in Baghdad and in their relationship with foreign governments.

### Hypotheses

After the U.S. and coalition invasion of Iraq, and the subsequent fall of the Ba'ath Party, Kurdistan did not experience the same political or security issues that the predominantly Sunni Arab or Shi'ia provinces suffered. To the contrary, the KRG remained a functioning governing body and retained a monopoly on the use of force. In addition, the years of hostility and fighting between the PUK and the KDP subsided, as the two major parties aligned to provide a united Kurdish front in Baghdad.

TABLE 8.3

#### HYPOTHESES SUPPORTED BY KURDISH POLITICAL PROCESSES

Supported	H	Proposition	Structure or Agency	Academic School
YES	H1	Political factions facing a threat will align with others to oppose the factions posing the threat	Structural	Neorealist - Balance

		(balance).		
YES	H2	Political factions facing a threat will ally with the most threatening power (bandwagon).	Structural	Neorealist - Bandwagon
YES	H3	Political momentum: Political factions will realign when doing so gives them a minimum winning coalition.	Structural	Comparative Politics
X	H4	Political factions will align when monetary gains are assured.	Agency	Behavioral Science
YES	H5	Factions will align based on racial, religious, or ethnic background.	Agency	Behavioral Science
YES	H6	Political factions will align when they have a similar ideology.	Agency	Behavioral Science
YES	H7	Factions will align based on shared grievances (past and/or present).	Agency	Behavioral Science
X	H8	Political factions will align when a point of critical mass is achieved.	Structure & Agency	Complexity Theory
YES	H9	Political factions will align when a charismatic leader drives a social movement.	Structure & Agency	Sociology
YES	H10	Political factions will align using agent-based considerations in the beginning, but will gravitate towards neorealist considerations as they mature.	Structure & Agency	Causal Mechanisms & Process Tracing

*Source:* Data compiled and generated by the author. [Table is the author's own].

Despite their vulnerabilities, after the U.S. and coalition invasion, the Iraqi Kurds were able to take advantage of the political situation in Baghdad and present a united front. Their behavior is in accordance with the structural theories of political neorealism, the PUK and the KDP bandwagoned together to balance the political situation in Baghdad. The Kurds also managed to stay politically aligned with U.S. interests, another example of bandwagoning. Their maneuvering served them well; today, the Kurdish regions of Iraq are arguably the most stable and most economically powerful provinces in the country. The Kurdish case is the most clear example of how charismatic leadership is important in early group formation, but how the structural considerations of neorealism and the political maneuvering from developing minimum winning coalitions take place after the groups become more politically mature.

TABLE 8.4  
MOST PROBABLE HYPOTHESES SUPPORTED BY KURDISH POLITICAL  
PROCESSES

Year	Party/ Militant Faction	Alignment With	Alignment Against	Threat Is	H	Most Probable Hypothesis
1946	KDP	-	British/Arab Government	Internal	H9	Charismatic Leadership
1975	PUK	-	KDP	Internal	H9	Charismatic Leadership
1978	PKK	-	Turkey	External	H9	Charismatic Leadership
1987	PUK	Iran	Ba’ath Party	Internal	H1	Neorealism – Balance

						Threat
1987	KDP	Iran	Ba'ath Party	Internal	H1	Neorealism – Balance Threat
2003	KRG	U.S.	AQI/ Ba'ath Party	Internal	H1	Neorealism – Balance Threat
2005	KIU	KRG	Sunni Parties	Internal	H1	Neorealism – Balance Threat
2005	KRG	UIA	Sunni Parties	Internal	H3 H2	Minimum Winning Coalition Neorealism - Bandwagoning
2010	KIU	Iran	KRG	Internal	H1	Neorealism – Balance Threat
2010	KDP	PUK	Sunni Parties	Internal	H1	Neorealism – Balance Threat

*Source:* Data compiled and generated by the author. [Table is the author's own].

### **Application to Theoretical Model**

Like the Sunni Arab and the Shi'ia cases, the Kurdish model of alignment and alliances does not conform to one single hypotheses from the scholarly literature. Instead, each major alignment is driven by charismatic leadership in the early stages, and becomes more predictable according to the theories put forth by the comparative politics and neorealist literature as they became institutionally mature. Therefore, it is difficult to predict *when* new Kurdish alliances may occur, only what alliances may take place after the parties have fully formed. Looking at the theoretical model proposed in Chapter 1, it is reasonable to assume that the two major Kurdish parties: the PUK and the KDP, were already at the level of institutionalization by the time of Saddam Hussein's fall. The PUK and KDP were seen as legitimate operating bodies within Kurdish governance and had a

place in international negotiations. Thus, the KDP and the PUK were not driven has much by personal grievance or individual considerations; their political actions were generally confined to bandwagoning, balancing or creating minimum winning coalitions. That been said, even after the fall of Saddam Hussein, the PUK and KDP still had unfinished political and military objectives, namely in the area of more autonomy for the Kurdish state, hence it is not surprising that both groups are still operating under the charismatic leadership of their founders.

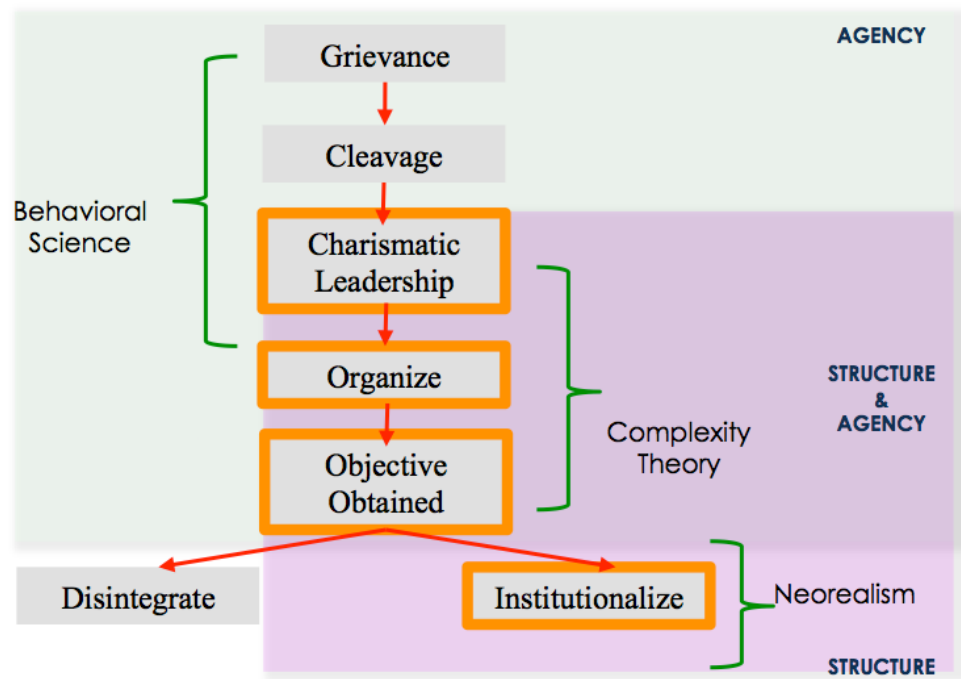


Fig. 8.7 Theoretical Model of Alliance Formation- KRG political factions, post-2003. [Figure is the author's own].

## Conclusion

The Kurds of Iraq are in a vulnerable position: they are landlocked and face opposition from many of their neighbors. The Kurds also have a history of self-determination, which is especially troublesome to the counties with a significant Kurdish minority population. For decades the Kurdish Iraqis put up a strong resistance front against Baghdad's rule. Their allegiances were to regional and tribal affiliations, and they used those allegiances to gain more power in relation to Baghdad. During the rule of Saddam Hussein, when the Kurds faced overwhelming opposition from the Ba'ath Party, the Kurds aligned with Iran. Once Iraq and Iran reached a peace agreement, the Kurds fought amongst themselves, but then aligned with U.S. interests to counter Saddam.

The most important characteristic that distinguished the Kurds from the rest of Iraq was the maturity of their internal political processes and institutions. That maturity enabled the Kurds to resist the power vacuum that consumed the rest of the country after the fall of the Ba'ath party. The KRG also had a monopoly on the use of force and the loyalty of the *peshmerga*. Internally, after the fall of the Ba'ath Party, the threats from Islamist factions and separatist groups have generally been quelled by the PUK and the KDP. Overall, the Kurdish factions have the most mature political processes in Iraq, but charismatic leaders are still at the forefront. This suggests the Kurdish political parties have not fully matured to the point of institutionalization, and will continue to align based on both structural and agent-based considerations.

## CHAPTER 9: IRAQ POST-U.S. DEPARTURE

*“Only the Sunnis can defeat ISIS.”*

Rafi al-Issawi, 2014<sup>185</sup>

### Background

During the U.S. military’s surge period from 2006 and 2008, U.S. and coalition forces dispersed into Iraqi towns and villages, creating hundreds of Forward Operating Bases (FOBs). This dispersion was an underpinning of General David Petraeus’s counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine, which advocated clearing areas of resistance, using host nation security forces to hold the area, and building support and improving infrastructure.<sup>186</sup> By 2009, the number of Iraqis being killed decreased significantly,<sup>187</sup> and the success of the surge set the stage for Iraq’s transition to democracy and entry into neoliberal markets.

The U.S. and coalition involvement in Iraq was not only military; there were also massive reconstruction efforts taking place simultaneous to the U.S. military’s efforts. During the reconstruction phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), coalition forces worked alongside State Department officials to rebuild legal, security, political, economic, and regulatory institutions; another important underpinning of Petraeus’s

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<sup>185</sup> Rafi al-Issawi quoted in Simeon Kerr, “Iraq’s Sunni could defeat ISIS if Maliki steps down, says ex-minister,” *Financial Times*, 24 June 2014 <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/1e87ed0e-fb96-11e3-aa19-00144feab7de.html#axzz3bAxmplEo> (accessed 26 March 2015).

<sup>186</sup> The U.S. Army/Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007) 5-20.

<sup>187</sup> Iraq Body Count, Database Online, <https://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/> (accessed 26 March 2015).



COIN doctrine.<sup>188</sup> The U.S. and coalition forces worked to install market-oriented policies and legal changes as well as transition state-owned enterprises to the private sector. This task proved to be enormously complicated for the inexperienced political appointees of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and later State Department Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), as well as the U.S. military.<sup>189</sup> Furthermore, the rapid influx of cash promoted widespread corruption amongst Iraqi officials and individuals involved in the contracting processes.<sup>190</sup>

### **Status of Forces Agreement**

In late 2008, the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Ryan Crocker, and Iraq's Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari signed a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) between the two nations. The SOFA was implemented in order to “determine the principal provisions and requirements that regulate the temporary presence, activities, and withdrawal of the United States Forces from Iraq.”<sup>191</sup> The SOFA granted the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) full responsibility for security, and mandated U.S. combat forces to withdraw from Iraqi cities, villages, and localities no later than June 30, 2009. Because the surge and new political realities put a cap on the violence, the U.S. military spent most of the first half of 2009 scaling back the FOBs they opened in 2006 – 2008.

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<sup>188</sup> *Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, 5-20.

<sup>189</sup> Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Imperial Life in the Emerald City* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 54-72.

<sup>190</sup> Chakmakchi, interview. See also: Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) Reports, *Global Security* (2013), <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/sigir/> (accessed 15 May 2015).

<sup>191</sup> Darron Wright, *Iraq Full Circle: From Shock and Awe to the Last Combat Patrol in Baghdad* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2012), 327.

On the military front, under U.S. and coalition guidance, by late 2008 the ISF was successfully eliminating many terrorist safe havens and passage points and slowing the influx of foreign fighters and weapons into Iraq on their own. Yet, despite the fact that the number of ISF battalions capable of conducting counterinsurgency operations steadily increased under U.S. training, the Iraqis still depended on the coalition in the areas of “logistics, fire support, communications, close air support, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, and planning.”<sup>192</sup>

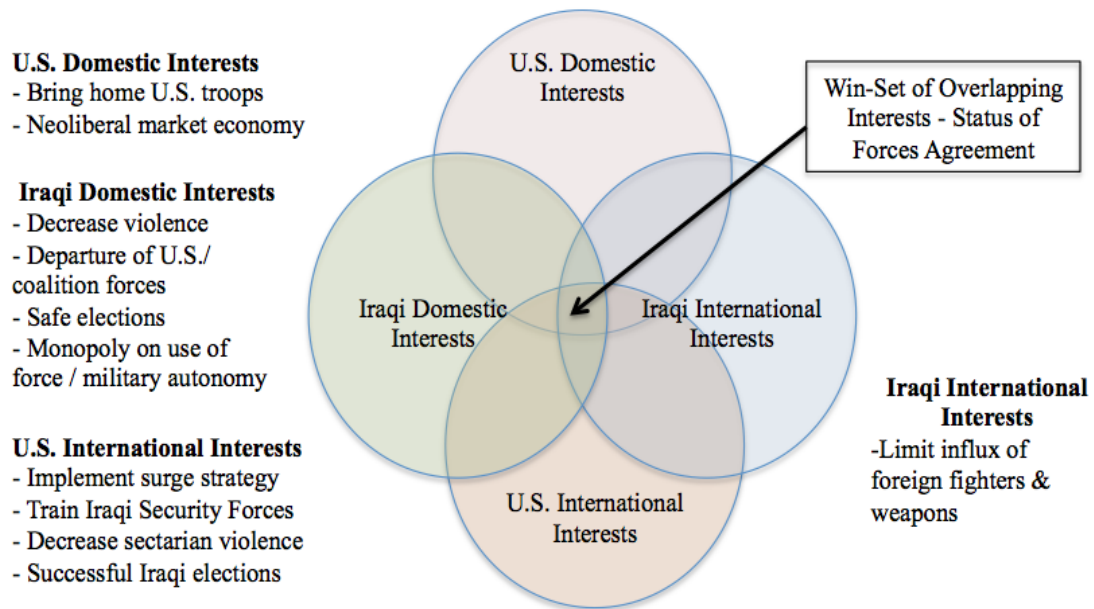


Fig. 9.1 Status of Forces Agreement, Overlapping Interests, 2008 [Figure is the author’s own].

<sup>192</sup> Barry Leonard, “Measuring Security and Stability in Iraq,” *Report to Congress*, January 9, 2009, Report to Congress, iv.

It is important to assess the SOFA from the perspective of overlapping interests. On the U.S. domestic front, in 2006 General Petraeus successfully generated Congressional support for his surge strategy. By 2008, the levels of violence in Iraq had decreased significantly. Inside Iraq, the Shi'ia political parties had consolidated power in Baghdad and Moqtada al Sadr implemented a ceasefire. The SOI created a monopoly on the use of violence in the areas that they controlled, thereby dampening the violence from the Al Qaeda network. By 2008, the domestic and international interests for both the U.S. and the Iraqis overlapped in such a way that the SOFA could be negotiated and implemented.

In 2010, the second quadrennial national elections in Iraq were held. Participation was high, and voters were marginally safe. The U.S. had succeeded in bringing down the levels of violence in the country and opening up dialogue on the principles of democratic governance. During the surge the U.S. had also continued to push for neoliberal economic reforms, and there were several indications those reforms were taking root.<sup>193</sup> While much of the violence had subsided, most Western policy makers would have preferred to see a stable, market-oriented democracy, and complete security in Baghdad by the time of U.S. withdrawal. This stability could not be achieved by the SOFA's accelerated timeline, mandating complete U.S. withdrawal by December 31, 2011.

In 2011, U.S. forces left Iraq after nearly eight years in the country, but most of the military, economic and market-oriented institutions put into place by coalition

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<sup>193</sup> Dhafir Abdul Karim, interview by author, 14 May 2014.

officials had not fermented to the point of becoming legitimate sources of authority and influence. Politically, there was concern that the Prime Minister, Nouri al Maliki, would not fully integrate the Sunnis into the political and security apparatus. The Iraqi Constitution, in its lack of thoroughness, did not provide a way forward on the 2010 elections, which were deadlocked between Nouri Al Maliki's State of Law (SOL) coalition and the secular, predominantly Sunni bloc led by Ayad Allawi. On the military front, while the Iraqi Ministry of Defense (MOD) successfully generated and fielded ground forces, deficiencies remained in maintaining, supplying, and supporting them.<sup>194</sup> Once the U.S. left the country, the economy faltered, governance was at a standstill, and the Iraqi military and security services had a difficult time conducting anything other than checkpoint operations.<sup>195</sup>

### **Maliki's Woes – Internal Security Threats**

Once U.S. and coalition forces pulled out of the region, publically U.S. policy makers exercised quite a bit of restraint with regards to their backing of one political player over another; but behind the scenes of U.S. diplomacy, there was a hard push to keep Maliki in power.<sup>196</sup> Many of the military and political personnel that were involved in Iraq praised the elections and attributed Iraq's 2010 political impasse as the democratic

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<sup>194</sup> Abdul Karim, interview.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *Endgame*, 628 – 651.

process taking time to form.<sup>197</sup> When U.S. forces finally left the country at the end of 2011, Prime Minister Maliki's government was left alone to handle Iraq's internal and external defense. Economically, the U.S. and coalition forces had hastily implemented dozens of reforms, but they did not have the institutional longevity needed to be effective. One result of the haste was a rush to implement neoliberal economic policies, many of which the country was ill prepared to handle. The Iraqis were expected to meet structural benchmarks set by organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. The benchmarks included activities like: conducting audited reviews of the domestic oil sector to reconcile the flows of oil and oil products at key points in the national system with the financial flows between the various state-owned companies and the budget, preparing detailed reports of outstanding stock advances, as well as doing a census of workers on the government payroll.<sup>198</sup> The challenges posed by corruption and government inefficiencies further exacerbated the problem.<sup>199</sup> Under Prime Minister Maliki, the Iraqi government was unable to make major decisions on how oil-revenues would be divided, the process for maintaining a robust security apparatus, or finalize plans for economic stabilization.

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<sup>197</sup> See Timothy Williams and Rod Norland, "Allawi Victory in Iraq Sets Up Period of Uncertainty," *The New York Times*, 26 March 2010 <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/27/world/middleeast/27iraq.html?pagewanted=all> accessed 15 June 2014; Emma Sky, "How Obama Abandoned Democracy in Iraq," *Politico* 7 April 2015, [http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/04/obama-iraq-116708\\_Page2.html#.VXn-Xef7KLs](http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/04/obama-iraq-116708_Page2.html#.VXn-Xef7KLs) (accessed 10 June 2015).

<sup>198</sup> International Monetary Fund, "Iraq: Letter of Intent, Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies, and Technical Memorandum of Understanding," 8 February 2010, <https://www.imf.org/external/np/loi/2010/irq/020810.pdf> (accessed 10 June 2015).

<sup>199</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Corruption and Integrity Challenges in the Public Sector of Iraq," January 2013, [http://www.unodc.org/documents/publications/2013\\_Report\\_on\\_Corruption\\_and\\_Integrity\\_Iraq.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/publications/2013_Report_on_Corruption_and_Integrity_Iraq.pdf) (accessed 15 May 2015).

## External Security Threats – Iran and Syria

The other major hurdle facing Iraqi politicians after the withdrawal of U.S. forces was threat posed by neighboring countries, namely Iran and Syria. After years of enduring the chaotic politicking of Saddam Hussein and the Ba'ath party, many Middle Eastern policy makers welcomed a more tractable Iraqi government, with political and economic outcomes benefiting groups that were marginalized in the past. Policymakers and elites across the Middle East saw an opportunity to penetrate Iraqi decision-making.

Iraq's powerful neighbor to the east, the Islamic Republic of Iran, quickly filled the void left by U.S. policy makers. Iranian officials quickly seized upon the opportunity to work with the longstanding Shi'ia militias by providing military and financial support. Iran pushed a soft power strategy: non-oil industry trade as well as economic support to Shi'ia organizations and political parties.<sup>200</sup>

Iran's intentions in Iraq complimented their long-term strategy in the Middle East. For years, the Iranian regime was aggressively jockeying to become a nuclear power. By 2010, Iran had developed one of the most sizeable arsenals of ballistic missiles and long-range artillery rockets in the Middle East, and maintained a robust chemical weapons

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<sup>200</sup> Michael Eisenstadt, Michael Knights and Ahmed Ali, "Iran's Influence in Iraq" Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Policy Focus #111, April 2011, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyFocus111.pdf> (accessed 15 May 2015); David Ignatius, "Tehran's Vote-Buying in Iraq," *Washington Post*, 25 February 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/24/AR2010022403479.html> (accessed 15 May 2015); David Ignatius, "Bush's Lost Iraqi Elections," *Washington Post*, 30 August 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/08/29/AR2007082901930.html> (accessed 15 May 2015), Iranian efforts to influence the December 2005 parliamentary elections also reportedly involved the smuggling into Iraq of thousands of forged ballots; Dexter Filkins, "Police Seize Forged Ballots Headed for Iraq from Iran," *New York Times*, 14 December 2005 <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/14/international/middleeast/14iraq.html> (accessed 15 May 2015).

capability.<sup>201</sup> In 2012, Iranian officials stated that they refused to halt their uranium enrichment program, and the regime was not deterred by the threat of a U.S. or Israeli-led precision attack on their nuclear facilities.<sup>202</sup> The soft power strategy gave the Iranian government a way to ferment relationships with the Iraqis and gain an economic foothold in Iraq, while at home they focused on developing hard power.

During the first few years after the departure of U.S. troops from Iraq, the U.S. could be characterized as being in a quasi “cold war” with the Iranians, with each party involved in covert plots to undermine the other. These plots typically involved assassination attempts on nuclear scientists and on “high-value” U.S. sympathizers, such as the Saudi Arabian ambassador to the U.S. Serious changes to the U.S.-Iran cold war did not occur until mid-2012 when the administration of U.S. President Barack Obama took a series of measures that can be seen as moving beyond the realm of diplomacy.

The first measure the Obama administration adopted was economic: U.S. officials “cut off the U.S. financial system from any entity that facilitates the purchase of Iranian oil through the Central Bank of Iran.”<sup>203</sup> They also gave the U.S. Treasury Department the power to “impose sanctions on any foreign individual or firm that helps Tehran acquire U.S. dollars or precious metals.”<sup>204</sup> Unlike previous efforts to curtail the Iranian economy, these sanctions had an almost immediate and devastating effect. Within a few

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<sup>201</sup> Nuclear Threat Initiative, “Syria Profile” and “Iran Profile” 2012.

[http://www.nti.org/e\\_research/profiles/Syria/Missile/4126.html](http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/Syria/Missile/4126.html) (accessed 15 May 2015).

<sup>202</sup> In 1982 Israel conducted preemptive air strikes on the Iraqi nuclear reactor at Osiraq.

<sup>203</sup> Jamie Crawford, “New Iran sanctions hit banks in China, Iraq” *CNN*, 31 July 2012

<http://www.cnn.com/2012/07/31/us/iran-sanctions/index.html> (accessed 16 May 2015).

<sup>204</sup> Samuel Rubinfeld, “Senate Passes Tough New Iran Sanctions.” *Wall Street Journal*, 3 December 2012. <http://blogs.wsj.com/corruption-currents/2012/12/03/senate-passes-tough-new-iran-sanctions/> (accessed 16 May 2015).

weeks, the sanctions forced the Iranian country into a dramatic economic downturn with hyperinflation and a collapsing exchange rate. Oil exports also suffered a dramatic drop.

As a retaliatory measure, in September 2012 Iran threatened to block the Strait of Hormuz. In response, the U.S., France, and Great Britain designed a show of military force and passed warships through the strait. The warships included: a nuclear powered carrier, a guided missile cruiser, two destroyers, and an escort vessel.<sup>205</sup> A few weeks later, the U.S. led a 27-nation naval exercise in the Strait of Hormuz designed to practice counter-mining at sea.<sup>206</sup> The warships and the naval exercise could be seen as coercive actions, designed to intimidate, threaten, and compel the Iranians to alter their political posture.

Finally, that same month, the U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton took the Iranian resistance group, *Mujahadeen e-Khalq* (MEK), off the official list of foreign terrorist organizations and State Department officials coordinated with the Iraqis to move the group to a former U.S. military installation in Baghdad. The MEK was a longtime antagonist to the Iranian regime and cooperated with U.S. officials to conduct intelligence operations, interception, and information gathering.

The sanctions and posturing on Iran also had an immediate impact on Iraq. In order to counter the sanctions, Iran put increased pressure on neighboring countries to help them circumvent the heavy restrictions. A typical by-product of sanctions is an

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<sup>205</sup> David Blair, "Britain, US and France send warships through Strait of Hormuz" *The Telegraph*, 23 January 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/9031392/Britain-US-and-France-send-warships-through-Strait-of-Hormuz.html> (23 May 2015).

<sup>206</sup> Daniel Sagalyn, "Iran Watches as US military launches exercise in Straight of Hormuz." *PBS Newshour*, 16 September 2014, <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/2012/09/navy-exercise.html> (23 May 2015).



underground economy;<sup>207</sup> when the U.S. imposed sanctions on Iraq in the mid-1990's, the country developed an intricate network in order to get goods into and out of the country. The imposition of sanctions on Iran had a similar effect.<sup>208</sup>

In Syria, an ongoing civil war between the minority Alawite leader Bashar Assad and anti-government rebel forces left ungoverned spaces across much of the Syrian landscape. Assad was backed by Russia and Iran, making it difficult for the U.S. to propose a military solution to the United Nations. Several U.S. lawmakers sought to set up no-fly zones and supply rebel forces with weapons, however many of the rebel forces were also aligned with pro-Islamist organizations that were active in Iraq. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Maliki failed to secure his border with Syria, leaving Anbar province and most of western Iraq completely exposed to an influx of foreign fighters.

Given the instability in Syria and the influx of refugees and foreign fighters, border security should have been a top priority for the Maliki administration. Instead, contracts were delayed and cancelled, and the borders remained so porous that they were an easy way for criminals and terrorists to enter back into the country. There was some speculation that border security was kept in this ambiguous state in order to appease Tehran's support for the Assad regime in Syria.<sup>209</sup> Porous borders meant that Tehran could control the supply lines all the way to Damascus, a vital security interest given the

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<sup>207</sup> For examples see: Nimah Mazaheri, "Iraq and the Domestic Political Effects of Economic Sanctions," *Middle East Journal* 64, no. 2 (2010), 253-268; Jon Hovi, Robert Huseby and Detlef Sprinz, "When Do (Imposed) Economic Sanctions Work? *World Politics* 57, no. 4 (2005), 479-99.

<sup>208</sup> International Crisis Group, "Spider Web: The Making and Unmaking of Iran Sanctions," 25 February 2013, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-iran-gulf/iran/138-spider-web-the-making-and-unmaking-of-iran-sanctions.aspx> (accessed 23 May 2015).

<sup>209</sup> Ghaffoori, interview; Abdul Karim, D. interview.

strict economic sanctions on the country. The borders remained a gateway for illegal activities, including smugglers, drug-runners, and arms dealers trafficking goods between Iran, Iraq, and Syria.

### **Sunni Disenfranchisement**

The absence of a sitting government in Baghdad for the majority of 2010 gave rise to social instability, insurgent attacks, economic uncertainty, and created a massive power vacuum in the outlying Sunni Arab provinces. In the beginning of his second administration, Prime Minister Maliki promised the Americans he would develop a power-sharing arrangement that would bring the Sunnis back to the political table. Once the U.S. left, threats to Prime Minister Maliki's power base from within Iraq came from disenfranchised Sunnis with popular appeal, a resurgent Ba'ath party, and internal disputes with other Shi'ia political players. He refused to designate a Minister of Defense (MOD) or Minister of the Interior (MOI), but instead concentrated power inside the Prime Minister's office. In order to counter internal threats, he appealed to the long-standing militias to quell uprisings and eliminate Sunni political players.<sup>210</sup> Prime Minister Maliki also integrated the Shi'ia SOI and militias into the ISF ahead of the *Sahwa* groups, then cut the funding for the SOI, leaving tens of thousands of military-aged Sunni Arab males without work.<sup>211</sup> Finally, Maliki strictly enforced Iraq's Justice and Accountability (de-Ba'athification) Law and Article 4 of Iraq's antiterrorism law,

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<sup>210</sup> Hamid al-Kifaey, "Innaha Majalis Isnad al-Maliki" [They are Maliki's Support Councils], *al Hayat*, 6 January 2009, <http://international.daralhayat.com/archivearticle/282409> (accessed 24 May 2015).

<sup>211</sup> Michael Pregent, email to author, 26 June 2015.

which imprisoned individuals suspected of terrorism indefinitely without a timeline for due process.<sup>212</sup> In doing so, Prime Minister Maliki aggravated large portions of the Sunni Arab population.

In 2011 and 2012, two major instances of Sunni marginalization provoked wide-scale protest. The first was with Iraqi Vice President Tariq al Hashemi, a former official in Ba'athist Iraq who later led the Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP). In December 2011, immediately after U.S. forces left the country, Hashemi's bodyguards were detained and beaten.<sup>213</sup> Prime Minister Maliki then had him arrested, accusing him of running death squads. Maliki's action sparked the beginning widespread resistance movements, including the boycott of the parliamentary bloc led by Ayad Allawi.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Miranda Sissons, "Briefing Paper: Iraq's New 'Accountability and Justice' Law," 22 January 2008, International Center for Transnational Justice, <https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Iraq-Accountability-Briefing-2008-English.pdf> (accessed 23 May 2015).

<sup>213</sup> "Iraq issues arrest warrant for Vice-President Tareq al-Hashemi," *Reuters*, 19 December 2011, <http://interc.pt/1Ml1FXL> (accessed 15 May 2015).

<sup>214</sup> Jack Healy and Michael Gordon, "Large Bloc of Lawmakers Boycotts Iraqi Parliament," *International New York Times*, 17 December 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/18/world/middleeast/iraqi-parliament-boycott-threatens-coalition.html> (11 June 2015).

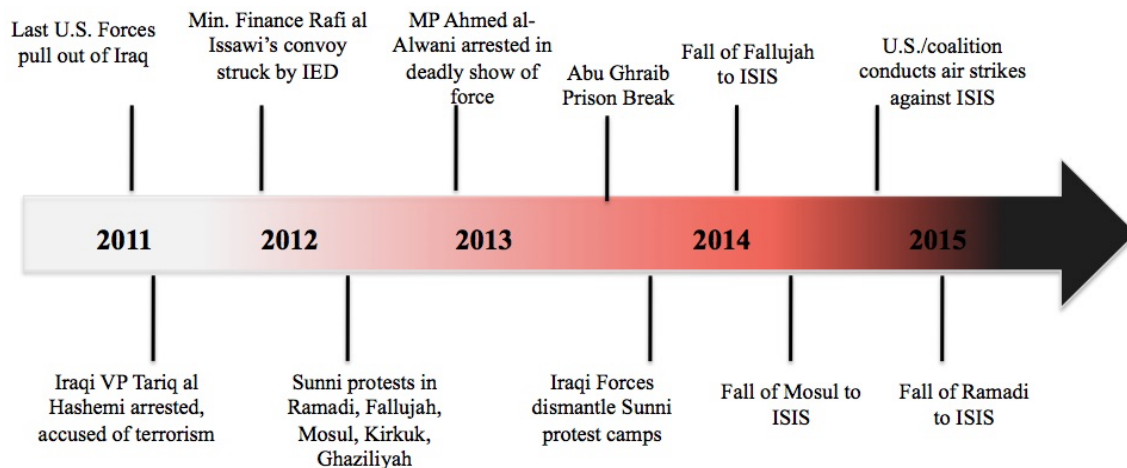


Fig. 9.2 Timeline of Sunni Arab Disenfranchisement, 2011 – 2015. [Figure is the author's own].

In January 2012, the popular Sunni Minister of Finance, Rafi al Issawi's vehicle was struck by an improvised explosive device (IED). In December 2012, his guards and staff were arrested and a bomb detonated near his convoy the next month.<sup>215</sup> Issawi's arrest triggered 70 days of protests that spread to the cities of Ramadi, Fallujah, Mosul, Kirkuk, and Ghaziliyah.<sup>216</sup> When Issawi barely escaped another assassination attempt in mid-January 2013, the Sunnis created permanent protest camps for daily rallies against the Maliki regime.

In late 2013, members of tribal provinces of the south and central Euphrates alongside tribal elders from clans in Anbar, Nineveh, Diyala, and Salahuddin came together to lobby against Maliki's political decision-making. The main issues they

<sup>215</sup> Michael Gordon, "Tensions Rise in Baghdad With Raid on Sunni Official," *The New York Times*, 21 December 2010, [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/21/world/middleeast/tensions-rise-in-baghdad-with-raid-on-sunni-official.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/21/world/middleeast/tensions-rise-in-baghdad-with-raid-on-sunni-official.html?_r=0) (accessed 11 June 2015).

<sup>216</sup> "What Drives Sunni Anger in Iraq," *Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty*, 23 June 2014, <http://www.rferl.org/content/iraq-sunni-anger-causes/25432218.html> (15 May 2015).

wanted to see addressed were: changes to Iraq's Justice and Accountability Law and an adaptation of Article 4 of Iraq's antiterrorism law. The delegation decided to form a monitoring committee comprising of two members from each province to ensure the demands of the Sunni Arab demonstrators in the west were taken to the authorities in Baghdad. Most importantly, the delegation gave Prime Minister Maliki a one-week ultimatum on issuing a final statement on the release of the prisoners arrested under the antiterrorism law, many of which were women. Instead of meeting the requests, Maliki had another prominent member of the Sunni community and minister in parliament, Ahmed al-Alwani, arrested in a deadly show of force at his place of residence. The minister was an active supporter of the permanent protest camps, and the subsequent death of several of al-Alwani's bodyguards and family members sparked more outrage amongst the Sunni population.<sup>217</sup>

### **2014 National Elections**

In 2013, the Iraqi government voted to change the election law. This was done, partially, because of the resulting deadlock after the 2010 elections, in which the SOL coalition led by Maliki was nearly deadlocked with Iraqi National Movement (INA), led by Ayad Allawi. The new election process stipulated that a more proportional method

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<sup>217</sup> "Iraq MP Ahmed al-Alwani arrested in deadly Ramadi raid," *BBC News*, 28 December 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25534541> (accessed 24 May 2015).

would be used to calculate how seats were distributed in the National Parliament, increased the number seats to 328, and allowed smaller parties to vie for leftover seats.<sup>218</sup>

Because of the change to the election law, which based the calculations for parliamentary seats off the Sainte-Lague method, the 2014 elections saw quite a few more parties on the political spectrum. There were also many more coalitions, made up of several parties, running alongside newer parties. The 2014 elections were similar to the previous elections in that there are 3 major groupings of parties: Shi'ia, Sunni and Kurdish. But, what is different about 2014 was that a very large percentage of the population, over 3 million out of 13 million who voted (see Table 8.1) could not be considered for any of these categories *alone*.

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<sup>218</sup> In November 2013, the Iraqi Supreme Court ruled that the current method of calculating parliamentary seats was unconstitutional. New method follows the Sainte-Lague method for calculating left over parliamentary seats where successive quotients are calculated for each party until all the seats are allocated. The Sainte-Lague method gives much smaller parties a better chance of getting a seat in parliament.

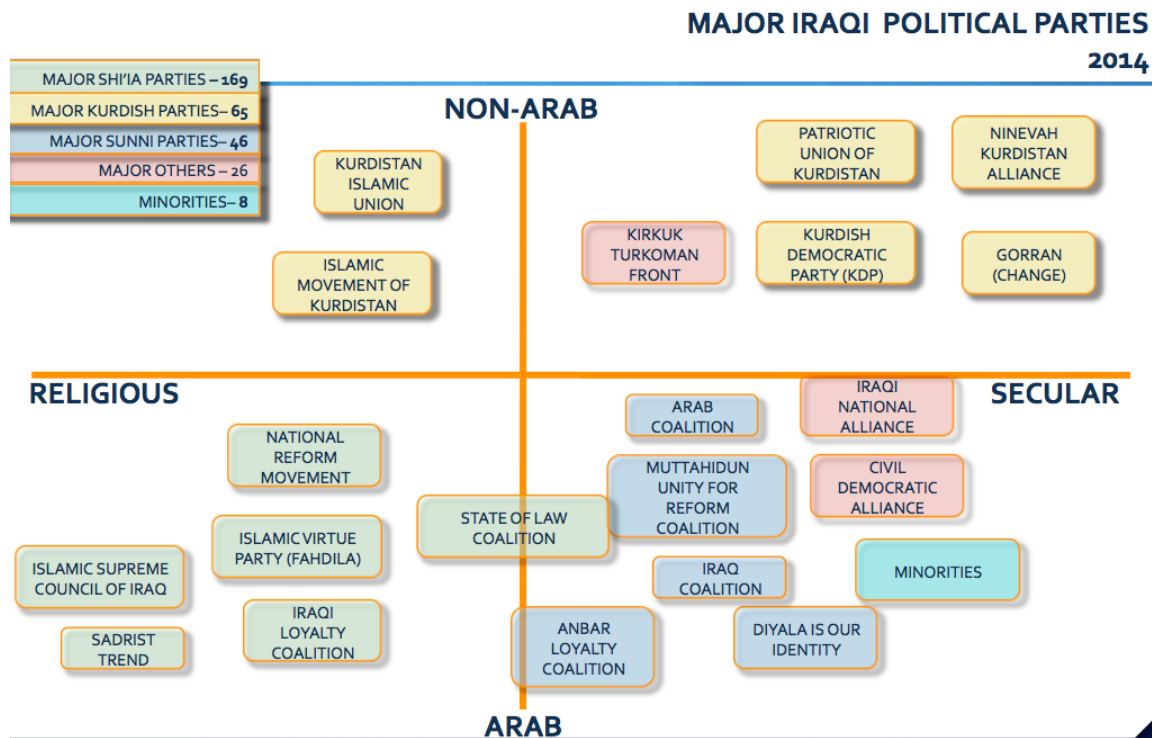


Fig. 9.3 Spectrum of Iraqi Political Parties, 2014. The spectrum of Iraqi political parties changed in the 2014 elections. Most notably there was a growing cleavage between secular and non-secular parties, as well as more widespread Sunni acceptance of the political process. Data compiled from a variety of sources see: Ali A. Nabhan “Iraqi Premier Leads Vote, Faces Stalemate,” *Wall Street Journal* May 19, 2015; The Independent High Electoral Commission, [www.ihed.iq](http://www.ihed.iq); Ahmed Ali, “Iraq’s 2014 National Elections,” Middle East Security Report 20, April 2015. Institute for the Study of War available: <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/AhmedAliIraqElections.pdf> [Table is the author’s own].

The graphic above depicts the Iraqi political spectrum in 2014. The parties were still split between religious and secular and Arab versus Kurdish. The inclusion of more minority factions changed the political dynamic, but still left Shi’ia parties in the majority with Kurdish and Sunni Arab parties holding the second and third largest blocs

respectively. The table below shows the major parties that won seats in the 2014 elections.

Amongst the Sunni factions, compared with the 2005 and 2010 elections, the country's Sunni Arabs demonstrated much more political disparity. They created several new political parties, notably *Mutahiddun* (Unity for Reform Coalition). While the Sunni Arabs still were not generating the kind of votes that would allow them to have the Premiership, the 2014 elections were successful in that like 2010 they generated widespread Sunni participation. In 2014, there was a growing cleavage between secular and non-secular parties in the Kurdish north as well as the cleavage in the Shi'ia parties from the SOL Coalition, which was comparatively more secular than the Sadrist trend and SCIRI. The inclusion of more minority parties resulted in both the Kurdish and Shi'ia parties generating a slightly smaller proportion of votes that they had in 2005 and 2010.

TABLE 9.1  
IRAQI ELECTIONS, 2014

PARTY/BLOC	LEADER	SECT	R/S	VOTES	%	SEATS
Kurdistan Democratic Party	Barzani	Kurd	Secular	852,198	6.5	25
Patriotic Union of Kurdistan	Talabani	Kurd	Secular	780,519	6	21
Gorran (Change)	Mustafa	Kurd	Secular	495,305	3.8	9
<b>Total Major Kurdish Parties</b>				<b>2,632,351</b>	<b>20.1</b>	<b>65</b>
State of Law Coalition	Maliki	Shi'ia	Religious	3,141,835	24	92
Islamic Supreme Council*	Hakim	Shi'ia	Religious	982,003	7.5	29*



Sadrist Movement	Sadr	Shi'ia	Religious	917,589	7	34
<b>Total Major Shi'ia Parties</b>				<b>5,653,344</b>	<b>44.3</b>	<b>169</b>
Iraqi National Alliance (Wataniya)	Allawi	Sunni/ Shi'ia	Secular	758,666	5.8	21
Muttahidoon al-Arabiya Coalition	Nujayfi	Sunni	Secular	680,690	5.2	23
	Mutlaq	Sunni	Secular	315,858	2.4	10
Iraqi Coalition	al-Dabbas	Sunni/ Shi'ia	Secular	250,154	1.9	5
Civil Democratic Alliance	Aziz	Sunni/ Shi'ia	Secular	187,969	1.4	3
<b>Total Major Sunni/Secular Parties</b>				<b>2,411,936</b>	<b>18.4</b>	<b>70</b>
Iraqi Turkmen Front	Ergec	Minority	Secular	71,492	0.5	2
Minorities	<i>several</i>	Minority		105,109	0.8	8
Others	<i>several</i>	Minority		2,069,313	15.8	14*
<b>Total Minorities/Others</b>				<b>2,245,914</b>	<b>17.1</b>	<b>24</b>

Source: Data compiled from a variety of sources see: Ali A. Nabhan "Iraqi Premier Leads Vote, Faces Stalemate," Wall Street Journal May 19, 2015; The Independent High Electoral Commission, [www.ihed.iq](http://www.ihed.iq); Ahmed Ali, "Iraq's 2014 National Elections," Middle East Security Report 20, April 2015. Institute for the Study of War available: <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/AhmedAliIraqElections.pdf> [Table is the author's own]. \*ISIC formed al –Muwatin coalition to gain 2 more seats.

### The Rise of the Islamic State

In 2013, Sunnis continued to voice their frustration with the Shi'ia controlled power-sharing arrangements, but Maliki diminished their role and tended not to grant them authority on major decisions. The political inclusion of all major political parties was the key issue plaguing the political scene. The increase in sectarian violence, especially from Sunni extremists, can be attributed to this factor. The more radical, Islamist perspectives were generally ignored by Western policy makers who, while

waiting for Iraq's government to take form, underestimated the power of revolutionary forces and often misinterpreted the reasons behind them.

In 2014, a group of former Ba'athists known as the *Jaysh Rikal Tariqah al-Naqsaḥbandi* (JRTN), joined forces with a resurgent Al Qaeda offshoot, known as *al Dawla al Islamiyya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham* (ISIS).<sup>219</sup> Both organizations sought to provide security and services to sectors of the society that was marginalized by the Maliki administration. They appealed to Iraq's tribal leaders and rural Sunnis who were prohibited from obtaining weapons in accordance with Iraq's counterterror law.

ISIS raised its flag over government buildings in the western Iraqi city of Fallujah in 2014. A few months later the group took complete control of Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq. At that time, the leader of ISIS declared itself to be an Islamic caliphate and renamed itself the Islamic State.<sup>220</sup> Since June 2014, the Islamic State has been, in many ways, more effective at governance than the Iraqi central government. The Islamic State has rule of law, order, license places, a judicial system, plans for currency, as well as a monopoly on the use of force in the area it controls.<sup>221</sup>

The Islamic State not only controls local governance in the areas it inhabits, but promotes the establishment of a caliphate and imposition of itself as the legitimate

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<sup>219</sup> Also known as: Da'ash; the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)

<sup>220</sup> Islamic State Media, "This is the Promise of Allah," June 2014, [http://myreader.toile-libre.org/uploads/My\\_53b039f00cb03.pdf](http://myreader.toile-libre.org/uploads/My_53b039f00cb03.pdf) (accessed 10 June 2015).

<sup>221</sup> Rick Gladstone, "Islamic State Says it Plans to Issue Its Own Currency," *New York Times*, 14 Nov 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/15/world/middleeast/islamic-state-says-it-plans-to-issue-its-own-currency-.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/15/world/middleeast/islamic-state-says-it-plans-to-issue-its-own-currency-.html?_r=0) (accessed 9 June 2015).

authority in the region.<sup>222</sup> The Islamic State has established a complete legal system with two branches: one that deals with administrative structures and the other that handles social services.<sup>223</sup> These services include: law enforcement and court systems,<sup>224</sup> English-speaking schools,<sup>225</sup> and a formal bureaucratic hierarchy of governance.<sup>226</sup> The Islamic State also has dedicated media elements to creating professionally styled videos as recruitment tools promoting their new society, a cabinet of advisors and a *Shura* Council.<sup>227</sup>

### **Hash'd al Shaabi**

When the U.S. departed Iraq in 2011, there was little public support on the Iraqi street for political groups with military wings.<sup>228</sup> Under Maliki's regime this sentiment changed, partially because he did not integrate them into the formal security apparatus, and partially because he legitimized the militias by giving them formal missions and authority in police matters.

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<sup>222</sup> see: Jessica Stern and J.M. Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror* (New York: Ecco, 2015); Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015); Patrick Colburn, *The Rise of the Islamic State: ISIS and the New Sunni Revolution* (New York: Verso, 2015).

<sup>223</sup> Charles Caris and Samuel Reynolds, "ISIS Governance in Syria," Institute for the Study of War, July 2014, [http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ISIS\\_Governance.pdf](http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ISIS_Governance.pdf) (accessed 10 June 2015).

<sup>224</sup> Aaron Zelin, "The War between ISIS and al-Qaeda for Supremacy of the Global Jihadist Movement," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, June 2014, [http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/ResearchNote\\_20\\_Zelin.pdf](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/ResearchNote_20_Zelin.pdf) (accessed 10 June 2015).

<sup>225</sup> Jamie Schram and Chris Perez, "ISIS' English-language schools teach jihadi children to blend in," New York Post, 23 February 2015, <http://nypost.com/2015/02/23/isis-english-language-schools-teach-jihadi-children-to-blend-in/> (accessed 23 May 2015).

<sup>226</sup> Nick Thompson and Atika Shubert, "The Anatomy of ISIS: How the 'Islamic State' is run, from oil to beheadings," CNN, 14 January 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/09/18/world/meast/isis-syria-iraq-hierarchy/> (accessed 15 May 2015).

<sup>227</sup> Stern and Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror*.

<sup>228</sup> Chakmakchi, interview; Ghaffoori, interview; Abdul Karim, D., interview.

Iraq's Shi'ia militant groups are often portrayed as legitimate organizations that keep the peace, and in many instances, it is an accurate characterization. Nearly all the Shi'ia militias are all tied to formal political parties, many of which have existed for decades. Three of the more prominent militias are: Badr Brigades, which are linked to the Badr Organization and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), led by Hadi al Ameri (who was chosen by Prime Minister Abadi to lead the Ministry of the Interior), Asa'ib Ahl al Haqq (AAH) which has ties to the Dawa party, but is led by former Sadrist Qais al-Khazali; and Jaysh al Mahdi (JAM-disbanded in 2008), the Peace Brigade/ Saraya al Salaam, linked with the populist Shi'ia cleric Moqtada al Sadr and the Sadrist Trend. Because of their longevity and ties to political groups, the Shi'ia militias are oftentimes better funded and equipped than the Iraqi Army and police forces.

After the fall of Mosul in June 2014, the Iraqi government formalized a program under the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) to integrate the militias into Iraq's security apparatus. Three months later, Islamic State militiamen overran Tikrit and murdered 1,700 young Shi'ia cadets from the Tikrit Air Academy in cold blood. The mass mobilization and ultimate widespread support across Iraq for the Hash'd al Shaabi was, in part, motivated by this atrocity. In a symbolic gesture, Tikrit was the first major battle in the Iraqi government's quest to take back territory held by the Islamic State. The Hash'd al Shaabi were a key part of the battle, and generated nationwide pride in pushing back the Islamic State.

By 2015, the Hash'd al Shaabi was funded by the Iraqi government and acted as an umbrella organization for the dozens of Shi'ia paramilitary groups operating in the

country: amongst the most prominent: AAH, the Badr Organization, and Saraya al-Salaam, formed in 2014 by Moqtada al Sadr. These three branches of the Hash'd al Shaabi closely parallel the three most prominent political movements within Iraq's Shi'ia population: Badr and ISCI; Dawa, and the populist Sadrist Trend. The leaders of the Hash'd al Shaabi also maintain close relations with Iran's elite Quds Force, the paramilitary wing of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps led by Iranian General Qasem Soleimani.

The organic rise of the Hash'd al Shaabi warrants some comparison to the rise of the SOI in 2007. There are several key similarities and differences between the SOI and the Hash'd al Shaabi. Both have charismatic leaders, such as the SOI's famous Anbari Sheikh Abu Risha, or Badr Brigades' Minister of the Interior, Hadi al Ameri. Both organizations received outside support: the SOI was financially backed by the U.S. government, whereas the Hash'd al Shaabi is receiving military support from Iran. Both organizations have been accused of abusing their power and exacting sectarian revenge, and in both cases, the Iraqi government has been pressed to investigate the allegations.

The key difference between the SOI and the Hash'd al Shaabi is the perception of legitimacy. While the U.S. military and government officials may have seen the SOI as a legitimate fighting organization, many Iraqis did not. To the contrary, the Hash'd al Shaabi has much wider support from the government, Shi'ia religious leaders, and citizens. The religious front is especially important. After the fall of Mosul in June 2014, the religious cleric Ali Al Sistani issued a fatwa for a "righteous jihad" against ISIS. To the contrary, the Sahwa movement did not have a fatwa that legitimized it with religious

clerics. On the political front, the Sahwa directly challenged the authority of the Iraqi central government in Baghdad and were being financed by the Americans, to the contrary, the Hash'd al Shaabi are working in direct coordination with the Iraqi government and are funded on a consistent basis.

### **Analysis**

The political climate and interests of Iraq and the U.S. overlapped in such a way that by 2008, a SOFA could be negotiated. The SOFA did not, however, succeed at providing conditions whereby U.S. forces could responsibly leave the country. This is not the fault of the planners or implementers of the SOFA itself, nor is it a failure of U.S. and coalition officials to properly assess Iraq's unique political situation. Although the CPA, and later the U.S. State Department and U.S. military forces never quite grasped how to run the residually socialist state apparatus in Iraq. The country's lack of institutional capacity and organization provided that its civil servants had little power to create or implement change. Due to the de-Ba'athification efforts and lapses in governmental capability, thousands of government workers, including policemen and firefighters would go for months without being financed, and the lack of an educated bureaucracy frustrated the working class. Furthermore, U.S. policymakers and intelligentsia failed to acknowledge the thousands of Iraq political elite, living in exile, with the capacity to run that state apparatus.

The rise of the Islamic State in war-torn Syria and western Iraq filled a political and security vacuum left exposed by the Shi'ia-dominated Baghdad government. In

order to balance the rise of the Islamic State, Iraq's three dominant ethno-sectarian factions have acted in accordance to neorealist precepts. In 2014, two major armed Arab Sunni factions aligned together against the Baghdad government: the JRTN and the Islamic State. This alliance was not based on ideological considerations, instead it was born of the need to balance against the Maliki administration. The KRG aligned with the U.S. to fight the Islamic State, and has actively requested U.S. military support and weapons. The Kurds have also cooperated with U.S. demands and have worked within the U.S.'s framework for security. Finally, Iraq's popular mobilization units (PMU)'s have largely aligned with Iran. While the U.S. is aiding Iraq's central government with airstrikes and training support in support of eliminating the Islamic State, the PMU's biggest ally in terms of crafting strategy is Iran.

In 2015, there was a split between Sunni Arab tribes, some of which are aligned with the U.S. and Baghdad's objectives, but many of which have switched allegiances and joined the Islamic State.<sup>229</sup> This split is largely due to the fact that the Sunni Arab tribes are caught between swearing allegiance to the Islamic State, or supporting a government in Baghdad that has ignored them or rebuffed their political advances. Therefore, some Sunni tribes have decided that the Islamic State is a more viable alternative than the Iraqi central government.

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<sup>229</sup> See: "ISIL wins support from Iraq's Sunni tribes," *Al Jazeera English*, 4 June 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/06/sunni-sheiks-pledge-allegiance-isil-iraq-anbar-150604074642668.html> (accessed 11 June 2015); Nour Malas and Ghassan Adnan, "Sunni Tribes in Iraq Divided Over Battle Against Islamic State," *Wall Street Journal*, 22 May 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/sunni-tribes-in-iraq-divided-over-battle-against-islamic-state-1432251747> (accessed 11 June 2015).

TABLE 9.2  
MOST PROBABLE HYPOTHESES SUPPORTED BY ISLAMIC STATE  
ALIGNMENT

Year	Party/ Militant Faction	Alignment With	Alignment Against	Threat Is	H	Most Probable Hypothesis
2014	JRTN	Islamic State	Dawa/ Shi'ia Govn't	Internal	H1	Neorealism – Balance Threat
2014	KRG/Peshmerga	U.S.	Islamic State	Internal	H1	Neorealism- Balance Threat
2014	PMU	Iran	Islamic State	Internal	H1	Neorealism- Balance Threat
2014	Dawa/Shi'ia Government	U.S. / coalition	Islamic State	Internal	H1	Neorealism- Balance Threat
2015	Sunni Arab Tribes	U.S./ Baghdad	Islamic State	Internal	H1	Neorealism – Balance Threat
2015	Sunni Arab Tribes	Islamic State	Dawa/ Shi'ia Govn't	Internal	H2	Neorealism – Bandwagon

[Table is the author's own].

### Application to Theoretical Model

Each of the factions in alignment with or against the new Islamic State appears to be behaving in accordance with neorealism: either bandwagoning or balancing. This is consistent with the theoretical model, each of the parties and militant factions operating for or against the Islamic State has institutional longevity, with the exception of the



PMU's, the Hash'd al Shaabi. The most probable hypothesis supporting the Hash'd al Shaabi's alignment with Iran against the Islamic State is the neorealist one; they are balancing against the threat.

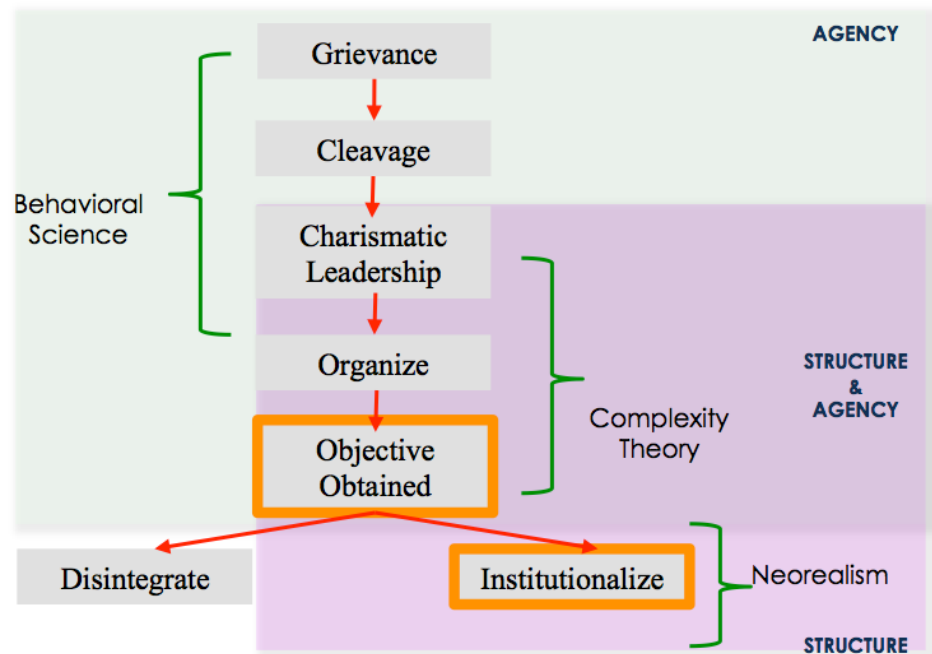


Figure 9.4 Theoretical Model for Alliances and Alignments against the Islamic State, 2014 – Present (highlighted in orange). [Figure is the author's own].

## Conclusion

The fact that the KRG and the Shi'ia government Baghdad are balancing against the Islamic State is consistent with the notion that institutionalized political parties act in accordance with neorealist principles. The Hash'd al Shaabi's alignment is counterintuitive\ given the fact that the PMU's are a relatively new institution. This can

be explained, however, by the fact that the PMU's are actually an amalgamation of previously existing Shi'ia militias, acting under the authority of the Baghdad government. This would explain their behavior as being in accordance with what neorealism would predict, vice the behavior of a single charismatic leader. The Islamic State, as a relatively new political body, is likely making alignments and alliances that are more consistent with agent-based theories vice structural theories.

## CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION

*“All men can see these tactics whereby I conquer, but what none can see is the strategy out of which victory is evolved.”*

- Sun Tzu,<sup>230</sup>

### Summary of Findings

Much of the literature on alliance building and alliance formation in international relations looks at the politics between sovereign states. Yet, there has been very little research conducted on the nature of alliances and alignment during periods of civil insurrection, unrest, and in situations where there are numerous political and military factions that challenge state sovereignty. This dissertation strove to answer three main questions. First, it aimed to uncover why competing politico-military factions in Iraq formed alliances and aligned in the manner that they did. Specifically, it addressed why so many Sunni Arabs realigned in such a dramatic and rapid manner against Al Qaeda in 2006 and 2007. Second, it addressed the relationship between realignment and the occupying force's policies, and finally, it sought to find a pattern to the alignment process or a general theory that can be derived from the way alliances and alignments took place in Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein.

In order to address these questions, this dissertation used the method of

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<sup>230</sup> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2002), 60.

comparative historical analysis (CHA) across the three primary ethno-sectarian factions in Iraq: Kurdish, Sunni Arab, and Shi'ia. The dependent variable of "alliance/alignment" was tested against ten possible hypotheses from the neorealist literature, behavioral science, comparative politics, complexity theory, as well as my own theory of alliance formation.

The outcomes presented in this study show that after the fall of Saddam Hussein, several political groups, militant factions, and organizations competed for control over Iraq's governance. Because Saddam had accommodated the Sunni population at the expense of the other factions, there were not as many Sunni opposition groups operating in the country during the Ba'ath regime. To the contrary, the most organized political competition in Baghdad came from long-standing groups in opposition to the Ba'ath party: primarily the Shi'ia's Dawa Party, the Islamic Supreme Council on Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), and the two predominate Kurdish factions: the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP).

Importantly, this study illuminates the importance of charismatic leadership in early-group formation, notably the predominantly Sunni Arab Sons of Iraq (SOI) as well as the formation of the militant factions under the Shi'ia Sadrist Trend. This study demonstrates that the main cause of alliance formation in newly organized political groups in Iraq tend to come from charismatic leadership and authority. To the contrary, once Iraqi political and militant groups were institutionalized, they were more likely to behave in a way that is consistent with neorealism. The neorealist literature can explain many of the alignments and alliances that formed between Iraqi political parties and

militant factions that took place after political groups was in existence to the point of institutionalization.

Secondly, this study shows that the relationship between the United States and the Iraqis was very important in nurturing the Sunni Awakening and facilitating the SOI movement. Without the military support of the U.S. Army and collaboration on the ground, the SOI leadership would not have gained the legitimacy they needed to attract more followers. Likewise, the political win-sets between U.S. domestic and international parties as well as Iraqi domestic and international parties had to align in a way that the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) was negotiable. These win-sets did not overlap until late 2008. From the U.S. domestic standpoint, MNF-I Commander General Petraeus had generated enough political support to implement his surge strategy and that strategy was showing signs of success, and from the Iraqi domestic standpoint, the SOI had successfully pushed back Al Qaeda and Moqtada al-Sadr declared a cease fire.

Finally, a general theory of alliances and alignments within states in a period of civil insurrection and general conflict was proposed. This theory suggests that in their early stages, political factions form because of personal grievances and internal cleavages but quickly begin to rely more on charismatic authority. As they mature, they are more likely to make decisions based on neorealist considerations. The table below gives a synopsis of the major political alignments and alliances discussed in this study. Each faction is given a maturity level of “a,” or “b.” Factions labeled “a” have institutional maturity of less than five years. Groups labeled “b” have institutional maturity of more than five years. Charismatic authority drives all of the “a” groups. This is logical, given

that the “a” groups are all born of a political cleavage. However, as each of the groups mature, their actions are in accordance with the theories derived from neorealist and coalition politics.

TABLE 10.1

MOST PROBABLE HYPOTHESES – ALL FACTIONS

Year	Maturity	Major Faction	Party/ Militant Faction	Alignment With	Alignment Against	H	Most Probable Hypothesis
1946	a	Kurd	KDP	-	British/Arab Government	H9	Charismatic Leadership
1975	a	Kurd	PUK	-	KDP	H9	Charismatic Leadership
1978	a	Kurd	PKK	-	Turkey	H9	Charismatic Leadership
2006	a	Shi'ia	Sadrist Trend	-	Dawa/SCIRI	H9	Charismatic Leadership
2006	a	Sunni	Anbari SOI	U.S.	Al Qaeda- Iraq	H9	Charismatic Leadership
2007	a	Sunni	Baghdad SOI	U.S.	Al Qaeda- Iraq	H9	Charismatic Leadership
2004	a	Shi'ia	JAM	Iran	U.S./coalition	H9	Charismatic Leadership
2008	a	Shi'ia	Shi'ia SOI	U.S.	AQI	H4	Ideological/ Monetary Gain
1987	b	Kurd	PUK	Iran	Ba'ath Party	H1	Neorealism - Balance Threat
1987	b	Kurd	KDP	Iran	Ba'ath Party	H1	Neorealism - Balance Threat
2003	b	Kurd	KRG	U.S.	AQI/ Ba'ath Party	H1	Neorealism - Balance Threat
2005	b	Kurd	KIU	KRG	Sunni Parties	H1	Neorealism

							- Balance Threat
2005	b	Kurd	KRG	UIA	Sunni Parties	H3	Minimum Winning Coalition
2010	b	Kurd	KIU	Iran	KRG	H1	Neorealism - Balance Threat
2010	b	Kurd	KDP	PUK	Sunni Parties	H1	Neorealism - Balance Threat
1982	b	Shi'ia	SCIRI/ Badr	Iran	Ba'ath Party	H4	Ideological/ Monetary Gain
2005	b	Shi'ia	Dawa	U.S.	Sunni Parties	H1	Neorealism - Balance Threat
2005	b	Shi'ia	Dawa	SCIRI/ UIA	Sunni Parties	H3	Minimum Winning Coalition
2011	b	Shi'ia	Dawa	Iran	Sunni Parties	H4	Ideological/ Monetary Gain
2014	b	Shi'ia	Badr Brigade	Iran	Islamic State	H4	Neorealism- Balance Threat
1980	b	Sunni	Ba'ath Party	U.S.	Iran	H1	Neorealism - Balance Threat
2003	b	Sunni	Islamic Army	-	U.S./coalition	H1	Neorealism - Balance Threat
2014	b	Sunni	JRTN	Islamic State	Dawa/ Shi'ia Govn't	H1	Neorealism - Balance Threat
2015	b	Sunni	Anbar Tribes	Islamic State	Dawa/ Shi'ia Govn't	H1	Neorealism - Bandwagon
2015	b	Sunni	Anbar Tribes	U.S.	Islamic State	H1	Neorealism - Balance Threat

Source: [Table is the author's own].

## **Policy Implications**

### *Policy Implications – Iraqi Government*

The biggest short-term challenge for the Iraqi government will be keeping the momentum that the popular mobilization units (PMUs) have generated in fighting the Islamic State without alienating the Sunni minority. In addition, the Iraqi government will be challenged with integrating the PMU's into the security apparatus in a formal way, and ensuring that the groups become more professional. Likewise, the Hash'd al Shaabi present a direct challenge to the government's monopoly on the legitimate use of force. There may be a point in time when Hash'd al Shaabi's leaders come into open conflict with Iraq's political body. There is also resentment amongst Sunni and Shi'ia factions that Iranian advisors have too much of a presence on the battlefield. Many Sunnis in outlying provinces have voiced concerns over the professionalism of the Hash'd al Shaabi and do not want them involved in the liberation of more Sunni towns and villages.<sup>231</sup> This concern has created a cleavage in the Sunni population: a cleavage that can easily be exploited by the Islamic State.

Currently, the Sunni Arabs of Iraq do not have an abundance of mature political alternatives to the Islamic State. The Sahwa movement quickly disintegrated after U.S. forces left the country, and most Sunni political players have been tied to Ba'ath loyalists. Most new Sunni political groups were formed after U.S. forces left the country. The Maliki administration made the mistake of eliminating Sunni political rivals by

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<sup>231</sup> Erin Banco, "ISIS One Year Later: U.S. Strategy to Fight ISIS Not Working, Lacks Sunni Inclusion, Experts Say," *International Business Times*, 10 June 2015, <http://www.ibtimes.com/isis-one-year-later-us-strategy-fight-isis-not-working-lacks-sunni-inclusion-experts-1959269> (accessed 10 June 2015).



threatening the lives of Sunni politicians, marginalizing the SOI, and forcing many Sunni Arabs into political exile. In order to understand the importance of offering a Sunni Arab-based political alternative to the Islamic State, an important lesson can be learned from the Sahwa.

One of the first leaders of the Sahwa movement in Baghdad, Abu Abed was an intelligence officer in the army of Saddam Hussein. His decision to join the U.S. in fighting Al Qaeda in Baghdad was a dramatic event in that it solidified the growing cleavage in the Sunni political spectrum. Likewise, the importance of charismatic leadership as a source of legitimate authority was seen during the Sunni Awakening, but perhaps under-appreciated by coalition forces that were likely more accustomed to legal-rational and traditional sources of authority. The rapid rise of Abu Abed as a charismatic leader is especially important as his power rested on his image of being able to perform heroic deeds, often by what were seen as irrational or untraditional means. When Abu Abed was able to show success in eliminating Al Qaeda, it gave him the credibility to grow the “Awakening” movement.

#### *U.S. and Coalition Forces*

Western powers routinely use the advantages of superior airpower, battlefield intelligence, and precision strikes, to target terrorist organizations. Oftentimes, however, the terrorist organizations are more like a hydra, and quickly regenerate a new head. The important difference was that the targeting was used in conjunction with a broader movement to engage the population against the terrorist network. Abu Abed didn’t simply eliminate Al Qaeda leaders and leave the neighborhood; he then enlisted the entire

local population in his desire to eliminate the AQI network in Baghdad. The combination of eliminating the terrorist network and replacing the network with new security apparatus proved to be a winning formula in the fight against radicalized Islamists.

Another issue the U.S. government faces is the interwoven nature of the alliance structure between the states of the Middle East. Because the Iranian regime backs the Shi'ia-led Iraqi government in Baghdad, the U.S. is in the awkward position of being a *de facto* ally with Iran in the war against the Islamic State. This gives Iranians more leverage in nuclear negotiations and challenges long-standing international protocol and the Middle East's balance of power.

#### *The Partition Debate*

In order to quell the violence in Iraq, several U.S. politicians have posited the idea of partitioning Iraq along three ethno-sectarian lines: Sunni Arab, Kurdish, and Shi'ia.<sup>232</sup> There are, however, very important consequences that need to be considered before partition can take place.

First, the ethnically mixed areas in Diyala, Ninewa, Tamim, Saladin as well as Baghdad and Kirkuk will be difficult, if not impossible to partition, without massive internal displacement. The oil rich Kirkuk, a city whose inhabitants identify as Kurds, Turkmen, Arabs, and Assyrians is a hotbed of sectarian violence. Iraq does not have a neat set of dividing lines between its major factions; territorial disputes are likely to erupt if partitioning favors one faction over another.

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<sup>232</sup> "Biden proposes partitioning Iraq into 3 regions," *Associated Press*, 1 May 2006, [http://www.nbcnews.com/id/12572371/ns/world\\_news-mideast\\_n\\_africa/t/biden-proposes-partitioning-iraq-regions/](http://www.nbcnews.com/id/12572371/ns/world_news-mideast_n_africa/t/biden-proposes-partitioning-iraq-regions/) (accessed 10 June 2015).

Second, the partition of Iraq is likely to aggravate the balance of political power in the region: Turkey will have considerable influence in a northern Kurdish state. A Shi'ia state in the south will bend to Iran, which will put enormous pressure on Saudi Arabia. The United States and European powers will be pressed to keep Sunni political moderates in power in order to prevent radicalized Salafist groups from gaining more power. Political elites across the country typically undermine other factions by empowering the Islamist groups create chaos and confusion.

Finally, partition of the country will disrupt the economic status quo and the control of natural resources. Iraq's most important commodity is oil. The predominantly Sunni region of Iraq only contains around 10% of the proven oil reserves in the country, so Sunnis could protest partition if oil revenues from the Kurdish and Shi'ia areas are not distributed evenly. Different factions control oil fields, refineries, pipelines, and shipping lines. Often overlooked as a focal point for negotiations, Iraq's scarce water resources may actually give considerable leverage to the Sunnis if they were to control a semi-autonomous region. Because both the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers flow through the predominantly Sunni region in the west. The water flow through the Haditha Dam in Al Anbar controls the national power grid. A deal on who controls water resources are will have to be agreed upon by all major parties if partition or a de facto partition was to take place.

### *Defeating the Islamic State*

In order to defeat the Islamic State, the interests of all the major parties involved in the conflict must overlap in a way that creates a viable win-set. When the U.S. and the

Iraqis were negotiating the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), they were the two major parties involved in Iraq's security. With the incursion of Iranian forces into Iraq since 2014, as well as a rapidly deteriorating security situation in Syria, there are many more parties that have a vested interest in Iraq's security. Likewise, the domestic considerations and support for intervention has changed. From the Iraqi perspective, domestically they seek to reclaim the territories lost to the Islamic State, however, the GOI is dealing with political pressure from Iran and Syria as well as an influx of foreign fighters from across the world. The challenge will be for all the parties with an interest in Iraq's security to develop a political alternative to the Islamic State for Iraq's Sunni population without upsetting the considerations of the other parties involved in the conflict.

#### *Broader Implications*

This research project contains several broader implications for U.S. foreign policy and decision-making. First, the role of the charismatic leader in early-political group formation is extremely important, yet very difficult to control. The charismatic leader can set the tone for the entire faction in terms of ideology, military action, and decision-making. With regard to the Islamic State, it is highly likely that there are factions within the organization that will rebel. A prudent strategist could capitalize on an emergent charismatic leader as a possible ally in fighting the group.

Second, this research shows that once political parties become institutionalized it is possible to determine *what* alliances might occur, but cannot predict *when* they will

begin. Therefore, political groups are much more malleable in their formative stages, before structural constraints set in.

Finally, this study implies that in order to defeat the Islamic State, all major parties involved in the security of the Middle East need to have interests that overlap in such a way it creates a win-set for all parties. The Islamic State grew stronger when the Baghdad governmental marginalized the political demands of the Sunnis in the western provinces. In order to creating viable and attainable win-sets for conflict resolution, each party in the conflict (even the most radical elements) should have their political needs addressed.

### **Areas for Future Research**

The findings in this dissertation are significant, however, the analysis also suggests a number of other areas that warrant further study. First, this study suggests that institutionalization and maturity of politico-military factions eventually takes place, but it does not specify how long that period of time is and which factors contribute towards this outcome. More analysis is needed on factors that contribute to political maturity and how to measure institutionalization of political groups.

Second, this dissertation raises a number of questions with regard to how alliances and alignment form when a state's sovereignty is being challenged. Specifically, more research is needed to test the theory that political cleavages and realigned militant factions actually require charismatic leadership in the beginning, but act in accordance with neorealism as they mature. This study only looked at how

alliances and alignments took place in Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein. Therefore, the most important contribution to this effort would be in the collection of additional data from several countries in order to increase the sample size for quantitative analysis.

Finally, this study highlights the special role of charismatic leadership in new political group formation. The role of the charismatic leader in Middle Eastern politics, as well as in countries where there are completely different sets of socio-economic and political variables, needs to be studied in depth. This research raises the important question of how political groups eventually transition from charismatic authority to legal/rational authority and why certain political groups never transition from the authority wielded by the charismatic leader.

## APPENDIX 1

*The protocol below outlines a sample of the questions used during the semi-structured interview process (the list of interviewees can be found in the “References” section).*

1. What is/was your role in Iraq?
2. What was the primary motivation behind the formation of the Sahwa movement?
3. What kind of people formed the Sahwa?
4. What were the objectives of the Sahwa?
5. What is the present role of the Sahwa in Iraqi politics?
6. Do you think that if the U.S. Government had financed the Sahwa members more money, it would have attracted more followers?
7. At what point, if any, was the Sahwa successful?
8. What would have happened if the Sahwa had not formed?
9. What is the future of the Sahwa?
10. Do you think the Sahwa would have been created if Al Qaeda had not been in Iraq?
11. Why wasn't there a Shi'ia Sahwa?
12. What circumstances would have led to a Shi'ia Sahwa?
13. Do you think that if the U.S. Government had financed groups like the Badr Brigades and Jaysh al Mahdi not to fight that this tactic would have been successful?
14. Do you think that reconstruction projects were helpful in gaining the support of the Iraqi people?
15. Do you think that reconstruction projects were a catalyst for involvement or non-involvement in insurgent operations?

16. Why do you think the Kurds generally supported U.S. forces?



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## **CURRICULUM VITAE**

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