

MERIA

IRAQ'S NEW POLITICAL ELITES: A DREAM COME TRUE?

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The abrupt upheaval in Iraq's leadership ranks is the greatest in its history as well as in the annals of the entire Middle East: from a single, all-powerful sovereign to a litany of rulers, leaders, and claimants to the throne; from the one and only Ba'th party to a vast array of parties, factions, and organizations. This essay analyzes the causes and consequences of this earthquake in Iraq and portrays the new elites which ascended to power. It argues that from the dawn of its existence, the Iraqi state's various regimes and leaders have endeavored to establish a stable polity that could boast of internal unity and a supra-sectarian allegiance with a measure of historical continuity but failed to do so. Consequently, the question that begs asking is whether the new elites will succeed where their predecessors have failed.

As a result of the war of 2003, Iraq's regime underwent a complete transformation, which took place literally overnight. In the aftermath, Iraq experienced a dramatic leadership change. As new leaders emerged to replace the displaced dictator, conflicts arose not only between new and old elites but also among the new elites themselves. The clashes have become so brutal that members of these disparate circles were literally being blown up in a continuous cycle of terrorist attacks, seriously hindering their ability to consolidate rule or to establish themselves. While violence has been a recurring theme in modern Iraq, the bloodshed triggered by the current power struggle is the most severe the country has ever known.

THE COLLAPSE OF THE HOUSE OF CARDS

The deck of cards distributed by the U.S. Armed Forces at the outbreak of the war, each with a picture of one of the Ba'th regime's leaders, symbolized the social and political upheavals that have beset Iraq since March 2003. Overnight, the once omnipotent leaders were rendered dangerous criminals with rewards on their heads. The leadership's ouster was different from the country's previous power

struggles, since the political elite was not removed as a consequence of internal challenges by the Iraqi military or an army-party coalition but rather by a foreign military force. The process condemned everything connected with the old regime, which was to be completely uprooted, and aimed to establish new social and political norms altogether.

Although the Ba'th regime collapsed with astonishing speed, uprooting a regime that dominated a country for more than 35 years required much more to be done. A key development was the decision to purge immediately all previous power bases of the regime: the Ba'th party, the army, and all other security organs.

The Ba'th party, with only 2,000 members when it took power in 1968, steadily grew to one million members and supporters who became the country's vanguard in every institution. The purge of all public institutions and organizations from Ba'thist influences (called *ijtithath* or de-Ba'thification) not only affected high officials but also an entire class of Iraqis who had joined the Ba'th--willingly or under duress--and who instantly lost their livelihood, status, and party-affiliated social network. Moreover, this left an administrative void that only intensified the chaos, making it

considerably harder for the new elites to establish their control.

Especially significant was the decision to disband the army, which totaled about 400,000 soldiers on the eve of the 2003 war. This institution had long endowed Iraq with a sense of continuity, especially in light of the changes that often occurred in other institutions. Dismantling the army destroyed the only source of livelihood and pride of hundreds of thousands of individuals and their families, some of whom had until recently been members of the Iraqi elite.¹

In addition to the removal of the old civilian and military elite, there was a comprehensive redistribution of power among Iraq's religious and ethnic groups. The Sunni monopoly over most positions of power was immediately destroyed and replaced with a formula designed along communal lines (*muhāsasa*). The Sunnis criticized this re-allotment, contending that it bolstered the country's sectarian allegiances at the expense of Iraqi national cohesion. The Sunnis were greatly reduced in power. For example, among the 25 members of the provisional government, which functioned between July 2003 and June 2004, there were only five Arab Sunnis, compared to 13 Shi'as and five Kurds. The picture was far bleaker from the Sunnis' perspective; their representatives had not received any key posts, though the numbers of representatives were in accord with each sector's relative share of the general population.

THE RISE OF NEW ELITES

Candidates to become parts of the new elites came from a number of directions. The first group consisted of tribal chiefs, clerics, and long-standing parties that emerged from the underground, plus numerous new parties that sprouted up. Saddam Hussein's regime began rehabilitating the status of the tribal elite, or at least some of its leaders, during the early 1990s after an extended period during which he

attempted to downplay their existence. A weakening of the central government led to a reciprocal expansion in the tribal leaders' power. These developments induced the Ba'ath to collaborate with the tribes or utilize them as a means for bolstering its legitimacy among parts of society that still maintained strong tribal affiliations.²

Similar events transpired following the war in 2003, but at that time there was no central government to fend off or counter the tribal powers. Consequently, the tribes strengthened themselves considerably by constructing coalitions with other forces.³ Important evidence of the recognition granted to the tribal elites was the appointment of Ghazi al-Yawir, one of the leaders of the Shammar tribe, as provisional president of Iraq in the summer of 2004.⁴ By 2005 another tribal element appeared on the scene, the "Awakening Councils" in Iraq (*majalis al-sahwa*), which were coalitions between tribal shaykhs backed and financed by the U.S. military to maintain security. The movement started among Sunni tribes in Anbar Province in 2005 to become an ad-hoc armed force across the country in less than a year.⁵

The "Awakening Councils" in Iraq have been credited with reducing levels of violence in the areas in which they operated; however, the rapid growth of the groups, whose salaries were initially paid for completely by the US military, has also led to concerns about some members' insurgent pasts fighting against coalition forces and to concerns about infiltration by al-Qa'ida. Another worry was that the "councils" were in fact armed Sunni opposition in the making, and the Shi'a-led government has been fighting them to prevent them from reaching power.⁶

The role of the tribes as the new elite was reinforced by their participation in the elections. For example, in the January 31, 2009 elections to the provincial governorates, the lists headed by tribal leaders in Anbar province, the "Awakening Councils," led by Shaykh Ahmad Abu Risha, won the elections.⁷

The ascent of the religious elite has been even more impressive than that of the tribal leaders. During the Ba'th era, the clerics were pushed to the political margins; the Sunni and Shi'a religious leaderships went into hiding or were severely persecuted. However, by the time the war had reached its peak, there was already a pronounced increase in the role of all segments of the religious leadership. This upsurge was triggered by the tribulations that the war had engendered and also by the lack of a central government capable of responding to civilian needs. The lack of a central government also meant that no one was able to thwart the clerics, who displayed organizational skills apparently preserved during their days in the underground. The person who best exemplified the ascendancy of the religious elite was Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani.⁸ From his residence in Najaf, he not only succeeded in imposing his authority over the majority of Shi'a but also managed to dictate critical political decisions to the Coalition forces. In addition to his religious and political powers, Sistani accumulated economic powers as well thanks to millions of supporters in the Shi'a world who keep sending him contributions.⁹

Similarly, previously established parties that for years had operated in the underground or had existed in name only suddenly resurfaced. In fact, one of the ironies of the recent war was that the revival of the Iraqi Communist Party was made possible by the Americans. This party, established in the mid-1930s, seemed the most impressive of the rejuvenated parties. Its members have displayed competent organizational skills. Soon after the fighting, the Communist Party took to the streets to organize demonstrations and to participate in other political activities forbidden to them by the Ba'th regime, their archenemy since the late 1970s.

Another party completely neutralized by the Ba'th was the National Democratic Party, which for years was headed by Kamil al-Chadirchi. One of the signs of the times was that

Chadirchi's son Nasir took over as head of the party and appeared to have brought about the party's revival.¹⁰ This has become a recurring theme, as the ranks of the various parties and political organizations started to form a new elite with members of the same families that had led them before the Ba'th swept into power.

Factions that emerged spontaneously were competing with other forces: groups or individuals who arrived from abroad with the occupation forces; sectors within the Iraqi population encouraged by the allies to imbue society and the new regime with a more Western and liberal character; and new power bases established by the Coalition in order to replace those that were purged. The first group consisted of all the anti-Ba'th, dissident organizations that initially operated in a clandestine manner from within Iraq and were subsequently forced into exile in neighboring countries, Europe, and the United States. Among the most prominent of these organizations were the Shi'a al-Da'wa party, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), the Iraqi National Congress (INC), and the Iraqi National Accord (INA). These former expatriate groups attempted to form the backbone of the new political elite, but not all of them have met with success.

As part of their efforts to construct a new Iraqi society, the Americans and their allies have placed a special emphasis on the political status of women, as they realized it would be impossible to establish democracy in a country that lacked equitable representation for its women. This was obviously a sharp reversal from the Ba'thist era, during which women did not fill any important political positions, with one exception: In 2001, shortly before the collapse of his regime, Saddam Hussein appointed Huda Salih Mahdi Ammash as member of the Revolutionary Command Council, the highest legislative and executive body in the state. Although women had a certain degree of representation in parliament, their function was no more than a rubber stamp for

the regime. In other words, Iraq's women were on the margins of the political map for 35 years (as well as before then). American pressure, as well as lobbying by Iraqi women themselves, was responsible for the inclusion of women in the provisional National Assembly (which functioned until the elections in January 2005), where they constituted 25 percent of its members.¹¹ Moreover, 33 percent of the candidate lists for the January 2005 elections were comprised of women, including clearly Islamic lists.¹² In the December 2005 parliamentary elections, the number of women elected fell short of the goal of 25 percent, comprising about 19 percent of the seats.¹³ In the new government, which was formed in May 2006, there were only four women among the 39 cabinet ministers, also fewer than had been in the previous cabinet. Yet the facts that women comprised about 19 percent of the seats in Parliament and that there were women ministers were still impressive.¹⁴

The dismantling of the Iraqi army and other security organs created an urgent need for replacements. This void was highlighted by the continued state of anarchy within the country itself and the lack of control along the borders, which have become porously traversable, including to Islamist terrorist groups. Police work and the enforcement of law and order fell entirely into the hands of the allies, who were thus compelled to establish a new Iraqi army and police force, just as the British had done in 1921 following a period of rebelliousness and anarchy that accompanied the British Mandate in Iraq. However, there is one major difference, namely that in the present experiment, the new army and the other security forces must contend with all the former power bases and individuals ousted from their posts--a fact that has rendered the new institutions prime targets for attack.

The major upheavals that have beset Iraq within such a short time have fomented intense struggles between the old and new elites as well as within each of these groups. As long as the Ba'th ruled Iraq with a firm hand, the window

of opportunity was shut to anyone not a member of the elite class. With the Ba'th's ouster, all the forces that for years had been pushed to the margins burst onto center stage. Instead of a single Ba'th party, about 100 parties competed for the top position in the January 2005 elections, and a similar number (organized in 15 lists) did so in the December elections the same year. This attests to both the new pluralism taking shape in the country and the atomization of its politics. Consequently, confrontations have not only pitted the veteran Ba'thist elite against the new parties and groups but also set the new groups against themselves. Competition also existed between the Iraqis who remained in the country and those who returned from abroad following the occupation.

In two respects, the collapse of the Sunni center in Baghdad has resulted in an unprecedented strengthening of the peripheries: Factions residing in the outlying regions have enhanced their positions at the expense of the central government, and political forces from the peripheral regions in the country have arrived at the center, where they have begun to form part of the new political elite. The leaders of this political revolution, which was triggered by a war forced upon the country from the outside, seek to attain legitimacy via the method of democracies, including elections, a national referendum, and a constitution.

The systemic contradiction between the collapse of the Sunnis and the ascendancy of the periphery has triggered the following developments: a desperate attempt to restore the status of the old Sunni center, the enhancement of the periphery's autonomy, power struggles among rival groups from the peripheries themselves, and friction between various peripheral groups that are now part of the elite. Moreover, the weakness of the new center--despite American backing--also contributed to the strengthening of the peripheral forces.

THE RUPTURE OF THE SUNNI ELITE

One of the most conspicuous paradoxes with respect to the Sunnis is that despite the fact that they were the rulers of the modern Iraqi state since its inception in 1920, there is no historical continuity among their elites. Instead, their history has been marred by continuous purges or dislodgments and the subsequent ascension of new elites. During Qasim's coup in 1958, for example, the Sunni Hashemite elite under the leadership of King Faysal (who the British imported and enthroned in Iraq) was almost entirely purged together with Sunni politicians from outside the royal family, such as Nuri al-Sa'id.

Less than five years later, Qasim and his attendant elite were purged. The first Ba'th regime that replaced them did not even manage to form a genuine ruling elite before being violently removed after a mere nine months. The five years between the two Ba'th regimes naturally did not leave enough time for the new elite to strike roots, and it was replaced by the second Ba'th regime. The second Ba'th regime's fledgling elite was characterized by the fact that its members did not hail from the heart of Baghdad's ruling consensus, but from Tikrit, Dur, and other remote areas. While the second Ba'th regime endured longer than any of the previous elites, rifts also erupted within the party, for example, the violent succession in 1979 involving the outgoing President Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr and the incoming President Saddam Hussein. Notwithstanding these ruptures, the Ba'thist elite became so deeply rooted that the task of eliminating it after the war proved to be more difficult and complicated than any "regime change" that preceded it.

The developments in Iraq stand in stark contrast to the developments in the Jordanian kingdom during the corresponding period. Like Iraq, Jordan too was an "artificial" creation of the British, who similarly imported Hashemite elite to Amman. However, in contrast to Iraq, the Jordanian elite struck roots and became a unifying force that to this day imparts continuity and stability to the entire country. The

comparison with the Jordanian monarchy strengthens the hypothesis that the "artificiality" of the state and the fact that the sovereign was a foreigner cannot be blamed for Iraq's woes.

In investigating the reasons for Iraq's erratic politics, the most likely culprit would be the systemic weakness of the Sunni elite. Not only were they a minority (comprising some 20 percent of the population) but they failed to display the necessary foresight to forge a sense of internal unity--even among the Sunnis themselves. In addition, they failed to develop a formula for sharing power with the two other major sectors--the Shi'a and the Kurds--which might have offset the conflicts of interest between these camps. Worst of all was their failure to forge a sense of Iraqi national identity.¹⁵ Another important factor contributing to the Sunni elite's weakness has been the internal struggle over Iraq's identity, which has bedeviled the country since its inception; for example, Iraqi nationalism versus pan-Arabism. Even the Ba'th regime, which ruled for such an extended period, wavered between these two alternatives. All these factors thus compelled the Sunnis to rule Iraq with an iron fist. The brutal nature of their governing style automatically carried over--and in a much more severe fashion--to their new role as the opposition, in that they felt forced to assume a "defensive" posture.

The lack of internal unity that characterized the Sunnis while they were still in power was exacerbated by their loss of this monopoly. Unlike the Kurds and Shi'a, they have immense difficulties identifying themselves under the Sunni label, as doing so would likely yield the following results: It would underscore their numerical weakness in comparison to the Shi'a, damage their reputation as the fervent adherents and representatives of supra-Iraqi unity, and perpetuate the sectarian-based allotment of power--which is detrimental to their interests.

The Sunni government's abrupt collapse also had a noticeable effect on this sector's ability to unify its ranks and stand up to the new power

bases. Unlike the Kurds and Shi'a, who established underground organizations and opposition parties over the years, the Sunnis did not, since the regime was identified with the Sunnis and represented their interests. Consequently, the Sunnis' weakness has been exacerbated sevenfold: Their power base was eradicated and they have not forged alternative political organizations with a coherent orientation or clear objectives.

Nevertheless, what are the Sunni forces that have risen on the ruins of the former elite? First of all, it is worth noting that the inner core of the disposed Ba'th regime (who have been derisively dubbed "Saddam's orphans"¹⁶) has spearheaded the all-out war against the new elites. Accordingly, the ex-Ba'thists were collaborating or hiding behind anyone who could assist them in their struggle, be it local Islamist groups or members of al-Qa'ida under Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, who have turned Iraq into their primary front against the Americans and their allies in Iraq.¹⁷

True, Zarqawi, said to be responsible for many thousands of deaths of Iraqis, was apprehended and killed by the Americans in June 2006.¹⁸ However, this did not stop the ex-Ba'thists and their collaborators from carrying out violent attacks. Anyone likely to be a member of the new social and political elite or suspected of helping it take root has become a target. This accounts for the scores of attacks not only against members of the new Iraqi administration but also against the intellectual strata (university professors, judges, clergy, and doctors) that might form the infrastructure of the new regime.¹⁹ Finally, the former Ba'thists have several advantages over the new Sunni groups: considerable experience, intimate knowledge of the terrain and the players involved, and the fact that they have nothing to lose. The asylum and support accorded them by the Ba'thi regime in Syria only encouraged them to carry on the fighting.²⁰

Since the 2003 war, a highly influential, sociopolitical power base has emerged

consisting of Sunni clergymen who spent most of the Ba'th era in the underground or in exile. Their meteoric rise has been facilitated by the gaping administrative and governing void that developed during the war. This state of affairs necessitated immediate solutions for the populace, such as the administration of medical care, the transport of food, the reconstruction of destroyed infrastructure, and police work to mitigate the war's attendant acts of vandalism and robbery.

Under these circumstances, the mosques became veritable islands of sanity and stability, and the clergy took charge of the situation even after the immediate danger had passed. Although the Shi'a clergy filled a similar role in their own region, the assistance provided by the Sunni clergy made a much stronger impression on the Sunnis because the extent of the battles in the Sunni region--during the war itself and the ensuing war of attrition--was much greater and demanded a more protracted effort.

The new social and political networks established by the Sunni clergy have gradually turned into institutionalized organizations; the most prominent of these are al-Hizb al-Islami led by Muhsin Abd al-Hamid and Hay'at Ulama al-Muslimin led by Harith Sulayman al-Dari. The former is, in fact, an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood movement, which began operating in Iraq in 1946, and was an underground organization throughout most of the republican regimes.²¹

Notwithstanding the significance of these Islamist groups, they are hindered by quite a few weak points: The Sunni groups are new and inexperienced, more reluctant than Shi'a counterparts to engage in dialogue with the Americans, and lack positive objectives and a clearly defined direction. To make up for these limitations, they have attempted to form ad-hoc partnerships with former Ba'thists, who either crossed the lines and joined the religious camp or continued to operate pockets of resistance in the underground. In fact, Hay'at Ulama al-Muslimin, which functions in the open, has

unequivocally affiliated itself with resistance operations (*al-muqawama*). Meanwhile, strong rivalry has developed between al-Hizb al-Islami and the more radical Hay'at Ulama al-Muslimin. While the former was willing to take part in the political game the latter was opposed to it, causing further rupture in the new Sunni elite.

Other Sunni elements were individuals and groups that had previously operated in exile. They too have preferred to eschew the Sunni rubric, but their identity can clearly be distinguished. One in particular is Adnan Pachachi, who served as foreign minister under the monarchy and returned to Iraq after the war. The party that he established (Tajammu al-Dimuqratiyyin al-Mustaquillin) takes a moderate, liberal, pro-Western line, including candidates from throughout the political spectrum on its list. Despite--or perhaps because of--this heterogeneity, he has failed to attract a significant portion of the Sunni public. In fact, his list failed to win so much as one seat in the January 2005 elections and in the December elections of the same year.

Another Sunni personality who failed to sweep the masses off their feet is Sharif Ali bin al-Husayn, the last scion to the Hashemite throne, who sought to restore Iraq's glory by reestablishing the constitutional monarchy. The monarchy never managed to attain legitimacy over the course of its 37-year existence, so it was hardly surprising that Husayn's list did not win any seats in the new parliament.

The Sunnis' systemic weaknesses were accentuated after the war, as the limitations of the entire sector have become abundantly clear. The Sunni elite is hindered by an overabundance of competing leaders. Unlike the Kurds and Shi'a, it lacks one or two leading, consensual candidates. Moreover, the Sunni elite has not offered a coherent political orientation or a vision amenable to large segments of Sunni society. Most importantly, many of its leaders endorse negative objectives, such as preventing the ascent of other forces. The fact that the brunt of the terror attacks and

military activities have been carried out in the area known as the Sunni triangle has had disastrous consequences for the Sunnis, who have already been stifled economically, socially, and politically.

The boycott of the January 2005 elections by leading Sunni groups and the vast majority of its electorate further exacerbated their political marginalization;²² and even though the Sunnis did participate in the December 2005 elections, still, they were not satisfied with the results--having received about 15 percent of the vote--and with their subsequent share in power. Hence, they speak of a "dictatorship of the majority over the minority."²³ The extent of their marginalization was underscored by the words of the Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani on the eve of the January 2005 elections: "The Sunni Arab brothers are a fundamental component of the Iraqi nation and their full rights must be guaranteed."²⁴ A more dramatic turnaround in the discourse and positions assumed by the Sunni and Kurdish elites would be difficult to imagine.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE AMONG THE KURDISH ELITE

In contrast to the ruptures among the Sunni leadership, the Kurds have managed to maintain a fair degree of historical continuity, despite eras during which the Kurdish leadership or ranking community members were driven into exile. All these tumultuous periods can be attributed to the wars between the Kurds and the central government in Baghdad, beginning with the Second World War, followed by the internal war between 1974 and 1975, and culminating with the Iran-Iraq war from 1980 to 1988.

The elite that most embodies this continuity is the Barzani tribe, which has passed on the leadership mantle from hand to hand since the 1930s. The Barzanis have managed to survive all the crises and safeguard their leadership crown, if not over all the Kurds, then at least over a significant portion of them. Their

continuity can be credited to several factors, foremost among them the personality and charisma of Mullah Mustafa Barzani, who underwent a metamorphosis from tribal leader in the 1940s to national leader in the 1960s and early 1970s.²⁵ Another factor is the unity within the Barzani tribe itself, which has enabled it to force competing tribes to the margins or forge alliances with them. Mullah Mustafa's navigation of internal struggles also enabled him to devote his energies to the conflict against the central government. The difficulty the central government had in reaching the Barzanis' mountain redoubt is yet another factor that helped them maintain their leadership status and the loyalty of the other tribes.

From the 1940s until the mid-1970s, Mullah Mustafa was the undisputed leader of the Kurds. Throughout this period, he focused his attention on the struggle against the government in Baghdad. Quite a few opponents arose from within the Kurdish camp over the course of his military and political activity, but none of the contenders managed to unseat him from power or alter his political decisions. As no authentic, alternative leadership emerged during his period of exile in the Soviet Union (1946-1958), Mullah Mustafa was able to reclaim the helm immediately upon his return to Iraq, at which time he began to prepare his sons as potential successors by having them join his inner circle.

Efforts to nurture his eldest son Ubaydallah as a leader failed completely. Ubaydallah conspired with the Ba'th regime against his father in the early 1970s, ultimately finding asylum in Baghdad, where he was murdered in 1980, apparently at the behest of the government. Mullah Mustafa's other two sons, Idris and Mas'ud, accompanied him throughout his political career and joined him in exile in Iran following the collapse of the insurgency in the spring of 1975. He himself never returned to Iraq and died in yet another exile--the United States--in 1979.

Idris and Mas'ud, both of whom returned to Iraq shortly thereafter, attempted to follow in his

footsteps. Of the two brothers, Mas'ud was the more natural and active leader. At the age of 16, he abandoned his studies and joined the Peshmerga, the Kurdish militia. At the age of 20 he became head of Parastin, the Kurdish intelligence organization.²⁶ After his father's death in 1979, he inherited from him the position of secretary-general of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). The two brothers endeavored to regain leadership over the entire Kurdish people but failed to replicate their father's achievements. Idris died of a heart attack in 1987 at the age of 42, while Mas'ud, two years younger, continued to hold onto power.²⁷ However, Mas'ud has had to contend with a rival camp that he has ultimately been unable to contain or defeat.

As a result, Iraqi Kurdistan has been divided into two camps since the passing of Barzani the father: At the head of one faction stood the traditional leadership of the Barzanis, while Jalal Talabani, head of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), heads the more urban, educated modern camp. Why did this rift transpire and who are the rival elite? It is worth noting that Talabani was Mullah Mustafa's rival from the 1960s. However, as long as the latter was at the helm, Talabani was unable to mount a challenge to the Barzani leadership, as Mullah Mustafa managed to unite both the tribal and urban forces (such as the intellectuals and members of the Kurdistan Democratic Party) around his leadership.

Nevertheless, the failure of the Kurdish revolt in 1975--after which Talabani's group was founded--the lackluster leadership of Mullah Mustafa's sons, the difficult postwar conditions in Iraqi Kurdistan, and the demand for new leadership all paved the way for the rise of the Talabani camp. The conflict between the two camps was fought on many fronts and also entailed an intergenerational struggle in which the Talabani's represented a generally younger group.

The power struggle between these two elites was so intense that it ultimately deteriorated into

war in the mid-1990s--a period during which Kurdistan was disengaged from the central government and ideal conditions ostensibly existed for realizing the Kurdish dream of unity and autonomy. The war ended with the partition of Iraqi Kurdistan into two spheres of influence. Ironically, the fact that each now had its own territory laid the foundations for a rapprochement between the two factions and their rather united stance on the eve of the war in 2003 and thereafter. The Kurds' relative cohesiveness, the fact that the Kurdish elite (unlike other opposition groups) have not left Kurdistan since their return following the great disaster of 1975, and their experience with over a decade of self-rule have endowed the Kurds with tremendous advantages over the other Iraqi elites that have come to the fore since the war.

These advantages, which have obviously been projected onto all Kurdish society, have stemmed from the disparate experiences of the Kurdish elite in comparison with the Sunnis. Not only was their leadership immune to purges or assassinations, but since the struggles of the 1990s, the extent of cooperation between the belligerent factions has progressed to the point of meaningful *modus vivendi*. Well before the 2005 nation-wide elections, the decision was made to integrate the two Kurdish camps and present a single joint list before the electorate, consisting of the two leading parties as well as the rest of the small parties, with the exclusion of the radical Islamists. The rapprochement between the KDP and PUK reached a point of forming a joint list in the July 2009 elections to the Kurdish parliament. Interestingly, the main challenge to them was the list Change (Gorran) headed by Nawshirwan Mustafa, himself a one time member of the old PUK elite. This again illustrates the continuity existing in the Kurdish elite in comparison to the Sunni and Shi'a.

The radical groups--most prominent of which was Ansar al-Islam--were a fairly new phenomenon among the Kurds. Overall, the Islamist groups have not managed to take root among the Kurds to the same degree as their

Sunni and Shi'a counterparts. Ansar al-Islam, which was connected to al-Qa'ida, was ousted from its bases near the Iranian border by joint allied forces composed of the U.S. army and Barzani and Talabani's troops. In fact, the main parties in Kurdistan have become the leading advocates of a democratic, secular state. Thus, their program has gained the Americans' full support.

Kurdish representation in Washington since the mid-1990s, a period during which the Ba'th regime had no representation there whatsoever, gave their leadership an additional head start over the others in relations with the United States. Furthermore, in the spring of 2003, Kurdish troops filled a significant, active role alongside the Americans in conquering regions that were under Ba'th control. Consequently, they have become the primary supporters of the Americans and the continued presence of the Coalition forces in Iraq. For instance, Talabani has denounced the calls for an early withdrawal of allied troops, because, in his estimation, such a withdrawal would precipitate a disaster: civil war, partition of the state, and mortal damage to Iraq's social and economic infrastructure.²⁸

Another crucial advantage is that the Kurds have been allowed to maintain their irregular forces, the Peshmerga, which helped the Coalition forces capture the city of Fallujah (a center of Sunni resistance) in November 2004. Since then, the Kurds came out vehemently against the calls to dismantle the Peshmerga as part of a general plan to disband all the militias in Iraq.

Today, the Kurdish elite constitute a counterbalance to the other elites. During the pivotal moment when power was being redistributed in Baghdad, the Kurds' more crystallized objectives and orientation have provided them with superior maneuverability and negotiating skills. Consequently, the Kurdish region is not only almost entirely independent of the central government but the Kurdish elite have also secured a solid foothold in the national government. For example,

following the Ba'th's ouster, Hushyar Zibari served as the foreign minister until the establishment of the provisional government in 2005 and has continued in this capacity under the new elected government. Similarly, Babakir Shawkat Zibari has been the Iraqi chief of staff since 2003. Five other Kurdish leaders (including Barzani and Talabani) served in the provisional government, where, for the first time, Kurdish representation was more or less equivalent to its relative share of the population. Moreover, Kurds have filled the position of president--Jalal Talabani--and other important cabinet posts in the provisional Iraqi government of April 2005 and the permanent one in April 2006.

THE SHI'A MOMENTUM

Whereas one can speak of the eradication of the old Sunni elites and the Kurds' historical continuity, the Shi'a have undergone a total revolution that has affected everything they have known and recognized for hundreds of years. The war instantly transformed them from a numerical majority that nonetheless found itself on the political margins into the candidates to govern the country. However, in contrast to the Sunnis and Kurds, the Shi'a elite have had to build a power base from scratch. Throughout the period of Ottoman rule, from the sixteenth to the twentieth century, the Iraqi Shi'a were prohibited from participating in the central government and never enjoyed periods of autonomous rule like the Kurds.

In effect, this state of affairs was bequeathed to modern Iraq, as the Shi'a rarely managed to attain key positions in its various governments, nor did they establish strong political organizations or parties capable of representing and fighting for their interests. Moreover, there was no set of coherent objectives uniting the Shi'a--their primary concern being survival. Nevertheless, several reservoirs existed that now serve as a source for a Shi'a elite: Shi'a members of the deposed Ba'th regime, who did

not serve in truly influential positions and certainly did not represent the Shi'a as a sect; clergymen, who mostly provided spiritual leadership whenever they were permitted to do so by the regime; and underground dissident organizations that were forced to operate from outside of Iraq so long as the Ba'th was in power.

With the fall of the Ba'th, a struggle began over the leadership that not only pitted these Shi'a elements against the Sunnis and Kurds but also precipitated internal feuds within the Shi'a camp. In the immediate aftermath of the war, the leadership reins were in the hands of Shi'a figures, including members of both secular and religious organizations who arrived from abroad with the blessing and encouragement of the Americans. The secular organizations were led by Shi'a (but also consisted of ranking Sunnis) who had close ties with the American administration. Although these organizations were heterogeneous, they all refrained from defining themselves on a sectarian basis. Within a short time, the two leading organizations--the Iraqi National Accord, headed by Iyad Allawi, and Ahmad Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress--were immersed in a power struggle. The rivalry between the two camps already existed when they were in exile, but the tensions were exacerbated several-fold once the competition began for the country's leading positions.

Alawi and Chalabi became archenemies and also dragged their two camps into the fracas. For a while, Alawi was in the ascendancy. He was awarded the key position of provisional prime minister in the summer of 2004, primarily because the Americans threw the full weight of their prestige behind his candidacy. Alawi, a former member of the Ba'th, earned the reputation of a strong man capable of restoring security and stability after a trying period of anarchy. Alawi furiously opposed the fast-growing trend of involving Ayatollah Sistani in political matters. He claimed that it was detrimental to both religion and politics. Other advantages that he had over Chalabi in the eyes

of the Americans were his consistent support for secularism and the fact that his list was open to a broad array of candidates from various sectors, including Sunnis and former Ba'ath members. From this standpoint, his platform was different from the vast majority of the Shi'a camp, which demanded that the Ba'ath be totally uprooted.²⁹ Despite these attributes, Alawi could hardly be deemed a popular leader in the eyes of the Shi'a or a figure that commanded country-wide legitimacy. In fact, his party won only 40 out of 275 seats in the January 2005 elections and only 25 in the December elections of the same year.

Although Chalabi--in contrast to Alawi--was originally the Americans' favorite son, he rapidly lost appeal in their eyes. There are many possible explanations for his fall from grace: the flawed (and thus suspicious) information that he provided the United States concerning Saddam Hussein's unconventional weapons, his tendency for being too independent, the ties he cultivated with Iran, and his decision to ally himself with Shi'a clergymen. Chalabi's ouster from the center of the political arena reflected the general unpopularity of secular Shi'a leaders. Chalabi, supported by Ayatollah Sistani, was only placed in the tenth slot on the Shi'a list for the January 2005 elections. Likewise, Chalabi's decision to join ranks with the clergy indicated that he lacked popular appeal. He reached the conclusion that if he wished to remain on the political scene he would have to conform to the growing trend of acquiescence in the authority of religion and the clergy.

In addition to the secular or partially secular Shi'a groups, strictly religious Shi'a parties or groups also arrived in Iraq with the allies. Prominent among those groups were al-Da'wa, founded at the end of the 1950s and the most prestigious of them, and the Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution of Iraq (SCIRI), an umbrella organization founded in Iran in 1982. Unlike the secular Shi'a leadership, whose primary ties were with the West, most of the religious Shi'a leadership was strongly

connected to Iran, which not only provided Shi'a clergy with political asylum but also offered them financial, organizational, and logistical assistance. This support explains the dependency of the religious leaders on Iran and why these alliances could not be extinguished immediately after the war. Nonetheless, their relationship with Iran since the war has become considerably more complicated and ambivalent.

First, a religious-ideological debate has erupted between Ali al-Sistani, Iraq's supreme Shi'a leader, and the religious leadership in Iran over the doctrine of "the guardianship of the jurisconsult" (*velayatei-faqih*)--a stance to which Sistani has adamantly objected. Secondly, there was a conflict of interest over the presence of foreign forces in Iraq. Iran hoped that the troops would depart as soon as possible, while most of Iraq's Shi'a leadership has preferred that the troops remain until the Shi'a consolidate their power. No less harming were the vestiges of the eight-year Iraqi-Iranian war which had left deep scars on the two nations. Nevertheless, the reliance of certain Iraqi Shi'a groups on Iran has persisted, and the mutual relations between Shi'a in both countries have tightened. This allegiance exists not only on the leadership level but also among ordinary Shi'a as a consequence of the newly porous borders between the two countries. These close relations were particularly salient when compared to the relatively independent Kurdish leadership, which lacked an external patron directly involved in their political decisions and behavior. In addition to the special bond with Iran, the Shi'a elite differed from their Kurdish counterparts in the following respects: the decentralization of the Shi'a leadership, the abundance of leaders, the existence of a religious authority that dictated to the political leaders, and the power struggles that occasionally deteriorated into violence.

The most important power struggles that reflected on the whole of Shi'a society, were among members of the families of ayatollahs, the supreme religious Shi'a authorities. Five

individuals have filled the position of leading ayatollahs since the Ba'th's rise to power over four decades ago: Muhsin al-Hakim, Abu al-Qasim al-Kho'i, Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr, and Ali al-Sistani.³⁰ The first four were succeeded by their progeny, but the second generation never attained the same level of spiritual leadership. On the contrary, most of the successors' energies were directed towards political activity and the establishment of clandestine political organizations. For example, Hakim's three sons were senior leaders, if not the founders, of the three most important underground organizations: Mahdi al-Hakim was involved with al-Da'wa; Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim was the head of the Mujahidin movement; and Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim founded the umbrella organization SCIRI, which subsequently co-opted the first two organizations. These developments have indeed conformed to the popular expression, "Everything remains in the family."

The postwar political void has provided an opportunity for the second generation of three families of ayatollahs to realize their political aspirations, which only intensified the friction among them. Two of the second-generation sons were killed in this struggle. In 2003, Baqir al-Hakim was murdered in Najaf in an attack that appears to have been orchestrated by Sunni factions. A conflict between Abu al-Qasim's son, Abd al-Majid al-Kho'i, and Muqtada al-Sadr, the son of Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr and the son-in-law of Baqir al-Sadr, ended in the murder of Kho'i, with Sadr considered the prime suspect.

This conflict contains various dimensions that have resurfaced in later clashes. It was a struggle between figures from abroad and personalities who had stayed in Iraq, as Kho'i arrived from exile in London immediately after the war, while Sadr remained in Iraq under the specter of persecution. Similarly, it was a clash between an individual of Iranian descent--Kho'i--and one who boasts of being a pure Iraqi Arab-

-Sadr. Moreover, it was a struggle pitting Kho'i's quiet, apolitical approach, referred to as *al-hawza al-samita*, against Sadr's activist approach, *al-hawza al-natiqa*. The latter disagreement lingered on from the preceding generation, as Kho'i the father espoused an apolitical outlook while the two Sadrs championed the opposite approach. These feuds did not end with Kho'i's death and passed on to the more conspicuous power struggles between Muqtada al-Sadr and Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani--two figures who stand at opposite poles of the Shi'a elite.

The power struggles between Sistani and Sadr may be viewed as a test case and also as a reflection of the events that have transpired on the Shi'a front since the war. Sistani, who became the supreme Shi'a religious authority after the murder by the Ba'th of Sadiq al-Sadr (Muqtada's father) in 1999, underwent a metamorphosis after the war; from a spiritual leader who excluded himself from politics, he went on to become the most powerful spiritual-political leader in Iraq. Sistani continues to be depicted as an apolitical figure who opposes a government composed of clergy. However, in practice Sistani has become the kingmaker behind the scenes, the authority that dictated developments in a country whose citizens revered his every word.

This implicit activism, paralleling changes in the whole Shi'a community, immersed Sistani in conflicts with Muqtada al-Sadr. On one level, their rivalry was an intergenerational struggle in which Sistani, who was in his seventies, represented the old generation, and Sadr, who was in his thirties, represented the young generation. In fact, many of Sadr's supporters--who referred to themselves as *Sadriyyun*--were young men from poor socioeconomic backgrounds. This rivalry also contained a sectarian-ethnic dimension: Whereas Sadr ostensibly personified the authentic Iraqi Arab, Sistani, who was of Iranian descent, was painted by the Sadr camp as a foreigner unworthy of leading Iraq's Arab Shi'a.³¹ Yet another element

was the feud between the families: Sistani was a disciple of Kho'i and thus supported the return of his son, Majid Kho'i, to Iraq. This allegiance automatically pitted Sistani against Sadr, and Majid's murder severely heightened the tensions between the two.

To make matters worse, both men represented a different style of leadership: Sistani's traditional and quiet demeanor against Sadr's charismatic and activist style. Sistani's spiritual leadership has spilled over into the political sphere by dint of traditional tools such as legal rulings and what may be referred to as political *ijtihad* (jurisprudence). In contrast, Sadr espouses a political leadership that extends into the spiritual realm via military and political tools. On the other hand, because of his young age and dearth of religious erudition, Sadr lacks the requisite religious authority. He has tried to make up for these weaknesses by affiliating himself with luminaries, such as his father, who was revered as the living embodiment of political activism due to his active resistance to the Ba'th regime. Sadr has thus attempted to prove that he was worthy of the support of all Shi'as by simultaneously endeavoring to glorify his late father's name as a supreme religious authority who transcended death and to present himself as the disciple of his father's way. Accordingly, he has utilized the social and religious networks that his father built and has reinforced them by establishing a militia that he has dubbed *Jaysh al-Mahdi* (the Army of the Mahdi).

Another luminary with whom Sadr has paradoxically attempted to associate himself is the Iranian Ayatollah Qazim Husayn al-Ha'iri. The ayatollah supported the ambitious young man at the beginning of his career, but distanced himself from Sadr once he became familiar with his independent streak. In order to imbue his leadership with religious validity, Sadr has even begun to grace himself with the title "Hujjat al-Islam," the third-highest rank in the Shi'a hierarchy. Sadr has also been attempting to undermine Sistani's prodigies, Abd al-Aziz al-

Hakim, at the time head of SCIRI, and Ibrahim al-Ja'fari, the one time leader of al-Da'wa. Another aspect of the profound disagreements between the two was that Sadr has sought to perpetuate his father and cousin's political activism at the expense of the Americans (i.e., Sadr believed that Iraqis must continue the violent resistance against foreigners until they withdraw from Iraq). Sistani, who understood how important American support was to the stabilization of the Shi'a's position, has been willing to exert his spiritual authority in order to prevent this sort of resistance--at least until power rested irreversibly in Shi'a hands.

In fact, internal Shi'a conflicts have become so entangled with external conflicts that it has become difficult to distinguish one from the other. Two prominent clashes were indicative of the integrated nature of these struggles. Sadr and his adherents initiated a violent struggle against the Americans between April and June 2004, which was followed by a second episode in August--the uprising in Najaf, the Shi'a's holiest city and the seat of residence of their most eminent scholars. Although the direct target was the Americans, Sadr's implicit intention was to call into question the legitimacy of other Shi'a leaders, especially Sistani. Moreover, he sought to offer a young, activist, anti-American alternative that called for the founding of a fundamentalist, Shi'a state in Iraq.

In both incidents, Sistani gained the upper hand by virtue of his wisdom and the fact that the majority of the Shi'a elite bowed to his authority. He managed to fend off Sadr and his supporters and, for all intents and purposes, has become the Shi'a's most influential religious and political authority. Nevertheless, Sadr's continued control over the internal Shi'a opposition sowed the seeds for a rift in the Shi'a camp. Things came to a head in March 2008 when prime minister and head of al-Da'wa party, Nuri al-Maliki, launched crackdown on Sadr's Mahdi Army in Basra and other Shi'a areas, dealing it a heavy blow. While restoring order was his stated goal, Maliki sought in fact

to weaken Sadr and his Mahdi Army well before the provincial elections which were scheduled to take place at the end of 2008.³²

Another trial for the Shi'a elite is in the offing: the upcoming general elections of 2010, which have already caused realignment in the Iraqi political leadership, especially among the Shi'a. The Shi'a coalition that Sistani had assiduously worked to establish before the December 2005 elections and which included all Shi'a groups--SCIRI, al-Da'wa party, and the Sadr movement--had fallen apart. The ongoing struggle for power between al-Da'wa and SCIRI (which in the meantime had changed its name into "Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq," ISCI) prompted them to part ways and to forge coalitions of their own. In the meantime the struggle for power between al-Da'wa and Sadr as well as between al-Da'wa and Shi'a tribal groupings is also continuing.³³ Whether such fissures in the Shi'a coalition that had brought them to power in 2005 endanger their supremacy in the government is too early to tell.

CONCLUSION

The abrupt upheaval in Iraq's leadership ranks is the greatest in its history as well as in the annals of the entire Middle East: from a single, all-powerful sovereign to a litany of rulers, leaders, and claimants to the throne; from the one and only Ba'th party to a vast array of parties, factions, and organizations; from a systemic and rigid ruling hierarchy to a large tapestry of powers, each pulling in its own direction; from an ideologically one-dimensional regime to a government attempting to uphold ideological pluralism; from a centralized government whose center of gravity was in Baghdad to a decentralized government emphasizing the power of the peripheries; and from a government entirely predicated on unbridled force to a government in which compromises and coalitions have become a fundamental component of its very existence. Nevertheless, it must be reiterated that, despite

the proliferation of factions in the Iraqi political game, a certain degree of historical continuity has been preserved, as power has remained in the hands of certain families, such as the Barzanis, Talabanis, and the families of Shi'a clerical leaders.

The Iraqi elections of January 2005 to the provisional national assembly and of December 2005 to the permanent one reflected the developments discussed in this article. In January, over 100 lists of new and old elites competed in the elections. Marginalized and formerly underground factions vaulted to the center of the political stage, while formerly omnipotent forces during the Ba'th era were mercilessly pushed to the fringes.

The lists that won the most votes in the January 2005 elections were coalitions composed along religious or ethnic lines: the Shi'a coalition garnered about half the votes, but less than a majority; and the Kurdish coalition attained about one-fourth of the ballots. The Sunnis hardly received any votes, as they did not form a coalition of their own and most of their people boycotted the elections. Similarly, the secular lists of the supra-sectarian alignments never managed to get off the ground.³⁴

Unlike in January, the Sunnis did participate in the elections in December 2005, but the overall picture did not change dramatically. Thus, the Shi'a Islamist lists won a plurality--41.2 percent of all votes--but not the two-thirds majority needed to form a government. The united Kurdish list took second place with 21.7 percent of the votes, and the leading Sunni Islamist list came in third with merely 15.1 percent of the votes. By contrast, only 8 percent went to the secular joint Shi'a-Sunni list led by Iyad Alawi. The rest were divided among nine smaller parties.³⁵ Theoretically speaking, this outcome should have facilitated the stabilization of the state and democratization of the system as it altered the anomaly of a minority ruling a majority. In practice, however, the old elites

alongside a host of newcomers to the opposition continue the war.

From the dawn of its existence, the Iraqi state's various regimes and leaders have endeavored to establish a stable polity that could boast of internal unity and a supra-sectarian allegiance with a measure of historical continuity. To date, all attempts have been utter failures. Consequently, the question that begs asking is whether the new elites will succeed where their predecessors have failed, or whether Iraq is a systemically flawed state that is liable to ensnare any new leadership that appears on the scene.

Alternatively, the events that we are witnessing today may very well be the opening shots in a struggle between two Islamic trends, Sunni and Shi'a; two national movements, Arab and Kurdish; and two states-in-progress, a Kurdish and a Shi'a-dominated one.

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NOTES

¹ Even Iraqis who opposed the regime thought this was a mistake. See, for example, Ghassan Atiyya, *al-Mada*, January 24, 2005.

² Amatzia Baram, "Neo-Tribalism in Iraq: Saddam Husayn's Tribal Policies 1991-1996," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (February 1997), pp. 1-31.

³ At a fairly early stage, the tribal leaders established a national umbrella organization called al-Rabita al-Wataniyya li-zu'ama wa-shuyukh al-Asha'ir al-Iraqiyya. Mas'ud Barazani, one of the leaders of the Kurdish factions, met with their representatives on the eve of the January 2005 elections in order to persuade them to help hold the elections on time. *Al-Ta'akhi*, January 12, 2005. Senior government members—such as the defense

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minister, Hazim al-Sha'lan—also cultivated ties with the tribal leaders before the January 2005 elections. *Al-Manara*, February 23–26, 2005.

⁴ While it is true that the presidency did not have any real authority in its new incarnation, the preference of Yawir over Pachachi constituted a telling indicator of the importance of tribalism. It is worth noting that the relations between the Sunni president and Allawi, the Shi'a prime minister, were acrimonious. Perhaps this animosity was the result of a struggle over authority or due to sectarian reasons. *Al-Ittihad*, February 23, 2005. Yawir, however, lost this post in April to the Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani.

⁵ *New York Times*, December 23, 2007.

⁶ *The Economist*, September 5, 2009.

⁷ In Iraq's Anbar province, the Awakening grapples with a new role. *Los Angeles Times*, May 4, 2009.

⁸ On the enigmatic Sistani, see Juan Cole, "The United States and Shi'ite Religious Factions in Post-Ba'thist Iraq," *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (Autumn 2003), pp. 543-66; Mehdi Khalaji, *The Last Marja: Sistani and the End of Traditional Religious Authority in Shiism* (Washington: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2006);

Rod Nordland and Babak Deganpisheh, "What Sistani Wants," *Newsweek*, February 14, 2005;

Ahmed al-Rahim, "The New Iraq: The Sistani Factor," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (July 2005), pp. 50-53; Babak Rahimi,

"Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani and the Democratization of Post-Saddam Iraq," *Middle East Review of International Affairs (MERIA) Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (December 2004), pp. 12-19, <http://www.gloria-center.org/meria/2004/12/rahimi.html>.

⁹ Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), p. 171.

¹⁰ In spite of this impressive beginning, however, these and other non-religious, liberal

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parties did not manage to carry weight in the elections to the permanent parliament in December 2005.

¹¹ Maysun al-Damluji, the deputy minister of culture, recounted the pressure that was exerted by women in *al-Nahda*, January 24, 2005.

¹² The allotment of such a large percentage of women enraged one journalist, who claimed that Iraqi women are not politically mature enough and that such a high proportion of women does not even exist in the United States or Britain. *Al-Ghadd*, January 9, 2005.

¹³ It should be noted that Sistani issued a fatwa encouraging women to go to the ballots even if their husbands were opposed to this. Nasr, *The Shia Revival*, p. 189.

¹⁴ For a detailed discussion, see Noga Efrati, "Negotiating Rights in Iraq: Women and the Personal Status Law," *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 59, No. 4, pp. 577-595; Judith Colp, "Women in the New Iraq", *Middle East Review of International Affairs (MERIA) Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (September 2008), <http://www.gloria-center.org/meria/2008/09/rubin.html>.

¹⁵ Majid Khadduri, *Independent Iraq* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 173-77.

¹⁶ A term used by the Kurdish leader, Jalal Talabani. *Al-Ittihad*, January 27, 2005.

¹⁷ The then provisional deputy prime minister, Barham Salih, claimed that a tight and "lethal" collaboration existed between "Saddam's people" and members of Mus'ab al-Zarqawi's World Jihad. *Al-Sabah*, January 18, 2005.

¹⁸ *The Economist*, June 10, 2006.

¹⁹ There were reports of a gang that kidnapped doctors and VIPs for ransom. On one occasion they demanded as much as \$100,000. *Al-Ahali*, November 3, 2004. In a book he wrote about Saddam, his physician explained that he left Iraq after the war because of the violence that was aimed at doctors and intellectuals. See Ala Bashir, *Kuntu Tabiban li Saddam* (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2005), p. 11.

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²⁰ Their leader being now Izzat Ibrahim al-Durri, the most prominent Ba`thi figure after Saddam in the defunct regime.

²¹ *Al-Hayat*, January 23, 2005.

²² One of the demands made by the Islamist groups as a condition for their participation in the elections was the establishment of a designated date for the withdrawal of the Americans from Iraq. Their request was rebuffed. *Al-Ahali*, December 29, 2004.

²³ *Al-Nahda*, February 5, 2005.

²⁴ *Al-Ittihad*, January 27, 2005.

²⁵ For an inside account see his son's book, Mas'ud al-Barazani, *Al-Barazani wal-Haraka al-Taharruriyya al-Kurdiyya* (Irbil: 2002), Vol. 3.

²⁶ Jonathan C. Randal, *After Such Knowledge, What Forgiveness?* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1999), pp. 190-91.

²⁷ Mas'ud made Neshirvan, Idris' son, his right-hand man by appointing him in 1999 at age of 33 to the post of prime minister of Kurdistan-the Barzani faction.

²⁸ *Al-Ittihad*. January 27, 2005.

²⁹ *The Economist*, February 5, 2005. *Al-Zaman*, March 3, 2005. The Chalabi camp's primary accusations against Allawi were that he had returned Ba`th members to government posts and that his administration was corrupt. *Al-Ahali*, February 23, 2005. Chalabi headed a committee charged with purging the Ba`th even before Allawi became prime minister and promised to restore the committee after the elections. *Al-Ahali*, February 23, 2005.

³⁰ Baqir and Sadiq al-Sadr are cousins. Although Baqir did not officially attain the position of the highest religious authority such as Sadiq, his religious and intellectual influence spanned the entire Shi'a world. There were of course other Ayatollas but they were of a lesser stature.

³¹ According to one source, Sistani did not request an Iraqi identification card until 2005. Al-Jazeera cable television, March 14, 2005.

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³² In the final analysis, the elections took place in late January 2009.

³³ *New York Times Magazine*, August 3, 2008.

³⁴ The united Shi'a list, al-Itilaf al-Iraqi al-Muwahhad, won 140 seats; the Kurdish coalition, al-Tahaluf al-Kurdistani, 75 seats; the Iraqi list, al-Qa'ima al-Iraqiyya, led by the outgoing prime minister, Iyad Allawi, took 40 seats; al-Iraqiyyun, under the leadership of Ghazi al-Yawir, the outgoing Sunni president, won five seats; Sadr's supporters (though he himself did not participate), al-Kawadir wal-Nukhab al-Wataniyya, three seats; the communist list, Ittihad al-Sha'b, took two seats; and the rest of the tiny lists took between one and two seats at most. *Tariq al-Sha'b*, February 20, 2005. Consequently, out of the multitude of lists, only 12 managed to enter parliament.

³⁵ *The Economist*. January 28, 2006.