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April 9, 2018

The Southern Iraqi Uprisings of 1991: the Fracturing of an Ethno-cultural Mosaic and the Rise of
Religious Nationalism

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Abstract

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By Mustafa Hassoun

This paper will analyze the development of modern Iraqi-Shia identity. The core argument is that the 1991 Shia Uprisings in Southern Iraq serve as a seminal moment in the development of said identity and are the first instance of resistance that is fundamentally Shia in nature in modern Iraqi history. The paper will begin with relevant background to the conflict then proceed by analyzing the events of the Uprisings. The conflict will be looked at through the frame of specific drivers, including but not limited to, government policy toward the ethnic population and foreign intervention. It will then place each of the conflicts in the modern Iraqi context. The paper will finish with a discussion of the importance of the research and how it counters the existing narrative surrounding modern Iraqi politics. The goal of the comparison is to highlight how the Shia identity developed, strengthened, and expanded in Iraq. Also, the discussion will provide the structure for other ethnic conflicts that are developing to be analyzed and said analysis will help to structure a framework to temper ethnic conflict.

Key terms: Ethno-nationalism, Shi'ism, Repressive Government Policy, Saddam Hussein, Iraq

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The Southern Iraqi Uprisings of 1991: the Fracturing of an Ethno-cultural Mosaic and the Rise of Religious Nationalism

Introduction

The modern composition of Iraq and the manner in which different ethnic and religious groups interact has changed dramatically over the course of the last century. Iraq's "*Convivencia*", especially in Baghdad, has fallen by the wayside. *Madinat al-Salam*, the Abbasid nickname for Baghdad, seems almost sarcastic in light of recent events.

The question then arises: how did the Iraq of today form? And why did it change so drastically in the last few decades? The answer to these questions is long and complicated, but undoubtedly there was rift in the relationship between the various ethnic and religious groups in Iraq.

For Iraqi-Kurdistan, these developments are well documented and there is general scholarly consensus¹ as to the nature of the growth of Kurdish identity in the context of Iraq. This is the case for a number of reasons. The two most obvious explanations, which go hand-in-hand, are that Kurds in Iraq have pushed for autonomy since 1946 and the Kurds are a distinct ethnically from the rest of Iraq.²

Outside of Iraqi-Kurdistan and putting groups that make up less than 2% of the population aside, these developments in identity are more complicated. The dissimilarities, by way of demography, between the nearly 75-80% of the country which is ethnically Arab are religious in nature.³ The fracturing of the relationship between Iraq's Arabs is an

¹ Gunter, Michael. *The Kurds Ascending*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008. p. 13.

² Gunter, Michael. *The Kurds Ascending*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008. p. 13.

³ "Iraq" *The World Factbook*, The United States Central Intelligence Agency, 2019.

important topic for research. It is significant for it provides insight as to the core grievances these groups possess and might offer a roadmap for future healing.

This work will track the development of the Iraqi-Shia identity, especially in South Iraq, and the role the various regimes had in forming this identity. The Shia relationship to the central government, has ebbed and flowed dramatically since the foundation of the modern state of Iraq. These waves are responsible for much of the antagonism that now exists. This paper argues that the 1991 Uprisings in southern Iraq or *al-Intifadha al-Sha'baniya* is the single most important event in the formation of modern Iraqi-Shia identity. Important in the sense that it especially impacted the events that followed. These revolts drove a wedge between the Shia in the South and the ruling Sunnis that is still reflected in modern Iraqi politics.

Existing scholarship frames the discussion of Iraq-Shia identity in a post-2003 format. In Oula Kadhum's piece "The Transnational Politics of Iraq's Shia Diaspora", she focuses on the effect the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime on the diaspora and the influx of formerly exiled persons during this time period. She briefly mentions that the history of Shia repression is important in understanding the modern psychology of the Iraqi-Shia, but does not delve deeply into the subject.⁴ In Fanar Haddad's work, "Shia-Centric State Building and Sunni Rejection in Post-2003 Iraq", he again touches on the importance of the authoritarianism the Shias faced in pre-2003 Iraq, but indicates that the events post-2003 Iraq were ultimately responsible for the rampant sectarianism that exists today.⁵

⁴ Kadhum Oula. "The Transnational Politics of Iraq's Shia Diaspora" Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1 March 2018.

⁵ Fanar Haddad. "Shia-Centric State Building and Sunni Rejection in Post-2003 Iraq," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 7 January 2016.

In perhaps the most important work on the history of modern Iraq, *The Modern History of Iraq* by Phebe Marr, she says the 1991 Uprisings left an indelible impression on the Iraqis, but does not explore this mark further in her work.⁶

This pattern persists in other works on the modern state of Iraq that grapple with Shia identity. This is the main contribution of this work. The discussion expands on the point that many scholars allude to, which is that *al-Intifadha al-Sha'baniya* left a mark on the Shia in southern Iraq that has had proliferating impacts on the Iraqi-Shia and the modern Iraqi state. Additionally, it will establish that the seeds of sectarianism were not planted in the failed nation-building project of the 2000s, rather 1991 saw those seeds planted and begin to germinate.

The work will proceed by tracing the ethno-religious alignments in Iraq and establishing that the 1991 Uprisings were the first of their kind in redefining these alignments, especially for Shias in the South . Each subsection will conclude with a summary of how the events described in the chapter impacted ethno-religious geography and behavior in Iraq. After making those points, the development of Iraqi-Shia identity will be analyzed in light of the massive repercussions they faced following the failed revolt attempt and the lack of assistance provided by the West, especially the United States.

Specifically, Chapter 1 breaks down the modern history of Iraq in terms of ethno-religious alignments and tracks changes with these configurations. This is in tandem with explaining how these events served as precursors for what was to come. Chapter 2 discusses the time immediately before the 1991 Uprisings and the Uprisings themselves

⁶ Marr, Phebe. *The Modern History of Iraq*, Westview Press, 2011. p. 34

and serves to demonstrate that this period is the first of its kind and monumental for the future of Sunni-Shia relations in Iraq. Chapter 3 tracks the demise of the Sunni-Shia relationship and seeks to illustrate the fact that conflicts in Iraq, at that point, had completed their transformation from politically motivated to ethno-religious in nature.

The hope is that this research will provide the academic and wider community awareness of the deeply rooted issues of Shia identity politics in Iraq.

Chapter 1: A Modern History of Iraq (Briefly)

I have a special ticket
 To another planet
 A comfortable world, and beautiful:
 a world without smoke . . .
 And Even better:
 the war
 Has left its “r” behind
 and turned into love
 —Dunya Mikhail, “Another Planet”

1A: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire

In order to study the nuts and bolts of Iraq’s ethno-religious makeup , it is necessarily important to discuss the history which led to the 1991 Uprisings and beyond. For the purpose of this work, I will begin during the fall of the Ottoman Empire. There are important aspects of Iraq’s ethno-religious makeup that are rooted in pre-colonial Iraq, but, for this study, the period before the fall of the Ottoman Empire did not particularly meaningfully contribute to the problems of contemporary Iraqi society.

World War I brought about the end of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire’s collapse came as a result of many factors including economic issues and their participation as a Central Power during the war. One of the most important factors was the political climate that existed in the Middle East before, during, and even after the war. The political climate was characterized by dissent in the form of reformist and nationalist movements. This began in the 1860s with what came to be known as the Young Ottomans. It escalated with armed rebellions against the Sultan as early as 1908. This persisted through World

War I with Turks, Armenians, and Kurds all alleging their right to Anatolia based on nationalist claims⁷.

The Arabs were no exception to this trend. Despite initially attempting to define Arabism within the Ottoman framework, during World War I, the Arabs suffered greatly at the hands of the Ottomans and their tune had changed. Before the war, Ottoman leadership had made some cosmetic concessions in an attempt to appease the Arabs, but once the war broke out, the Arabs began to experience serious hardship. The root of the trouble was mandatory conscription⁸. As a result of this practice the Arab economy suffered huge consequences. Moreover, much of the Arab world became a battleground. This is where the Arab-British relationship truly took off. The Arabs had grown tired of the increasingly autocratic nature of the Ottoman central government and the British could benefit from the Arabs in a number of ways: oil and diverting Ottoman troops to name two of the most important⁹.

Ottoman Iraq was divided into 3 *vilayets* or provinces at this time: the Mosul *Vilayet*, the Baghdad *Vilayet*, and the Basra *Vilayet*. The Mesopotamia Campaign of World War I began on October 29, 1914. Each of these provinces slowly fell under the British sphere of influence as the operation continued. This set the stage for a shakeup of Mesopotamia, which was to become Iraq.¹⁰

⁷ Quataert, Donald. *The Ottoman Empire, 1700–1922*. Cambridge University Press, 2005. p. 186

⁸ Anderson, Betty S. *A History of Modern Middle Eastern Rulers, Rebels, and Rogues*. Stanford University Press, 2016. p.150-151.

⁹ Murphy, David. *The Arab Revolt 1916–18 Lawrence sets Arabia Ablaze*. Osprey: London, 2008. p. 33

¹⁰ “The Mesopotamia Campaign”. *The National Archives of the United Kingdom*. Web. 22 March 2019

In terms of regime change, the British first focused their efforts on Abdul Aziz ibn Abdul Rahman Al Saud, or Ibn Saud, as he is known in the West. Ibn Saud had proven his military prowess. In collaboration with the Wahhabi religious group he gradually conquered Najd and the eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula. The British formally recognized Ibn Saud as the leader of Najd with the Anglo-Saudi treaty. Part of the agreement was for Ibn Saud to wage war against allies of the Ottoman Empire. He was able to chip away at their territory but the British decided in favor of another individual because they determined Ibn Saud was only focused on the Arabian Peninsula¹¹. This other individual's name was Hussein bin Ali, the father of the soon to be King of Iraq, Faisal I and King of Jordan, Abdullah I.

Hussein ibn Ali was the protector of the Holy Mosques in Mecca and Medina and hailed from the Hashemite family. This gave him serious legitimacy with the Arabs. Not only was he in charge of the most holy sites in Islam, he also hailed from a family that is known to be descendants of the Prophet. Through a series of letters between Sir Henry McMahon and Sharif Hussein, known as the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence, the British and this Arab leadership and this segment of the Arab population defined their relationship. The British agreed to recognize Arab independence in exchange for an Arab revolt against the Ottomans¹². It is during these revolts that Faisal and Abdullah established themselves as competent leaders.

¹¹ Anderson, Betty S. *A History of Modern Middle Eastern Rulers, Rebels, and Rogues*. Stanford University Press, 2016. p.151.

¹² Anderson, Betty S. *A History of Modern Middle Eastern Rulers, Rebels, and Rogues*. Stanford University Press, 2016. p.152.

Beginning in 1916 in Mecca then Emir Faisal led the Arab revolt. With the help of the British and specifically the famous “Lawrence of Arabia” the campaign was a success. He changed the narratives when appropriate, from Islam to Arab Nationalism, depending on his audience. Gradually, his army took Ottoman Arab territory and on October 1, 1918 set up a fully Arab government in Damascus. This was the end of the merry relationship between these Arabs and the West. The British and the French disregarded their promises of a unified Arab state and the Americans went against their public espousal of self-determination and the fertile crescent was carved up into British and French mandates according to the parameters set earlier by the Sykes-Picot agreement. Iraq was granted to the British. It is important to note that the drawing of Iraq’s borders was such that the British could control and exploit any oil found in the area. This helps to explain why, for example, towns like Erbil and Sulaymaniyah were brought into the fold despite the largest demographic group in each of these towns being Kurdish.

British rule was initially rejected by the Iraqi people. Rebellions sprouted up across Mesopotamia. These rebellions were politically oriented, not ethnically nor religiously. For example, the 1920 Iraqi revolt against the British brought together various tribes and classes across ethno-religious boundaries in fighting the British.¹³ Shia, Sunni, and Kurdish, and Tyari tribesmen played an important role in this failed rebellion, highlighting the fact that the so-called ethno-cultural mosaic that Iraq once was, was very much still intact at the

¹³ Atiyah, Ghassan R. “Iraq: 1908-1921 A Socio-Political Study”. The Arab Institute for Research and Publishing, 1973. p. 307

time. Eventually, despite the efforts of much of the Iraqi people, Faisal was installed as King in 1921 by the British.¹⁴

¹⁴ Anderson, Betty S. *A History of Modern Middle Eastern Rulers, Rebels, and Rogues*. Stanford University Press, 2016. p. 185.

1B: The Iraqi Monarchy

Faisal was initially only granted limited power. The British expected this concession to be enough to quell the Arab frustrations at the time. The Iraqi government began to be characterized by a series of maneuvers for Faisal to maintain power and a strong relationship with the British. He placed Sharifian officers, who had rebelled on his behalf, in high positions in the military. He gave Ottoman bureaucrats a stake in Iraq's success and placed them in high positions in the bureaucracy. He also rewarded rich Sunni-Baghdadis for not participating in the rebellion against him with positions in parliament. He also pitted Shia tribes against one another by rewarding those who had not rebelled against him and punishing those who did. As Betty Anderson puts it "King Faisal proved adept at shifting these groups into and out of power in order to guarantee that no coalition could grow powerful enough to rise against him. He exploited the fact that these disparate groups did not necessarily agree on all elements of governance".¹⁵ This is the mark of an adept albeit morally questionable ruler.

King Faisal and the British continued their grip on Iraq with the Iraqi Constitution of 1924. This constitution, on the surface, represented a constitutional monarchy. It included democratic checks and balances. The reality was, however, that the constitution included many opportunities and provisions for the King and the British to exercise their will as they pleased. Also, importantly, despite clauses promising equality before the law, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and other rights for Iraqi citizens, in practice, few of these

¹⁵ Anderson, Betty S. *A History of Modern Middle Eastern Rulers, Rebels, and Rogues*. Stanford University Press, 2016. p.186.

rights were recognized¹⁶. In 1930, with the Anglo-Iraqi treaty, Iraq was granted power over their defense and state institutions. Nonetheless, the British still maintained heavy influence and King Faisal granted them many concessions.¹⁷ As time went on King Faisal died and his son, Ghazi I, proved less adept at the political game so to speak. Faisal II, Ghazi I's son, further cemented the Iraqi monarchy's relationship with the British. He often visited the Queen of the United Kingdom and, importantly, he was well received by the monarch and her people¹⁸. There were a series of tribal revolts and leftist movements plaguing the central government which ultimately led to the fall of the Hashemite Kingdom of Iraq in 1958.

The British relationship with these Arab leaders has proven disastrous. Aside from drawing borders to suit their own interests with the French and those of their allies, there was a more detrimental aspect to the happenings of the early 20th century in the Middle East. Despite the level of agency Arab leaders had, they were often put in the impossible position of pleasing the Western powers on one hand and appeasing their Arab citizens on the other. Moreover, divides grew sharp between those that had acquired power and those that were excluded. This led to mass dissension and rebellion by the 1930s across the Arab Mandates and laid a shaky foundation for the future of the Middle East.

It was during this time period that the Kurds began their quest for autonomy.¹⁹ In addition, one could argue, the skeleton of discontent between the Shias and the Sunnis in

¹⁶ Anderson, Betty S. *A History of Modern Middle Eastern Rulers, Rebels, and Rogues*. Stanford University Press, 2016. p. 187.

¹⁷ Anderson, Betty S. *A History of Modern Middle Eastern Rulers, Rebels, and Rogues*. Stanford University Press, 2016. p. 187.

¹⁸ "Crisis in Iraq". *British Movietone, Associated Press*, July 7, 1958.

¹⁹ Gunter, Michael. *The Kurds Ascending*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008. p. 13.

Iraq began to form. The monarchs, Sunni leaders installed by the British, in elevating Sunni elites and pitting Shia tribespeople against one another, enhanced the mistrust the Shias have of the ruling elites. These misgivings would only grow as time passed, eventually leading to Iraq's current state of affairs. With that said, at the end of the monarchical period, at least for Sunnis and Shias in Iraq, they were relatively united across religious boundaries by way of class and political ideology.

1C: The Iraqi Republic

The best and most successful example of the unification across religious boundaries in support of a political cause in the latter half of the 20th century in Iraq was the 14th of July Revolution. On the July 14, 1958 a group of Iraqi military officers rose up against the last king of Iraq, Faisal II. The coup was mainly executed by Abd al-Karim Qasim and Abdul Salam Arif. The revolt was triggered when King Hussein of Jordan, King Faisal II's cousin, requested military assistance fearing an anti-western revolt in Lebanon spreading into Jordanian territory. The Free Officers movement of Iraq, headed by Abd al-Karim Qasim and Abdul Salam Arif, seized their opportunity and led battalions into Baghdad, declaring the end of the Iraqi monarchy.

The 14th of July revolution was the culmination of a series of uprisings and coup attempts on the part of the Iraqi people against the central government. These attempts include the 1936 Bakr Sidqi Coup and the 1941 Golden Square Coup. The 1958 Coup succeeded in large part because of the collaboration across political and religious boundaries. Abd al-Karim Qasim was of mixed Sunni-Shia parentage and was an ardent Iraqi-nationalist and leftist. Abdul Salam Arif was a Sunni Muslim who was a staunch Arab-nationalist. As such the 14th of July Revolution was met with little resistance²⁰.

The honeymoon period, after the deposition of the monarchy, lasted a short time because tensions almost immediately began to rise between the leftist Qasim and the pan-Arabist Arif. The crux of the power struggle was the United Arab Republic (UAR)²¹. Abdul

²⁰ Abdullah, Thabit. *A Short History of Iraq: 636 to the present*, Pearson Education, Harlow, UK, 2003.p. 141

²¹ Ismael, Tareq Y, Abu Jaber, Kamel, and Ismael, Jacqueline S. *Politics and Government in the Middle East and North Africa*. Florida International University Press, Miami, 1991. p. 158-159.

Salam Arif was a staunch supporter of joining the UAR with Egypt and Syria under the leadership of Gamal Abdel Nasser. Abd al Karim Qasim opposed this move instead opting for the *wataniyah* policy of “Iraq First”.²² Qasim ultimately won out in this power struggle. He demoted Arif. Arif refused to take his new post, and, upon returning to Baghdad in November of the same year, he was arrested on charges of plotting against the state along with Rashid Ali Al-Gaylani, a fellow Arab nationalist. Almost exactly two years later Qasim had him released from prison.²³

In the summer of 1958 the Iraqi Army wrote and signed an interim constitution which established the Republic of Iraq. The constitution itself was only about four pages long, translated into English. It was made up of four chapters. It includes provisions for an independent judiciary, transitioning authority, and specifically delineates the authors of the constitution, including Abdel Salam Araf and Abd al Karim Qasim²⁴.

Despite the initial glimmer of hope, Iraqi politics quickly devolved into infighting, again, primarily because of the struggle over the United Arab Republic²⁵. Abd al-Karim Qasim was elevated to the highest status in Iraqi politics and took control of the country. The interim constitution rapidly became a non-starter.

In 1958 Qasim lifted the ban on the Iraqi Communist Party, further antagonizing the Arab nationalist generals which made up a substantial portion of the government and who

²² Polk, William Roe. *Understanding Iraq*. I. B. Tauris, 2005. p. 111.

²³ Ismael, Tareq Y, Abu Jaber, Kamel, 1932- and Ismael, Jacqueline S *Politics and Government in the Middle East and North Africa*. Florida International University Press, Miami, 1991. 163.

²⁴ *The 1958 Iraqi Interim Constitution*. Available at:

http://confinder.richmond.edu/admin/docs/1958_Interim_Constitution__English_.PDF.

²⁵ Marr, Phebe, *The Modern History of Iraq*. Westview Press. 2004. p. 160

were co-conspirators in the 14th of July Revolution. These power struggles marred his 5 years as President of Iraq²⁶.

Abd al-Karim Qasim was hailed by his supporters as a man of the people. This plays out in much of Qasim's policy actions during his time as president. In December of 1961 Qasim promulgated Law No. 80 which intended to seize over 99% of Iraqi land from British-owned Iraq Petroleum Company and nationalize the oil industry. It was under Qasim's rule that the now largest subsection of Baghdad, *Madinat al-Thawra*, which means city of the revolution, was constructed. Almost 35,000 other residential units were built from 1958-1963. Qasim is still known for many domestic, social reforms that he enacted. The three most consequential and progressive categories of reforms he enacted were land reform, women's rights, and education. The Agrarian Reform Law, passed in September of 1958, restructured rent for rural farmers. In December of 1959, polygamy was outlawed and a minimum age was set to 18 for marriage, although with room for exceptions. In a radical move for the time period women were granted equal rights on matters of inheritance. Thirdly, Iraq's education budget was nearly doubled in his first two years in office. It must be said that, unfortunately, many of his reforms did not last beyond his removal in 1963.²⁷

The Kurdish question came into focus during Qasim's rule. Mustafa Mohamed Barzani, one of the most prominent political leaders in modern Kurdish politics had a

²⁶ Helen Chapin Metz, *Iraq: A Country Study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress. 1988

²⁷ Ali, Hussein. "Iraqis Recall Golden Age". Institute for War and Peace. 2006.

working relationship with Abd al-Karim Qasim. In this photograph, Qasim sits next to the son of Mustafa Barzani and future president of Iraqi-Kurdistan, Masoud Barzani.



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Plate 1

After a promise of autonomy, there were many years of relative calm in the Kurdish regions of Iraq. The promises eventually went unfulfilled because of domestic pressures keeping Qasim from granting autonomy to the Kurds. Mustafa Barzani eventually began to make connections with the West. The early 1960s marked the true beginning of the long and complicated modern Iraqi-Kurdish question.²⁹

By 1962 Qasim's position was weak. A 1959 Uprising attempt in Mosul had left Qasim in an impossible position. Qasim was forced to bring more communists into the upper echelons of Iraqi politics because of the threat posed by unionists, which eventually

²⁸ Solomon, Christopher. "60 Years After Iraq's 1958 July 14 Revolution". 2018, available at: https://medium.com/@Christopher_Solomon/60-years-after-iraqs-1958-july-14-revolution-3ff7a2d38249

²⁹ Rubin, Avshalom "Abd al-Karim Qasim and the Kurds of Iraq: Centralization, resistance and revolt, 1958–63". *Middle Eastern Studies*, 2007. p. 353–382.

led to Iraq's departure from the Baghdad Pact. This brought Iraq closer to the Soviet Union both politically and economically. At the same time, the Baathists were gaining popularity and the core members of the party firmly believed that the only way to slow down communist influences within Iraq was to overthrow and assassinate Abd al-Karim Qasim. With the Arab nationalist parties invigorated, the balancing act between the leftists and the far-right was proving too difficult. On February 8-10, 1963, the Ramadan Revolution captured and overthrew Abd al-Karim Qasim. Qasim was executed after a quick trial. His death was broadcast to prove he was dead. Immediately following Qasim's execution a door-to-door hunt for what the revolutionaries deemed communists commenced.³⁰

To this day, no one can say for certain if the United States had a direct impact on the overthrow of Abd al-Karim Qasim. There have been persistent rumors that the United States Central Intelligence Agency was responsible for the Ramadan Revolution. What is known for certain is that the United States had been closely monitoring the situation since 1961. And, according to Archibald Roosevelt Jr., a high ranking CIA official, there were plans to overthrow and even kill Qasim. Additionally, as an aside, the situation bears the hallmarks CIA meddling in foreign countries during the Cold War. The Ramadan Revolution marked the transition from the United Kingdom as the main foreign actor in Iraq to the United States.³¹

Abd al-Karim Qasim's rule is remembered fondly, especially by elder members of Iraq's Shia community. During his rule, and even now, his nickname was *al-za'im* meaning

³⁰ Coughlin, Con. *Saddam: His Rise and Fall*. Harper Perennial, 2005. p. 40

³¹ Little, Douglas. *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East Since 1945*. The University of North Carolina Press, 2002. p. 62

“the leader”.³² Although his time as prime minister was nearly immediately marked by infighting and power struggles, the contentions had little to do with religion. The primary episode of fighting during Qasim’s rule was the 1959 Mosul Uprising and helps to illustrate this point.

The 1959 Mosul Uprising was an attempted coup by Arab nationalists that wished to join the United Arab Republic. The belligerents included sympathetic tribesmen from across the religious spectrum including the tribe of *Shammar*, which is made up of several different faiths.³³

At this point in time, the Sunni-Shia relationship had not splintered. Politics and religion remained relatively distinct. Fears that Arab nationalism was a project to establish Sunni hegemony and Shias becoming more and more disenfranchised prevented this relationship from remaining unbroken for long.

³² Dawisha, Aheed. *Iraq: a Political History from Independence to Occupation*. Princeton University Press, 2009. p. 174

³³ "IRAQ: The Revolt That Failed". *Time*. 23 March 1959. Retrieved 21 March 2019.

1D: The Baathists take Hold

After the Ramadan Revolution and the deposition of Abd al-Karim Qasim, Abdul Salam Arif was selected as President in part due to his popularity across Iraq. He was not a Baathist, but his rule was heavily influenced by the Baathist party and much of the power laid at the feet of the then prime minister, Ahmed Hassan Al-Bakr.

Arif quickly began moving Iraq back to Arab nationalist end of spectrum. Importantly, just a month after taking power, a 1963 Syrian coup d'état saw the Baathists come to power in Damascus. Arif reentered Iraq into unification talks with Syria and Egypt in 1963 and in 1964 he declared the establishment of the Arab Socialist Union of Iraq, modeled after Gamal Abdel Nasser's Egypt for the purpose of building unity between Arab nations. These actions were in sharp contrast to those of his predecessor.

Arif found his fair share of enemies—both foreign and domestic—in his time in office. As he distanced Baghdad from Moscow a strain developed in Iraq-Soviet Union relations³⁴. Within his own government the Baathists were becoming increasingly displeased with Arif's affinity for Gamal Abdel Nasser and Nasserism³⁵. In the autumn of 1964 a Baath plot to assassinate Arif was uncovered. In October of 1964, Arif had those responsible for conspiring against him, including Saddam Hussein, exiled.

³⁴ “KHRUSHCHEV TALKS WITH ARIF IN CAIRO; Meeting Said to Take Chill Off Relations With Iraqi.” *New York Times*, 21 May 1964. p. 6.

President Arif proved adept at political maneuvers and governing the country more generally. He seized on weakness within the Baath Party caused by ideological differences and in November of 1963, managed to remove most of the Baathists in his cabinet and replaced them with Nasserists, including Prime Minister Bakr. In terms of governance, Arif is perhaps most well-known for the advancements infrastructure under his rule³⁶.

In April of 1966, Abdul Salam Arif was killed in a helicopter crash in southern Iraq. The circumstances of the crash were just as suspicious as one might expect. Baathist dissenters are thought to be the cause of the sabotage.³⁷ After a power struggle that lasted for less than a week, Iraqi Army officers chose Abdul Salam Arif's younger brother, Abdel-Rahman to take over his brother's post. Abdel-Rahman was seen as easier to manipulate by the Baathists who were slowly cementing the hold on the country. After Abdel-Rahman's rise to power many of those responsible for the conspiracy to assassinate his brother were released from prison, namely Saddam Hussein and Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr.

Abdel-Rahman Arif's Presidency is widely regarded as unimpactful. His term only lasted two years and is primarily known for two reasons: a decisive loss to the Israeli and Iranian supported Peshmerga and for being the last chief executive before the total Baathist takeover of Iraq. He departed the Office as he arrived: quietly and at the hands of the Baathists. He was exiled to Turkey and survived until he was 91. Abdel-Rahman Arif is one of few leaders of modern Iraq that died of natural causes³⁸.

³⁶ Tripp, Charles. *A History of Iraq*, Cambridge University Press, 2000. p. 177.

³⁷ "Abdel-Rahman Aref, 91, Former Iraqi President, Is Dead." *The New York Times*, 25 August 2007. p. C10.

³⁸ "Abdel-Rahman Aref, 91, Former Iraqi President, Is Dead." *The New York Times*, 25 August 2007. p. C10.

Another power struggle ensued but Ahmed Hassan Al-Bakr, the head of the Baath Party of Iraq consolidated power, and was appointed both prime minister and president. Bakr appointed Saddam Deputy Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council and Vice President. Saddam was additionally responsible for Iraq's security services.

1968 was a disaster for non-Baathists in Iraq. Under the command of Saddam Hussein, security services rounded up Nasserists and communists, among other political groups. Bakr's government devised fake spy plots in order to arrest political opponents. This period also saw religious targeting on the part of the central government. A particularly gruesome example of this occurred in 1969 with an event known as the 1969 Baghdad Hangings. 14 individuals (9 Jewish, 3 Muslim, and 2 Christian) were accused of spying for Israel. They were hanged and displayed in Baghdad. The men were all from Baghdad or Basra—a potential signal of Baghdad's deteriorating relationship with the South.³⁹ This occurrence marks the beginning of two startling trends in Baathist Iraq. The first is this type of farcical judicial proceeding became increasingly more common in Iraq. The second is that, because of the negative publicity and backlash from the international community, Baghdad learned to be more insular about these actions, i.e., human rights violations. The international community, with the notable exception of the Soviet Union, called the executions unjustified. It also speaks to the increasing distance between Iraq and the West, which persisted beyond Bakr's rule.

By the mid 1970s, Saddam's power and influence had grown tremendously. Rumors that Bakr's health was waning circulated the country. Protests by Shia in southern Iraq,

³⁹ G.C.B. "4th Anniversary of a Crime Against Humanity THE BAGHDAD HANGINGS." *The Scribe - The Journal of Babylonian Jewry*, January 1973. p. 3.

although not widespread nor well organized, further made Bakr seem weak in the eyes of the Party and his supporters, especially after the 1979 Iranian Revolution. For maybe the first time in history Shias in southern Iraq began to view the ruling elite as Sunni autocrats. Saddam positioned himself well to take over from Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr. Nonetheless, Hussein took careful steps in order to surround himself with people he could trust, grab as much power as possible and make certain he had support across the board before he officially seized power. This speaks Saddam's anxiety and paranoia which plays out when he takes the Presidency. An example of this was his campaign against the defunct Iraqi Communist Party that was practically a method of purging the Baathist Party and further consolidating his power. As a final attempt to undercut Saddam's power grab, Bakr began rapidly making treaties with the Syrian President, Hafez al-Assad, which would lead to the unification of Iraq and Syria. Saddam acted quickly and forced Bakr to resign, preventing such a plan from coming to fruition. On July 16, 1979, Saddam Hussein formally assumed the presidency⁴⁰.

The 1970s in most of Iraq can be likened to the calm before the storm. This is with the exception of Iraqi-Kurdistan. Iraqi-Kurdistan, by 1970, had been engaged in heavy fighting against Baghdad. Throughout the 1970s the Kurds continued to engage the central government military, even involving important international actors. At this point the Kurds in Iraq had a bonafide ethno-nationalist movement that had sought autonomy for more than two decades.⁴¹ During Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr's rule Iraq experienced solid economic growth and an increase in standard of living, but something sinister was boiling under the

⁴⁰ Butt, GERAL "Analysis: Instability benefits Saddam Hussein". *BBC News*. 16 October 2000.

⁴¹ Harris, G.S. "Ethnic Conflict and the Kurds". *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 1977. p. 112–124.

surface. Coupled with his relatively progressive economic policies came cronyism, patronage, and nepotism. Political opposition and minority groups had fled or began to get increasingly frustrated with the central government, including the Shia.⁴²

⁴² Alnasrawi, Abbas. *The Economy of Iraq: Oil, Wars, Destruction of Development and Prospects, 1950–2010*, 1994. p. 72-73.

1E: 1979 and Saddam Hussein

Saddam Hussein quickly cemented his autocracy by growing an intense cult of personality within Iraq and silencing dissidents. He developed his cult of personality by putting up posters, murals, and statues of himself all around Iraq as well as on the Iraqi currency.

The summer of 1979 brought many of the pressures that laid beneath the surface under previous administrations to focus. Domestically, only 6 days after taking power, Saddam Hussein convened the members of the Baath Party. He claimed to have discovered a fifth column within the Party and ordered the names of 68 alleged co-conspirators to be read aloud in front of the assembly. The 68 individuals were arrested and many were sentenced to death; other high ranking members made up the firing squad.⁴³ Outside of the Baathist Party, Saddam had accelerated attacks against political opponents, including the mainly Shia Islamic Dawa Party. Many members of such organizations had wished to emulate the 1979 Iranian Revolution but because of the danger posed by Saddam many fled to Iran or elsewhere. In the North, the pressures from the Kurds continued. Their Kurdish ethno-nationalist ideology stood in sharp contrast to Baathist thought.

Internationally, the hostile relationship with Egypt after the Camp David Accords continued. Diplomatic relations warmed with the Egyptians a few years into the Iran-Iraq War. The Soviet-Iraqi relations continued their pendulum swing, this time toward the negative end of the spectrum because of actions taken against the Iraqi Communist Party. And perhaps most importantly, after the Iranian Revolution, Iraq's relationship with Iran

⁴³ Mortimer, Edward. "The Thief of Baghdad: *Saddam Hussein: A Biography*." *New York Review of Books*, 1990.

took a nose-dive. Saddam used both the People's Army and *Mukhabarat*, the Department of General Intelligence, to find and destroy his perceived enemies—foreign and domestic.⁴⁴

1979 and the new regime's manner of governance spelled trouble for the immediate future of Iraq's ethno-religious mosaic. The autocratic, totalitarian tendencies that already existed in the central government were, evidently, exacerbated as soon as Saddam Hussein took office. Whomever was considered an opponent of the Saddam-Baathist party was in grave danger. As such, when the Iran-Iraq War commenced, and Iraq was fighting a major Shia power, the regime expanded their anti-Shia policies markedly.

⁴⁴ Helen Chapin Metz Iraq: A Country Study: "Internal Security in the 1980s", *Library of Congress Country Studies*, 1988.

1F: Iraq until the First Gulf War

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini had lived in the holy city of Najaf, Iraq for 14 years in the 1960s and 1970s, largely tolerated by the regime. Khomeini steadily grew the influence of Shi'ism around the Middle East, especially in countries with large Shia populations, like Iraq. Having been the *de facto* leader in 1978, Saddam, after pressure from the Shah of Iran, made the decision to expel Khomeini. This turned out to be a mistake. In France, Khomeini grew his media capabilities and had much greater access to Iranian diaspora communities.

Once Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran and the Islamic Republic of Iran was established, tensions between Iran and Iraq reached a tipping point. After a number of skirmishes along Shatt al-Arab, which divides Iraq and Iran, Iraq invaded Iran. The Iraqi military first attacked Mehrabad airport in Tehran and then entered the province of Khuzestan, which has a sizeable Arab minority. The international community sided with Saddam Hussein, with the exception of the Soviet Union. This is despite the regime's attempted development of nuclear weapons and use of chemical weapons against the Kurds. After initial gains and advancements, Iraq started to suffer strategic losses and by the end of 1982 Iraq was on the defensive. This began a war of attrition that lasted until 1988.

"Saddam's delusions", as Kevin Woods, James Lacey, and Williamson Murray put it⁴⁵ began to result in horrific violence more and more often from 1982 on. A particularly horrifying example happened in 1982 at a challenging crossroads during the war. "Saddam asked his ministers for candid advice. With some temerity, the minister of health, Riyadh

⁴⁵ Woods, Kevin, et al. "Saddam's Delusions." *Foreign Affairs, Foreign Affairs Magazine*, 15 December 2016.

Ibrahim, suggested that Saddam temporarily step down and resume the presidency after peace was established. Saddam had him carted away immediately. The next day, pieces of the minister's chopped-up body were delivered to his wife."⁴⁶ Also, in 1982 leading into 1983, Saddam began a campaign of terror. He ordered more than 200 army officers from different backgrounds killed for failures on the battlefield. He launched a major crackdown on Shia leadership and arrested 90 members of the senior cleric Mohammad Baqir al-Hakim's family who had fled to Iran in 1980. Many member of the al-Hakim family were executed. The same fate met many members of the Barzani family.

The war ended in 1988 as a bloody stalemate. Neither side had achieved their goals and the border remained practically unchanged. The war did not help Saddam's image and actually bolstered Khomeini's image because of how little support Iran received throughout the 8-year struggle.⁴⁷

Throughout the war, the regime's stranglehold on the Iraqi people tightened and Saddam's anxieties multiplied. The central government managed to maintain relative economic stability although it accumulated billions of dollars in debt. Baghdad desperately tried to retain civilian support, even paying for the restoration of the Imam Ali Shrine in Najaf, one of the holiest sites in Shia Islam. The regime also contributed to other Shia *waqf*, or religious endowments. Despite these actions, which on the surface seem to signal improving relations between the central government and Shia, the Baath Party steadily increased their policies of repression against Shia. The Dujail Massacre is an especially

⁴⁶ Woods, Kevin, et al. "Saddam's Delusions." *Foreign Affairs*, Foreign Affairs Magazine, 15 Dec. 2016.

⁴⁷ Cordesman, Anthony *Iraqi Security Forces: A Strategy for Success*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006. p. xviii.

appalling example. Saddam Hussein ordered the destruction of the village following an assassination attempt in July of 1982. Hundreds of men, women, and children were detained, tortured, and/or executed as a result. Many more were sent into exile in parts of remote southern Iraq. A separate attack, the Anfal Campaign, targeted ethnic minority (mostly Kurdish) civilians in rural Northern Iraq.⁴⁸ The ethno-religious relationships that once bonded Iraq, during the Iran-Iraq War, were rapidly falling apart.

As an aside, the Dujail Massacre was the crime for which Saddam Hussein was sentenced to death by hanging. Three years after the fall of the Baath Party, Saddam was hanged in connection with these crimes.

The Iran-Iraq War sealed the fate of the South. The Iraqi government, acting on fears that 1979 (Shia) Islamic Revolution in Iran would spur a revolution in the Iraq, began mounting a campaign against the Shia. So began the repressive government policies that defined the rest of the time Saddam Hussein was in office. A campaign of expulsion called *taba'iyya* followed a mass arrests. *Taba'iyya* was the Baathist policy that allowed the government to deport any Iraqi on the justification that they were of Iranian origin. This policy targeted the Shia communities in the south. More than half a million people, at least, were expelled over the course of the 1980s. Politically, measures were introduced that made it retroactively illegal to be a member of the Islamic Dawa Party.

Nowadays, the Islamic Dawa Party is among the most influential in the country with members such as Nouri al-Maliki and Haider al-Abadi amongst their ranks. Targeted

⁴⁸ Menendez, James. "Seeking Justice in Dujail". *BBC*, 2005.

religious and political assassinations and kidnappings became commonplace during this time period as well.⁴⁹

In addition to the Shia, other non-Baathists were rapidly becoming disillusioned with Saddam Hussein and his government. Much of what kept non-Kurdish populations quelled was stable economic activity. This economic stability would not last for long. Iraq was fortunate that the fighting during the Iran-Iraq War did not extend much further than the Iran-Iraq border. After the Iran-Iraq War, Iraq's relationship with the international community began to deteriorate, including with Iraq's Arab neighbors. This deterioration was no more evident than in Iraq's relationship with Kuwait. The tensions began to escalate when Saddam requested that the Kuwaitis forgive Iraq's \$30 billion debt and Kuwait refused.

The same year, Saddam pushed OPEC nations to reduce their oil output so that Iraq could sell its oil at a higher price to pay back their debts. Not only did the Kuwaitis refuse, but they spearheaded the campaign against Saddam's request. Coupled with the contemporary issues, Saddam and many Iraqis had argued for decades that Kuwait was an Iraqi territory, as it had been a part of the Ottoman province of Basra during the Ottoman period. Baghdad began to seriously consider an invasion. In 1989 Saddam ordered troops on the Iraq-Kuwait border. Iraq continued to lament the overproduction of oil on the part of Kuwait, but to no avail.

Saddam, in response to Western criticism of his actions threatened to attack Israel which brought the United States into the fold. The U.S. ambassador to Iraq at the time, April

⁴⁹ Fawcett, John, and Victor Tanner. "The Internally Displaced People of Iraq." *Brookings.edu*, The Brookings Institution, 1 October 2002

Glaspie, visited Iraq in July of 1990. She stated during that meeting: “We have no opinion on your Arab-Arab conflicts, such as your dispute with Kuwait. Secretary Baker has directed me to emphasize the instruction, first given to Iraq in the 1960s, that the Kuwait issue is not associated with America.” Many accuse Amb. Glaspie of giving tacit approval to Saddam Hussein to invade Kuwait by not explicitly condemning the option. Ambassador Glaspie returned to the United States confident that war was not imminent. About one week later, Kuwait refused to cover the full cost of revenue lost from the Rumaila Oil Field, and Saddam Hussein ordered the invasion of Kuwait⁵⁰.

The Shia-Sunni relationship was strained before the Iran-Iraq War. Because Iran was (and is) the world’s preeminent Shia power, it was not long after the war started that Shias within Iraq’s own borders became enemies of the state. As previously mentioned, operations began as anti-Iranian, but morphed into anti-Shia. Both the Shia and the Sunni-Iraqis had antagonized one another. Especially because of the example of the Iranian Revolution, what was to come was almost inevitable.

⁵⁰ Simons, Geoff. *Iraq: from Sumer to post-Saddam* (3 ed.). Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. p. 333-343.

Chapter 2: The Fracturing

Then the war grew up
and invented a new game for them:
the winner is the one
who returns from the journey
alone,
—Dunya Mikhail, “The Iraqi Nights”

2A: The First Gulf War

The Iraqi Army, which had not fully demobilized after the Iran-Iraq War, was one of the largest armies in the world at the time of the invasion of Kuwait. It is estimated that, at the end of the Iran-Iraq War, the Iraqi Army consisted of nearly 1.5 million soldiers, thousands of tanks, and hundreds of aircraft.⁵¹ Kuwait’s army, on the other hand, consisted of about 20,000 soldiers.⁵² The Iraqi Army made short work of the Kuwaiti Army and soon after declared Kuwait the 19th province of Iraq after the initial invasion.

Saddam put his first cousin, Ali Hassan al Majid, also known as “Chemical Ali”, in charge of the new province. The Emir of Kuwait, some of his ministers, and thousands of refugees fled to Saudi Arabia.

The regime took a major gamble. Saddam wagered that the Western powers would not want to get involved in a protracted war in the Middle East. His assumption was that the West would simply accept Iraq’s occupation of Kuwait. This was Baghdad’s ploy to get out from under the mountain of debt Iraq had accumulated during Iraq’s 8-year war with Iran. This tactic ultimately failed.

⁵¹ Childs, John; Corvisier, André (1994). *A Dictionary of Military History and the Art of War*. Wiley-Blackwell. p. 403

⁵² Srivastava, L.S., Joshi, V.P. (2005). *International Relations From 1914 To Present Day*. Krishna Prakashan Media. p. 105

Within hours of the invasion, United States and Kuwait requested that the United Nations Security Council hold a meeting. The UNSC convened and passed Resolution 660 and, 4 days later, Resolution 661. Resolution 660 was passed unanimously and condemned the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. It called upon Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait and for negotiations to begin immediately, facilitated by the League of Arab States. Resolution 661 reaffirmed Resolution 660 and instituted sanctions. The sanctions were as follows:

The Council therefore decided that states should prevent:

- (a) the import of all products and commodities originating in Iraq or Kuwait;
- (b) any activities by their nationals or in their territories that would promote the export of products originating in Iraq or Kuwait, as well as the transfer of funds to either country for the purposes of such activities;
- (c) the sale of weapons or other military equipment to Iraq and Kuwait, excluding humanitarian aid;
- (d) the availability of funds or other financial or economic resources to either country, or to any commercial, industrial or public utility operating within them, except for medical or humanitarian purposes.

These actions would prove devastating to Iraq. The resolution established a committee, commonly known as the 661 Committee, that was responsible for sanctions exemptions. Until 1996 and the United Nations' Oil-for-Food Programme, the 661 Committee was the only legal means to import goods. This, for all intents and purposes, was the beginning of the end for Saddam and his regime. These sanctions were the turning point internationally and domestically. Internationally, it unified the majority of the countries of world against

him in a meaningful capacity. Domestically, the sanctions took such a toll on the country and its economy that all the various social and political grievances came to the boil.

The First Gulf War can be separated into two clean parts: Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm. Operation Desert Shield includes the initial international condemnation and lasted until January 1991. This first portion of the war was marked by buildup of troops on either side. Most worrying for the international community were Iraq's troop movements within Kuwait—many of which were massing on Kuwait's southern Border with Saudi Arabia. The question was, would Saddam stop there? If Iraq managed to seize the oil wells just across the Kuwait-Saudi Arabia border, Saddam Hussein would have controlled nearly 50% of the world's oil. At the start of Operation Desert Shield, Iraq could have invaded Saudi Arabia and handled its smaller army with relative ease.

The United States and Saudi Arabia saw eye to eye on the matter from the moment Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. Two telcons (memoranda of telephone conversation) between former President George H.W. Bush and the then King Fahd of Saudi Arabia captures this sentiment. The first of these conversations occurred on August 2, 1990, the day of the invasion. The memorandum is marked with constant agreement on matters related to the Kuwaiti royal family and Saddam Hussein.⁵³ Two days later, President George H.W. Bush and King Fahd spoke over the phone again, this time the world leaders discussed authorizing and organizing American military presence within Saudi Arabia. Once again, the conversation was remarkably cordial and the two men saw eye-to-eye. The two

⁵³ The White House, *Memorandum of Telephone Conversation* [Telcon with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, 2 August 1990, available at: <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/files/memcons-telcons/1990-08-02--Fahd.pdf>

concluded their discussion on this note, King Fahd said to Bush: "To say thank you is not enough. I value your friendship very much. I value the friendship that Saudi Arabia has with a world leader who stands for justice and truth".⁵⁴

It was important for the United States to put together an international coalition of militaries so as not to seem as though the support for Saudi Arabia was an American led attack on Iraq. In the coming months nearly 35 countries joined the Americans in the Saudi desert on the border with Kuwait, including Arab countries like Syria and Egypt. The man in charge of this coalition of forces was American General Norman Schwarzkopf. Schwarzkopf's style can be summed up in a statement he made at the end of August 1990. He said: "Let's face it, if he dares come across that border and comes down here, I'm completely confident that we're going to kick his butt when he gets here".⁵⁵

Across the border in Kuwait, the actions of Saddam and his army shocked the international community. Public executions and resistance beatings became commonplace. Kuwaitis founded a resistance movement. Those Kuwaitis resisting from within the country experienced some of the worst casualty rates of the war.

By late 1990 world leaders were growing increasingly impatient with Saddam Hussein as he showed no signs of obeying United Nations Security Council Resolution 660 and withdrawing from Kuwait. On November 29, 1990, the UNSC passed Resolution 678, which granted United Nations Member-states, in cooperation with Kuwait, to force Iraq out

⁵⁴ The White House, *Memorandum of Telephone Conversation* [Telcon with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, 4 August 1990, available at: <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/files/memcons-telcons/1990-08-04--Fahd.pdf>

⁵⁵ "U.S. Won't Start War--but Will Finish It, Commander Vows." *The LA Times*, 31 August 1990.

of Kuwait if they did not proceed with a total withdrawal by January 15, 1991. The specific language in the resolution is as follows: “Authorizes Member States cooperating with the Government of Kuwait, unless Iraq on or before 15 January 1991 fully implements...the above mentioned resolutions, to use all necessary means to uphold and implement resolution 660 (1990) and all subsequent relevant resolutions and to restore international peace and security in the area;”.⁵⁶ Resolution 678 put Operation Desert Shield on the clock and started the countdown to war.

By the end of 1990, Iraq had built heavily fortified positions across Kuwait. And on the frontier with Saudi Arabia. And just inside Iraq were Saddam’s elite forces, the Iraqi Republican Guard. As such, the Iraqis refused to withdraw from Kuwait,. January 15 came and went, and Operation Desert Storm began. Saddam made another erroneous gamble. He bet that, since the Vietnam War was in such recent memory, that the American public would not have the appetite for a conflict with Iraq and in turn avoid engaging them in a conflict that ran the risk of extending for many years. Nonetheless, coalition forces began amassing soldiers and weaponry in the Gulf. A final meeting in Geneva between U.S. Secretary of State and Iraq’s Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz was unsuccessful. No last ditch effort by diplomats or politicians could stop coalition forces from entering Kuwait once the January 15 deadline expired. On January 16, 1991 an extensive aerial bombing campaign commenced.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ UN Security Council, Security Council Resolution 678 (1990). 29 November 1990, available at: <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/678>

⁵⁷ Atkinson, Rick. (*Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1994. p. 47.

The goals of bombing campaign were to cripple the Iraqi Air Force and destroy Saddam's communication and coordination abilities— particularly in Baghdad. Iraq responded with Scud missile strikes on Saudi Arabia and Israel. Saddam's attacks on Israel where an attempt to involve them in the conflict, thereby provoking a withdrawal from the coalition by other Arab states. In the then U.S. Secretary of Defense, Richard Cheney's memoir he describes a time when the Israelis came close to retaliating.⁵⁸

The bombing campaign was successful and prevented Saddam Hussein from dragging coalition forces into the costly and deadly ground campaign he needed. At this point in the conflict, early February 1991, Saddam Hussein understood it was time to engage coalition forces on the ground. He ordered a surprise attack on the Saudi town of Khafji, just across the Kuwait-Saudi Arabia border. After only two days of fighting, coalition forces regained control of Khafji. This was the first ground engagement of the First Gulf War, but with Khafji back under control, the coalition refocused their efforts on the aerial campaign.⁵⁹

On February 13, 1991 tragedy struck Al-A'miriya, a suburb of Baghdad. An aerial attack by the U.S. Air Force using two "smart" bombs destroyed a shelter which contained hundreds of civilians. More than 400 civilians were killed in the strike.⁶⁰ The veil was lifted off media campaign in the West, which was carefully executed to make the operation seem

⁵⁸ Gross, Judah Ari. "'We're Going to Attack Iraq,' Israel Told the US. 'Move Your Planes' On 27th Anniversary of Saddam's 1991 Scud Missile Strikes at Israel, Defense Ministry Releases Interviews with Senior Officials on How Close Israel Came to Bombing Baghdad." *The Times of Israel*, 18 January 2018.

⁵⁹ Murphy, Caryle and Gugliotta, Guy. "Saudi Town Reclaimed." *The Washington Post*, 1 February 1990. p. A01.

⁶⁰ Jeenah, Na'eem. "Al-Amariyah – A Graveyard of Unwilling Martyrs". July 2001.

bloodless. General Schwarzkopf was forced to reduce the number of bombings on Iraqi cities, for fear of causing more civilian casualties. In tandem with this reduction, Saddam was showing no signs of withdrawing his forces of Kuwait. Preparations were underway for a full-scale ground assault.

In retaliation for the coalition's continuous aerial bombardment, Saddam ordered the Iraqi Army to blow up the oil fields of Kuwait. This only increased the impetus on Schwarzkopf to begin the ground assault. On February 24, 1991 the ground attack began. Coalition forces had devised an ingenious attack plan whereby they would feign a full-scale assault from the South but actually cross the Iraq-Saudi Arabia border and hook East, back into Kuwait. Their mission was two-fold: liberate Kuwait and cripple the Iraqi Army and Republican Guard to such a great extent that it would be difficult for Saddam to engage in such behavior ever again. After such a devastating 5 weeks of aerial bombardment, the Iraqi Army was in no position to fight and coalition forces met little resistance. The Republican Guard was also dealt with in relative short order. On February 27 Saddam ordered the Iraqi Army to withdraw from Kuwait.⁶¹

Throughout Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm the coalition forces dropped a series of leaflets over Iraq and Kuwait. The themes centered on coercing the Iraqis to surrender during Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm. In this example, the cartoon depicts has two parts. The first shows an Iraqi soldier thinking about the military might of the coalition and looking understandably scared. The second panel of

⁶¹ Holsti, Ole R. "The United States and Iraq before the Iraq War". *American Public Opinion on the Iraq War*. University of Michigan Press. 7 November 2011. p. 20.

the cartoon shows the same soldier's second thought bubble which is a family portrait of what one can assume is his family. Thinking about his family, the soldier accepts the offer to surrender by a soldier from the coalition forces.

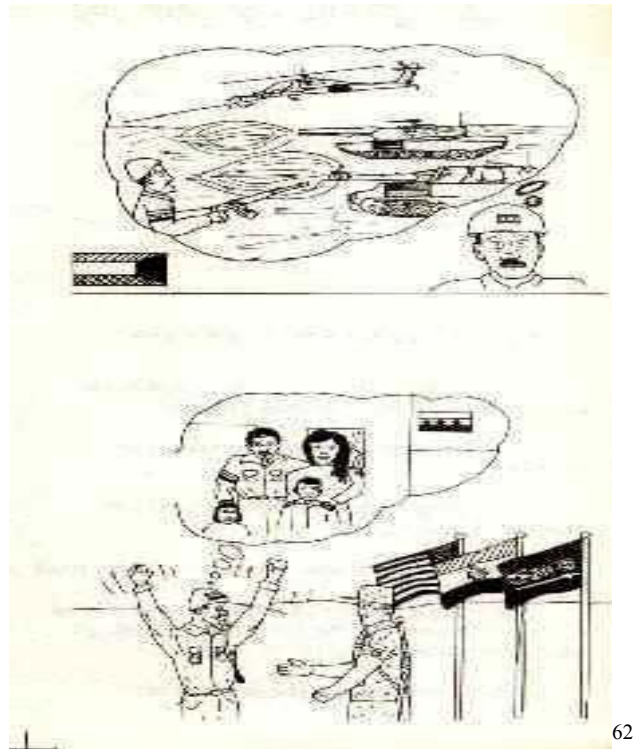


Plate 2

The themes shifted during the initial aerial bombardment. They had become direct, personal attacks on Saddam Hussein. There are at least 19 examples of leaflets that were dropped during the First Gulf War that are an attack on Saddam Hussein. One of the

⁶² Rouse, Ed, "Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm" (1990-1991), available at: <http://www.psywarrior.com/HerbDStorm2.html>

clearest examples is contains a depiction of Saddam Hussein as a grim reaper of sorts and is captioned “The Governor of the Dead”.



Plate 3

Another of the best examples is the Kuwaiti flag with a caption over the white stripe of the flag stating: “Worship Allah, do not serve Saddam”.

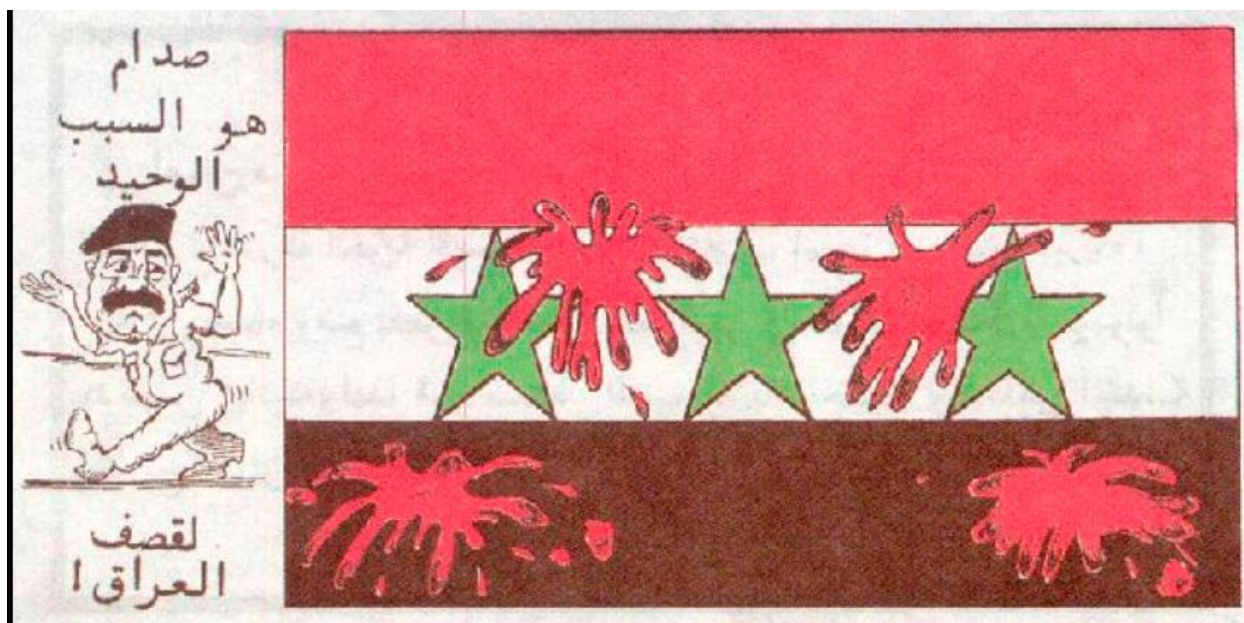


Plate 4

⁶³ Rouse, Ed, “Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm” (1990-1991), available at: <http://www.psywarrior.com/HerbDStorm2.html>

⁶⁴ Rouse, Ed, “Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm” (1990-1991), available at: <http://www.psywarrior.com/HerbDStorm2.html>

This discord, sowed by the Americans, encouraged what was to come. It was a part of the coalition's war calculus to attempt to disrupt the regime's activities from inside the country and out. Another telling leaflet shows Saddam throwing his hands in the air, almost as if he does not care, at the sight of the Iraqi flag with blood splattered all over it. In Arabic, the leaflet adds "Saddam is the one reason for the bombing of Iraq".



65

Plate 5

Additionally, President George H.W. Bush made this statement 11 days before Saddam Hussein ordered the withdrawal of troops from Kuwait: "But there's another way for the bloodshed to stop, and that is for the Iraqi military and the Iraqi people to take matters into their own hands, to force Saddam Hussein, the dictator, to step aside, and to comply with the United Nations resolutions, and then rejoin the family of peace-loving nations. We have no argument with the people of Iraq. Our differences are with Iraq's

⁶⁵ Rouse, Ed, "Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm" (1990-1991), available at: <http://www.psywarrior.com/HerbDStorm2.html>

brutal dictator. And the war, let me just assure you all, is going on schedule. Of course all of us want to see the war ended soon and with a limited loss of life. And it can, if Saddam Hussein would comply unconditionally with these U.N. resolutions and do now what he should have done long, long ago.”⁶⁶ On March 1, Bush also publicly stated: "In my own view . . . the Iraqi people should put (Saddam) aside, and that would facilitate the resolution of all these problems that exist and certainly would facilitate the acceptance of Iraq back into the family of peace-loving nations." ⁶⁷ Lastly, it is rumored that the CIA funded a Saudi Arabia based radio station: Voice of Free Iraq. In a broadcast on February 24, 1991 an exiled Baathist, Salah Omar al-Ali, said: “Rise to save the homeland from the clutches of dictatorship so that you can devote yourself to avoiding the dangers of the continuation of the war and destruction. Honorable Sons of the Tigris and the Euphrates, at these decisive moments of your life, and while facing the danger of death at the hands of foreign forces, you have no option in order to survive and defend the homeland but put an end to the dictator and his criminal gang.”⁶⁸

Whether or not the rumors were true, the public statements and the pamphlets provided Iraqis enough incentive to rise up against Saddam’s regime. After years of disenfranchisement, the international encouragement was, at least, the straw that broke the camel’s back. In the days immediately following the end of the First Gulf War, a series of popular rebellions, in southern (and northern) Iraq, began.

⁶⁶ “WAR IN THE GULF: Bush Statement; Excerpts From 2 Statements by Bush on Iraq's Proposal for Ending Conflict.” *The New York Times*, 16 Feb. 1991, p. 1001005.

⁶⁷ Embry, Jason. “Uprising in Iraq May Be Slow Because of U.S. Inaction in 1991 Uprising in Iraq May Be Slow Because of U.S. Inaction in 1991.” *Seattle Pi*, 4 Apr. 2003.

⁶⁸ Fisk, Robert. *Great War for Civilisation*, Fourth Estate, 2005. p. 646.

2B: The Uprisings

The Southern Iraqi Uprisings are known in Iraq as *al-Intifadha al-Sha'baniya*, literally translated as the Uprising of Sha'ban (the 8th month of the Islamic calendar). They began in Basra on March 1, 1991, one day after the end of the First Gulf War, following the return of the Iraqi Army from Kuwait. Within days the Uprising had spread to the rest of southern Iraq—but the Americans were not coming.

No fly-zones were enforced by the Americans, the British, and the French over Kurdish, Northern Iraq beginning in March of 1991. The operation was called Operation Provide Comfort, later Operation Northern Watch. The no-fly-zone in Southern Iraq, Operation Southern Watch, was not instituted until August of 1992. One can speculate as to the geo-political considerations that led to this reality, including the increasing presence of Iran in the region. The point is, Operation Provide Comfort prevented the situation in Kurdistan from devolving, and Operation Southern Watch arrived much too late.

The Shia in South were initially successful and managed to control many cities, namely the two holy cities of Najaf and Karbala. One of the preeminent academic researchers and prolific writers on the Shia studies is Dr. Abbas Kadhim, who is now a senior policy fellow at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. According to Dr. Abbas Kadhim, in an interview with Ahlulbayt TV: "There was an excitement. Even Iraqis weren't believing that they were revolting and there was an uprising".⁶⁹ The Uprisings were not led by a particular group nor were they planned but

⁶⁹ "The '91 Uprising - The Story behind the 1991 Uprising in Iraq." Ahlulbayt TV. June 23, 2015.

when Saddam Hussein attacked the shrines of Imam Ali in Najaf and Imam Hussein and Abbas in Karbala the revolt became fundamentally Shia in nature, for the first time in modern Iraqi history. Once the *intifadha* took hold, fighters responded to calls to fight broadcasted from the holy shrines. The shrines served as a rallying point for fighters and shelter for civilians, making the shrines the epicenter of the conflict. Another statement by Dr. Abbas Kadhim highlights the importance of these shrines and the commitment they demonstrated throughout the *intifadha*. He says: "The people who are holding the shrine of Imam Hussein and the shrine of Imam Abbas and around downtown Karbala, they did not leave. They continued until the last minute then that's why, literally, the shrine had be toppled on heads of the people because they would not give up."⁷⁰

The excitement did not last. Saddam retaliated viciously. Individuals that survived the Uprisings describe attacks on the elderly, children, and even pregnant women. According to the Human Rights Watch Report on the Uprisings: "In their attempts to retake cities, and after consolidating control, loyalist forces killed thousands of unarmed civilians by firing indiscriminately into residential areas; executing young people on the streets, in homes and in hospitals; rounding up suspects, especially young men, during house-to-house searches, and arresting them without charge or shooting them en masse; and using helicopters to attack unarmed civilians as they fled the cities."⁷¹ It was during these atrocities that a rumor spread across southern Iraq. The rumor was that Hussein Kamel al-Majid, Saddam's son-in-law, and brutal Baathist general said to his soldiers, in front of the

⁷⁰ "The '91 Uprising - The Story behind the 1991 Uprising in Iraq." Ahlulbayt TV. June 23, 2015

⁷¹ "ENDLESS TORMENT The 1991 Uprising in Iraq And Its Aftermath." Human Rights Watch. June 1992.

Shrine of Imam Hussein: "I am Hussein and this is Hussein, we will see which Hussein lasts".⁷² In other words, this was a direct challenge to one of the most sacred figures in Islam, a clear sign that the regime was positioning itself as a challenge to the holiest and dearest parts of Shia identity. This outraged the south and served to mobilize the opposition. These days the statement is still discussed in the Shia Iraqi community and whether or not it was true, it served as yet another unifying force and rallying cry that brought the Shia in southern Iraq closer and closer together.

At that point of *al-intifadha al-Sha'baniya* failure was imminent. When no assistance from the international community came, the fighters supplies slowly dwindled and Saddam Hussein and his generals were able reassert their control over southern Iraq. The Former Secretary of State wrote in his book, *The Politics of Diplomacy* and in an LA Times op-ed : "as much as Saddam's neighbors wanted to see him gone, they feared Iraq would fragment in unpredictable ways that would play into the hands of the mullahs of Iran, who could export their brand of Islamic fundamentalism with the help of Iraq's Shiites and quickly transform themselves into a dominant regional power".⁷³

People that were able, fled to Saudi Arabia and Iran. The ones that could not escape suffered greatly. Ayatollah Abu Al-Qasim Al Khoei, arguably the most important *marja'* of his time, who had previously declared the rebels' cause just, was transported to Baghdad at more than 90 years old from Najaf. Eventually, under mounting pressure, he was returned to Najaf only to be placed under house arrest. Many Shia institutions were destroyed

⁷² "The '91 Uprising - The Story behind the 1991 Uprising in Iraq." Ahlulbayt TV. June 23, 2015

⁷³ Baker, James A. "Why the U.S. Didn't March to Baghdad." *The LA Times*, 8 Sept. 1996.

during the suppression of the uprising and more still were demolished afterwards under the guise of modernization of these cities. Young, Shia men were rounded up and arrested and brought to security facilities to be tortured or even killed. Reports of low flying aircrafts shooting civilians fleeing the cities also circulated. The next decade proved disastrous for the country of Iraq and its people.

The Shia had openly rebelled against the government. This made Shias enemies of the state—from this, Iraq still has not recovered. The years following the 1991 Uprisings would force Sunnis and Shias in staunchly different camps, both societally and politically. The 1991 Uprisings were the most important turning point Sunni-Shia relations. From that point on, the Arab-Sunni-Arab-Shia relationship has been marked by antagonism. This brand of antagonism, at its most benign, is a perpetual blame game and, its most malignant, is viciously violent.

Chapter 3: A Shattered Mosaic

“The dead, Your honor, do not agonize over their crimes and do not long to be happy, you know. If from time to time we hear the opposite, then those are just trivial religious and poetical exaggerations and ridiculous rumors, which have nothing to do with the real circumstance of the simple dead”

Hassan Blasim, *The Corpse Exhibition and Other Iraqi Stories*

3A: The Immediate and Near-Immediate Aftermath

The plight of the Kurds in the North in the time following the uprisings was relatively well documented. The United Nations and actors inside and outside of the Middle East had access to the area and we now have specific numerical information in regards to the aftermath of the uprisings in Kurdistan.

In the South, because the area was virtually closed to outside observers, those reporting on the aftermath had to rely on the testimony of those who fled, which at times was unreliable. As such, specific statistics are hard to come by, but the many acts of retaliation the regime took against the Shia in the south have been documented.

Additionally, as a Human Rights Watch report on the conflict puts it: “Many observers believe that attacks by Baghdad on the Kurdish-held zone have been restrained to some extent by Saddam's fear that they would provoke the intervention of Allied forces. Since April 1991, the U.S. has publicly warned Iraqi troops not to fly any aircraft, including helicopters, north of the 36th parallel, to keep security forces from entering the Allies' self-

declared security zone, and to refrain from attacking Kurdish civilians.” Due to this protection, Kurdistan was spared some of the worst of the regime wrath.⁷⁴

The immediate aftermath saw sweeping arrests made in the cities of Najaf and Karbala, two of the most central places for Shia identity in the world. The list of those arrested included the previously mentioned Grand Ayatollah Sayed Abu al-Qassem al-Khoei and 105 members of his family. The regime extended this tactic to other clergymen in the south. In a United Nations reports on the security situation in Iraq described the drastic reduction in Shia scholars in the area and, once the Uprisings had failed, nearly all of them had disappeared or were under arrest. This speaks to the Baathists seeking to destroy the Shia spirit by wiping out its *ulema*.⁷⁵

To further this point, under the guise of urban development entire buildings in the areas surrounding the holy shrines, in particular the shrines of Hussein and Abbas were leveled. A reporter from the Spanish newspaper El País visited Karbala and left with the impression that the destruction was indeed a tactic by the army in order to squash the resistance. Unlike in Karbala, which was marked by indiscriminate retaliation, in Najaf the Baathists specifically targeted religious institutions, including but not limited to the Imam Ali shrine. The aforementioned United Nations report highlights the construction of a

⁷⁴ "ENDLESS TORMENT The 1991 Uprising in Iraq And Its Aftermath." Human Rights Watch. June 1992.

⁷⁵ "ENDLESS TORMENT The 1991 Uprising in Iraq And Its Aftermath." Human Rights Watch. June 1992.

highway over the Wadi al-Salaam cemetery, a cemetery which for thousands of years was the holiest final resting place for Shias across the world⁷⁶.

It quickly became clear that the regime was systematically targeting the political and cultural institutions that made up the fabric of Shia society in the South. Even in Karbala, where the retaliation was more indiscriminate, it was evident who the regime was targeting.

An important minority in the South are the Marsh Arabs. The Marsh Arabs were not major players in the Uprisings, though they are majority Shia. As such, in line with the Baghdad's anti-Shia campaign, they experienced massive consequences.

⁷⁶ "ENDLESS TORMENT The 1991 Uprising in Iraq And Its Aftermath." Human Rights Watch. June 1992.

3B: The Marsh Arab Question

The Marsh Arabs or *Ma'dan* are distinct from their fellow Southerners in many ways. The *Ma'dan's* culture centers on the river basins in southern Iraq. As such, their cultural practices differ from what would be considered normal in Iraq. For example, most *Ma'dan* lived in arched reed houses known as *mudhif*. Additionally, the Marsh Arabs are genetically distinct from their countrymen. There exist a variety of Marsh Arab origin theories. Some of the most popular tie them to the ancient Sumerians and others link them with Bedouins. The British posited that the Marsh Arabs may have originally come from India.⁷⁷

Despite *al-Intifadha al-Sha'baniya* originating from cities in the south, the Marshes suffered immensely. Following the end of the conflict, the central government rapidly accelerated human rights violations against the Marsh Arabs. A 2003 report by Human Rights Watch details the long list of violations committed by the regime against the Marsh Arabs in the 1990s. The list is as follows:

“Murder of thousands of unarmed civilians following the abortive March 1991 uprising, through summary execution and the indiscriminate bombardment and shelling of residential areas in towns and villages in the vicinity of Basra, al-Nasiriyya, al-‘Amara and across the marshes region;

⁷⁷ Thesiger, Wilfred. “The Marshmen of Southern Iraq.” *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 120, no. 3, 1954. pp. 272–281.

Forcible population transfer—coercive expulsion of part of the Marsh Arab population from their native villages to settlements on dry land on the outskirts of the marshes and along major highways to facilitate government control over them; · Arbitrary and prolonged imprisonment of thousands who had been arrested during and in the aftermath of military bombardment of residential areas in the marshes, including civilians and others suspected of anti-government activities;

Torture of Marsh Arab detainees held in government custody, in order to extract information from them, as punishment, and as a means to spread fear among the local population;

Enforced disappearances of many of the Marsh Arabs arrested during the 1990s, whose fate and whereabouts remain unresolved to date;

Persecution of the Marsh Arabs through the intentional and severe deprivation of their fundamental rights on the basis of their religious and political identity as a group”.⁷⁸

The question becomes, why did the Marsh Arabs face such harsh consequences when their involvement in the *intifadha* was limited? There are two answers. The first has to do with the Marsh Arabs place in Middle Eastern society, and specifically Iraqi society.

⁷⁸ "The Iraqi Government Assault on the Marsh Arabs" Human Rights Watch. January 2003.

To this day the term *Ma'dan* is used disparagingly. The term connotes backwardness, similar to “hick” in the United States. American academic Juan Cole puts it as follows: “settled governments in the region (West Asia) have long viewed them as a problem, rather as eastern European governments often looked on Gypsies”.⁷⁹ As such, the regime had a negative view of the Marsh Arabs and used the *intifadha* as an excuse to accelerate their campaigns against them. But this is a simplistic view of the situation. In order to understand why Baghdad chose to target the Marshes the broader context must be included. Their lands served as refuge for fleeing Southerners. As a part of the systematic campaign against the Shia, the Marsh Arabs were necessarily involved. For the regime, they were a part of the larger Shia fabric in southern Iraq⁸⁰. The fact that the demolition of their homelands occurred immediately after the Uprisings was no accident—the attack on the Marsh Arabs was because they were Shia.

The reason the Marsh Arabs suffered so greatly is because of their environment. Their environment made them an easy target for the regime. The regime had many government engineered tactics at their disposal to devastate the marshes, even all the way from Baghdad. In a United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) press release from 2001, the UNEP confirmed the effectiveness of these tactics. 90% of the marshlands were destroyed and called it one of the world’s greatest environmental catastrophes.

The tragedy of the Marsh Arabs is difficult to understate. In addition to the lives lost as a result of the regime’s campaign, an ancient habitat and way of living has been

⁷⁹ Cole, Juan “Marsh Arab Rebellion: Grievance, Mafias, and Militias in Iraq,” Wadie Jwaideh Memorial Lecture, University of Indiana, 15 October 2005

⁸⁰ “The Iraqi Government Assault on the Marsh Arabs” Human Rights Watch. January 2003.

destroyed. Despite efforts to reinvigorate the marshes, which will almost certainly never fully recover, the *Ma'dan* do not want to return to their former lifestyle⁸¹.

⁸¹ Hammer, Joshua. "Return to the Marsh." *Smithsonian.com*, Smithsonian Institution, 1 October 2006.

3C: Long-term Consequences

Al-Intifadha al-Sha'baniya was a distinct and seminal moment for the Shia in the South of Iraq for many reasons. It was the first collective revolutionary action on the part of the Shia. It set the stage for the sectarian divides that define modern day Iraq.

The 1990s were marked by hyperinflation and increased poverty. The combination of repressive government policies and sanctions against the regime were the two primary culprits. Additionally, during this time period, Baghdad distanced itself from the rest of the international community. For example, the regime's cooperation with United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) created to ensure Iraq's compliance with international weapons of mass destruction statutes was at best questionable. At worst, Baghdad was actively attempting to subvert UNSCOM⁸².

The tenuous relationship with the international community escalated until the regime was presented with Resolution 1441 by the United Nations Security Council on November 8, 2002, which was passed unanimously. The first two operative clauses of UNSC Resolution 1441 stated:

- "1. *Decides* that Iraq has been and remains in material breach of its obligations under relevant resolutions, including resolution 687 (1991), in particular through Iraq's failure to cooperate with United Nations inspectors and the IAEA, and to complete the actions required under paragraphs 8 to 13 of resolution 687 (1991);
2. *Decides*, while acknowledging paragraph 1 above, to afford Iraq, by this resolution, a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations under

⁸² United Nations, Secretariat, *Letter from the Secretary General Addressed to the President of the Security Council*, 15 December 1998, available at: <https://www.un.org/Depts/unscom/s98-1172.htm>

relevant resolutions of the Council; and accordingly decides to set up an enhanced inspection regime with the aim of bringing to full and verified completion the disarmament process established by resolution 687 (1991) and subsequent resolutions of the Council;".⁸³

This was the end for Saddam Hussein's rule in Iraq. March of 2003 began a month long campaign to depose Saddam Hussein. Saddam disappeared in April and Operation Iraqi Freedom, as it was dubbed, ended with George W. Bush's infamous "Mission Accomplished" speech and the lifting of economic sanctions.

The American and British invasion, although it rapidly deposed Saddam Hussein, did not have adequate plans for nation-building for the post-Saddam era. The ensuing power vacuum was filled by ethno-nationalism and religious nationalism that sprouted under Saddam Hussein's regime. The ethno-cultural mosaic was fully shattered in just a few short years after the American and British invasion.

Iraq has adopted a power-sharing model of democracy that has left no group wholly satisfied. The Kurds in the North now have a semi-autonomous state that runs almost like an independent country. The Sunnis in the West became increasingly dissatisfied and developed a distaste for the central government, which was bastardized and morphed into hate. In the Shia case, despite controlling many of the most important positions in Iraqi politics, many areas of South Iraq have been littered with protests since 2015.⁸⁴ The

⁸³ UN Security Council, Security Council Resolution 144, 8 November 2002, available at: <http://www.un.org/Depts/unmovic/documents/1441.pdf>

⁸⁴ Harith al-Hasan. "Social Protest in Iraq and Reality of the Internal Shia Dispute". 30 August 2015 *Al Jazeera*. Web. 22 March 2019

country has broken into pieces and now is just the sum of its parts. This is additionally complicated by the fact that in northern and central Iraq the lines between different groups are blurred, which has led to conflict.

The city of Baghdad's transformation is the clearest example of this fracturing. Baghdad went from a metropolis where individuals of different faiths and backgrounds lived side-by-side to a city where the majority of its neighborhoods are defined by religious or ethnic labels. In a 2007 survey of Baghdad's neighborhoods the New York Times describes many of these neighborhoods with these labels⁸⁵. For example, Amiriya, in west Baghdad, which was an elite neighborhood that attracted scholars, engineers, and doctors of different backgrounds, has become an almost exclusively Sunni neighborhood.⁸⁶

The *Daesh* (the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) development is also relevant and telling. *Daesh* took advantage of disenfranchised Sunnis in the North and the West of the country and managed to take vast swaths of territory. Shia militias, often backed by Iran, played a huge role in combatting and ultimately defeating *Daesh*, committing their own series of human rights violations against innocent Sunnis. The *Daesh* situation illustrates just how terrible sectarianism in Iraq has become because it highlights the measures each group will resort to in order to combat the other.

⁸⁵Cave, Damien et. al. "Assessing the 'Surge'" The New York Times 6 September 2007. *The New York Times Archives*. Web. 25 February 2019.

⁸⁶ Muir, Jim. "ميليشيا سنية تجلب الهدوء الى بغداد", *BBC Arabic*, 28 November 2007. Web. 25 February 2019.

Lessons Learned and Conclusion

Iraq is now among the worst countries when it comes to societal divisions between religious groups—both qualitatively and quantitatively. The qualitative discussion has been laid out above. Quantitatively, Iraq is ranked 3rd worst for societal discrimination of minorities. This is contrast to state religious minority discrimination which is slightly better than the global average.⁸⁷ This means that, although the days of Saddam Hussein and more explicit forms of persecution may be behind Iraq, Iraq's societal fabric has suffered immensely.

It is difficult to take the Iraqi situation and generalize it so there may be some lessons to be learned for ethno-religious conflicts. In order to achieve this, it is best to frame the developments in terms of specific drivers. There are number that might provide important useful, information.

The first of these drivers is religious differences. In the Iraqi context, the ruling elite, the Baathists, were primarily Sunni Arabs. The anti-government fighters in the 1991 Uprisings in southern Iraq were Shia Arabs. As such, there is a religious group that is distinct from the ruling elite and the ruling elite come from a minority religious group. Going forward it would be useful to frame the discussion in terms of statistics so the existing qualitative analysis can be expanded upon. The research question would be, is a minority leader more likely to use mass killing as tactic in civil war? The study would compare mass killing, defined as 50,000 or more deaths over the course of 5 years or less,

⁸⁷ Fox, Jonathan, Roger Finke, and Dane R. Mataic. "New Data and Measures on Societal Discrimination and Religious Minorities." *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion*, 2018. Volume 2, Article 14.

and the percentage of the population the leader shares with the population. This allows for more detailed analysis in comparison to the current literature which uses 0 or 1 when coding for the presence of ethnic/identity conflict.⁸⁸ The hypothesis that the 1991 Uprisings in Iraq put forth is the presence of an ethnic minority leader increases the likelihood a civil war will exhibit mass killing.

Another driver is repressive government policies. Baghdad began implementing repressive policies and ramped up policies that already existed in the aftermath of the *intifadha*. Another example that has not already been mentioned is tormenting family members of those who fled Iraq. The Baathists routinely tortured the family members of refugees who fled Iraq, especially of those who worked in government or government-related positions. These types of policies from Baghdad contributed to the mounting social and political grievances and tensions that galvanized the resistance and, in part, sparked the conflict.

Lastly, it is important to discuss foreign government intervention and follow through. In Iraq, the United States' series of pamphlets that were dropped all over southern Iraq criticizing Saddam Hussein and encouraging the Shias in the South to revolt were critical. There are a number of factors which influence each government's decision to follow through after all but sparking the conflict. The Shias had neither of the requisite characteristics for American follow through. One factor is elite buy in within the foreign country. Americans, and especially American elites, did not have personal attachment to

⁸⁸ Benjamin Valentino, Paul Huth and Dylan Balch-Lindsay. "Draining the Sea": Mass Killing and Guerrilla Warfare. *International Organization*, 2004. Volume 58, pp 375-407.

the Shia Iraqi. Another factor is geopolitical complications, which with the potential for an increasingly powerful Islamic Republic of Iran, worked against the South. The Shia stood no chance without Western intervention but the Kurds managed to set up a semi-autonomous state aided by no-fly zones and humanitarian assistance from the West.

This decision, not to credibly commit to a cause that the American government championed made a significant difference. This, again, would contribute to study of the likelihood an ethnic/identity conflict devolves into mass killing.

Another potential avenue for future research is to explicitly study the 1991 Uprisings and write an all-encompassing piece (to the extent that, that is possible) on the occurrences. This can be achieved by using many of the sources discussed in this work and combining them with interviews and other material gathered researching in Iraq.

In terms of policy recommendations, this research presents a grim outlook. Societal issues in Iraq are deeply rooted and as such will be difficult to tackle. We know from past ethno-religious conflicts it is important to remove the emphasis on ethnicity and religion in order to move the state forward. One potential route Iraq could take is implementing a single-transferable vote system as Donald Horowitz has argued.⁸⁹ This will allow for Iraqis to cast a vote for someone other than the member of their co-ethnic party. This could slowly deemphasize ethno-religiosity in politics and move the system toward a focus on political ideology.

Going forward this information can be used to counter the notion that the 2003 Invasion of Iraq is the seminal moment in Iraqi-Shia identity. Contrary to popular belief and

⁸⁹ Horowitz, Donald. *A Democratic South Africa? Constitutional Engineering in a Divided Society*. University of California Press, 1992. pp. 167–173.

scholarship, 1991 and *al-Intifadha al-Sha'baniya* has the most central place in modern Iraqi-Shia ethnic, religious, and cultural identity, not Operation Iraqi Freedom. The 1991 Uprisings changed the ethno-national and ethno-religious make up of Iraq by pitting Shias against Sunnis. Both directly, through the fighting, and indirectly, through the regime's policies afterwards, the Uprisings transformed Iraq. This transformation shattered Iraq's ethno-cultural mosaic and Iraq has yet to recover.

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