The Call to a Free, Glorious Iraq: Iraqi Shia Political Theology, 1958-1979

by
Mohamed Amer Shaker

A PROJECT

submitted to

Oregon State University

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in partial fulfillment of
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degree of

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(Honors Scholar)

Presented May 20, 2015
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Abstract approved:

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Jonathan Katz

This paper is an analysis of the political theology articulated by Shia clerics and the political parties they were affiliated with between 1958-1979 with specific attention paid to Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir Al-Sadr and the Islamic Da'wa Party. It begins by tracing the development of Shia clerical political activism under the Kingdom of Iraq and proceeds with an analysis of the rhetoric of the political parties that were developed under the Republic. In their formulations of their political theology, Shia clerics debated and negotiated with other contemporary social movements, wrestling with ideas such as pan-Arabism, ecumenism and social justice. I thus argue that in developing their political theology, Shia clerics borrowed consciously from their ideological surroundings to create a theological base for their political program that could resolve the contradictions of those other political movements.

Key Words: Iraq, Political Theology, Islamic Studies, Muhammad Baqir Al-Sadr

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I understand that my project will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University, University Honors College. My signature below authorizes release of my project to any reader upon request.

Mohamed Amer Shaker, Author

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Introduction

The arrest of Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr in April 1980 was nothing new, either to the cleric or the masses of people who followed his directives.[1] To them, it represented yet another injustice inflicted upon them by the Baath regime of Iraq, whose latest commander, the now-infamous Saddam Hussein, had inaugurated a new wave of terror against the Shias of Baghdad and southern Iraq, especially those who were engaged in 'subversive' activities. Writing from his cell in Baghdad, however, Ayatollah al-Sadr urged his followers to abandon the strong sectarian rhetoric of the new regime and to unite with one another against it:

> Oh my dear people, I turn to you all, Sunnites and Shi'ites, Arabs and Kurds, in this crucial moment of crisis and jihad … since the crisis is that of the whole Iraqi people, the brave response and struggle must also become the reality of the whole Iraqi people. Thus I am with you, my Sunni brother and son, just as much as I am with you, my Shi'i brother and son…
>
> Oh my sons and brothers, the sons of Mosul and Basra, the sons of Baghdad, Karbala and Najaf… [unite in order to] build a free, glorious Iraq… where citizens of all nationalities and schools of thought would feel that they are brothers and would all contribute to the leadership of their country.[2]

In short form, then, Ayatollah al-Sadr's final missive to the Iraqi people (not merely the Shias who pledged *taqlid* to him, of course, but *all* Iraqi people) encapsulates many of the issues and tensions that Iraqis, and for the purposes of this investigation, specifically Iraqi Shias, were struggling with. By initiating his letter with a call for religious unity about Sunnis and Shias, Ayatollah al-Sadr, like others before him, grappled with the issue of the strong sectarian divide

[1] Ayatollah al-Sadr was a leading cleric in the Da'wa Party who rose to prominence during the 1950's. For a longer profile of him, see Joyce Wiley, *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 76-77 and for a full explanation of his work, see his seminal text *Falsafatuna*, first published in 1959.

[2] Amatzia Baram, "The Radical Shi'ite Opposition Movements in Iraq," in *Religious Radicalism and Politics in the Middle East*, ed. Emmanuel Sivan and Menachem Friedman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 108-109.

already present in Iraq that had only intensified under the particular formation of sectarianism that the Saddam Hussein regime had ushered in, in which power was derived not merely from the party but from his tribal origins in Tikrit, his Sunni sect and his power base in the Iraqi military.[3] The question of how to circumvent and, indeed, transcend the problem of religious differences and sectarian divide was one that Ayatollah al-Sadr would deal with for the greater part of his political and religious career, providing various answers along the way.

Furthermore, the call to both Arabs and Kurds reveals a further tension present here: in calling to the Kurds, as well as to the Arabs, Ayatollah al-Sadr not only repudiated the current sectarian rhetoric, he also went against generations of pan-Arab thought and practice, in which the unity of the Arab nation was threatened by the existence of the non-Arabized Kurdish people (among the many other ethnoreligious minorities of Iraq). In doing so, Ayatollah al-Sadr here reveals that Iraqis, and Iraqi Shias in particular, had come to view with suspicion, disdain and ultimately disfavor the rhetoric of pan-Arabism that was approaching its wane in much of the Arab world by the 1970s. Specifically to the Shias of Iraq, pan-Arabism had never served as a rallying cry for them. Ayatollah al-Sadr's rejection of that rhetoric in his call to the Kurdish people is emblematic of the broader trends taking place in Iraq with respect to the rhetoric of pan-Arabism, espoused in general by Arab leaders and in particular by the Saddam Hussein regime, which sought to capitalize on the rhetoric of pan-Arabism in the aftermath of Egypt's dismissal as the potential leader of the Arab nation.[4]

In his prison missive, Ayatollah al-Sadr continues to mention the need to build a "free, glorious Iraq" that would be constructed by the "whole Iraqi people." Here he contends with two

[3] Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002), 206.
[4] Baram, "The Radical Shi'ite Opposition Movements in Iraq," 97.

separate issues in one: firstly, he challenges and dismisses the transnational and anti-state rhetoric of pan-Islamism, which, though having been on the wane for quite some time by the latter half of the twentieth century, would see a resurgence in and after this time period. In focusing his efforts on the nation and its people rather than on the whole of the *ummah*, Ayatollah al-Sadr in fact goes against the mainstream of (pan-)Islamist thought in suggesting that there need be no necessary imperative to dissolve the nation, the state or its political boundaries in the pursuit of an Islamic society.[5] Moreover, he deliberately displaces the fanciful rhetoric of pan-Islamism, which tended to reference the far-flung regions of the *ummah* and would cite places as disparate as Istanbul, Jakarta, Karachi and Cairo. Rather, Ayatollah al-Sadr enshrines the great natural gas and oil cities of Iraq (Mosul and Basra) and places them alongside the cities of greatest secular historical and religious significance (Baghdad, Karbala and Najaf). In doing so, Ayatollah al-Sadr uplifts the nation even more, displacing the rhetoric of pan-Islamism with a markedly nationalist one. Furthermore, he consciously positioned the Iraqi nation and state as the target of political action. Rather than focusing on its deconstruction or on a separate entity, Ayatollah al-Sadr, like many other Islamists of his time, focused on the nation-state paradigm as the target of his political activity. Though the means that he went about it doing so were peculiar for Shia movements at the time, he nonetheless placed the nation-state as the central locus of targeted political movement, resolving the essential transnational question that has come to dominate studies of Shia political Islam.[6]

[5] Baram, "The Radical Shi'ite Opposition Movements in Iraq," 99-102.
[6] Talib Aziz, "The Political Theory of Muhammad Baqir Sadr," in *Ayatollahs, Sufis and Ideologues: State, Religion and Social Movements in Iraq*, ed. Faleh Abdul-Jabbar (London: Saqi Books, 2002), 231.

Finally, Ayatollah al-Sadr's letter contains a clear directive to his people to create a new nation built on egalitarianism. Here, Ayatollah al-Sadr struggles to resolve the tension between reform (working with the structures provided to affect change 'within the system') and revolution (deconstructing the system entirely and creating a new one with new institutions). It is clear that a whole new society will have to be built, one no longer based on such superfluous and dangerous labels as sect or race yet Ayatollah al-Sadr takes pains in this letter to continue to support the essential construct of the nation-state. More importantly, however, is the idea that an egalitarian Iraq is around the corner if Iraqis rise up and take the opportunity that they have been given at this moment. Ayatollah al-Sadr's letter is thus not merely an analysis of contemporary Iraq, nor is it simply a diagnosis of what must be done; rather, it is a direct call to action to the Iraqi people to take up the reins and continue the work that has already been started to create a new Iraq, one that is within grasp at this moment. The idea that they are within a moment of "crisis and jihad" further emphasizes this; not only are they at a critical juncture in time, they are also locked in a period of continuous struggle and one that must be resolved by continuous action. As is typical of his style throughout his years of writing, preaching and movement-building, Ayatollah al-Sadr leaves somewhat ambiguous and (even more so) contradictory, the question of whether there will be revolution or reform. Nonetheless it is clear that there is a call for action to affect change at this historic juncture immediately.

This letter is thus of incredible importance for the study of modern Iraq, particularly a study such as this, which concentrates on the political theology of Iraqi Shias between 1958 and 1980- that is, after the July 14 Revolution and into the early years of the Saddam Hussein era of modern Iraq. Iraqi Shias had, over the course of the twentieth century, proved themselves capable of interjecting themselves into a variety of movements from the Marxist uprising in 1958

to the burgeoning Islamist movement that was taking hold in the shrine cities of southern Iraq.[7] In their political action, revolutionary in many senses as it was a break from the normal quietist streak that had been characteristic of Iraqi Shia clergy well into the early twentieth century, they entered into a world that was already bursting with many new ideas that were in constant movement and circulation.[8] The case of Ayatollah al-Sadr then is but a microcosm and one that this paper will use consciously; the focus on Ayatollah al-Sadr and his Al-Da'wa Al-Islamiyyah Party (referred to throughout as the Da'wa Party) is not to say that they were at the forefront of Iraqi Shia political activity (though they were certainly part of the vanguard). Rather, they are emblematic of the many debates and the constant negotiations and renegotiations of meaning and political circumstance that Iraqi Shias were constantly undertaking throughout their political activity during this time period.

The time period chosen is important for a variety of reasons; firstly, the transition out of early Republican Iraq and into the post-1958 era is a major one for reasons that will be discussed in detail later in the paper. Put simply, however, the transition opened the door for organized Iraqi Shia political action to take place in the manner that it did. This political action, having been let in, then proliferated throughout the roughly two decades covered in this investigation. I necessarily end with the Saddam Hussein regime, however, because the character of political revolt and political action more broadly underwent necessary mutations, owing to the repressive nature of Saddam Hussein's administration of Iraq, as well as the new sectarian configuration that his regime produced to govern nation through.[9] Iraqi Shia political action, then, did not just

[7] Hanna Batatu, "Iraq's Shi'a, their Political Role and the Processes of their Integration into Society," in *The Islamic Impulse,* ed. Barbara Stowasser (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 208-212.
[8] Tripp, *A History of Iraq,* 144.
[9] Tripp, *A History of Iraq,* 208-215.

go ‘underground’ but rather took on guerilla characteristics and concerned itself with how to openly confront the Iraqi state through violent overthrow rather than the channels that will discussed later in this paper.[10] This is not to say that the earlier movements that will be discussed do not ever ask the question of violence or ponder its necessity, nor do I suggest that they were not covert (as they most certainly were throughout most of the 1960s and 1970s). Rather, they did not see their covert guerilla actions as being the central ethos by which Iraq could be changed to produce the Islamic society that they desired.[11] As I will demonstrate, though the eventual overthrow of the central administration was, of course, desirable, mass uprising of the kind Ayatollah al-Sadr and his contemporaries envisioned was not the violent confrontation of, for example, the 1991 Iraqi Intifada in southern Iraq and Kurdistan.

Furthermore, the time period chosen necessarily predates the 1979 Islamic/Iranian Revolution led by Ayatollah Khomeini and his contemporaries that overthrew the government of the Shah and established the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI). Due to its emphasis on the transnational exportation of Islamic revolution (a key borrowing by Khomeini from Marxist thought), many Shia movements, including Hezbollah and the Houthis of Yemen, came under the financial influence and ideological directive of Tehran.[12] The IRI thus, for obvious political reasons as well as for its wealth of information for the scholarly study of political Islam, has

[10] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 259-267, Amatzia Baram, “Two Roads to Revolutionary Shi’ite Fundamentalism in Iraq,” in *Accounting for Fundamentalism: The Dynamic Character of Movements,* ed. Martin E. Marty and Scott R. Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 547-555.
[11] Baram, “Two Roads to Revolutionary Shi’ite Fundamentalism in Iraq,” 538-541, Abdul-Halim Al-Ruhaimi, “The Da’wa Islamic Party: Origins, Actors and Ideology” in *Ayatollahs, Sufis and Ideologues: State, Religion and Social Movements in Iraq,* ed. Faleh Abdul-Jabbar (London: Saqi Books, 2002), 154-155.
[12] Hamid Dabashi, *Shiism: A Religion of Protest* (USA: First Harvard University Press, 2012), 1-27.

come to dominate the field of Shia political Islam entirely.[13] This investigation thus cultivates an analysis that seeks to displace the centrality of the IRI and its transnational program from the study of Shia political Islam. By moving a full two decades prior to the Islamic Revolution, and several years before Ayatollah Khomeini begins his revolutionary activities that would prompt his deportation and years in exile, I contend that Iraq offers a different model of Shia political Islam that disrupts the Iranian model. Here, many of the same concerns that were brought up by Ayatollah al-Sadr are relevant: the Iraqi movement was national, rather than transnational (although it remained open to the possibility of transnational connections); it was focused on reforming the nation-state rather than replacing its structures entirely; it enshrined the secular and religious heritages of Iraq rather than de-secularizing the nation entirely and, most importantly, Iraqi cleric-activists grappled with questions of leadership and the clergy years before Ayatollah Khomeini's theory of the Stewardship of the Jurisprudents (Wilayat Al-Faqih) would be consolidated and put into action.[14] This is not to say that the Iranian model will (ever) become obsolete. However, it must necessarily be disrupted by the study of Iraq, as well as other models in Lebanon, Yemen and Bahrain, for example, in order to prevent it from holding an unwieldy amount of influence over the study entirely. That is, following the Iranian model without the qualification of the Iraqi model, for instance, leads scholars to assume an essentially transnational character to Shia political Islam, which the Iraqi model simply does not bear out. This paper thus contends that the rigorous incorporation of Iraq into the study of Shia political Islam is necessary for the study to be true to the variety of ideologies and movements espoused by Shias in their quests to build Islamic societies.

[13] Dabashi, *Shiism*, 1-27.
[14] Aziz, "The Political Theory of Muhammad Baqir Sadr," 237-240.

The main contention of this paper, then, is not to offer a cohesive discussion of all the tenets of what I am terming 'Iraqi Shia political theology' from 1958 to 1979; such a study has already been attempted and executed well and I do not presume in this space of this investigation to make such a scholarly intervention.[15] I do argue, however, for several components that are necessary to understanding the political theology of Iraqi Shias during this time period and intentionally use the case studies of Ayatollah al-Sadr and the Da'wa Party to illustrate those components. Firstly, though I maintain that there was much that was innovative and even revolutionary about the character of Iraqi Shia political action and theology generally, I argue that they borrowed from an already existing vocabulary and set of debates that were in circulation throughout the Arab-Islamic world. In particular, as has been mentioned, Iraqi Shias found themselves at a historical moment: pan-Arabism was a mainstay in the Arab world, forming a cornerstone of many leaders' platforms and political programs (in fact, the United Arab Republic, brief as it was, was created during this time); Arab socialism was on the rise, not only in Iraq but in Syria, Egypt and Palestine; pan-Islamism, though diminished from its robust form in the late nineteenth century, would see its second articulation during this period and political Islam would be on the rise during the latter half of the time period covered owing to the dramatic failure of secular nationalism in resolving national questions but also that of Zionism.[16] Iraqi Shias were thus not apart from these movements and these debates. Rather, they were intrinsic to them, formed parts of them and borrowed from their vocabulary and their actions constantly in creating a political theology for themselves.

[15] See Wiley, *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as* for a complete analysis.
[16] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 164-175.

Second, I maintain the use of the term 'political theology.' I assert that in an era wherein sectarian conflict is being de-'religionized' and sectarian actors seen as inherently self-serving or clannish that Iraqi Shias were consciously developing a religiously-grounded ideology and political program that could serve their needs and that was based in theology.[17] Led as it was by the clerical establishment of the shrine cities (Karbala and Najaf), it can be surmised that there would have been no way for the movement to lack an inherently religious core. To assert that there was a theological basis to Iraqi Shia political action, however, is not merely to say that their actions were grounded in a religious worldview; rather, that worldview, produced by the political theology of the clerics, drove action and directed it towards creating the world that Iraqi Shias wanted to build, based off of the political theology that was at the core of their program. I do not mean to say that the clerics were the only ones in charge of Iraq Shia political movement at this time- the historical record does not bear that out, as lay Iraqis, particularly those concentrated in urban Baghdad, continued to be engaged in socialist, pan-Arab or other social movements.[18] However, I do contend that there was an inherent theology that produced the particular kinds of action and programs that I discuss in this paper and to dismiss the religious base is to do away with the reality of how these actors saw their political movement.

Finally, I argue that the articulation of a political theology- and here the case of Ayatollah al-Sadr is most instructive- by Iraqi Shias was done to resolve the contradictions and the tensions that lay at the heart of many of the other ideologies that they found themselves immersed in. That is, Iraqi Shias were conscious, for example, of their isolation from the broader currents of pan-

[17] Chibli Mallat, "Iraq," in *The Politics of Islamic Revivalism: Diversity and Unity,* ed. Shireen T. Hunter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 75-77.
[18] Hanna Batatu, "Iraq's Underground Shi'a Movements: Characteristics, Causes and Prospects," *The Middle East Journal* 35 (1981): 581-584, Wiley, *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as,* 85-97.

Arabism and pan-Islamism that focused on Sunni Arabs to their exclusion; on the flipside, they could not in many cases wholeheartedly identify themselves with the atheistic and overly materialist nature of Arab socialism or the transnational character that lay at the heart of many pan-Islamisms.[19] In creating their own political theology, then, Iraqi Shias attempted to grapple with and resolve the contradictions that they were confronted with when they entered the marketplace of these ideologies and movements. In doing so, they borrowed from Marxist rhetoric when necessary and from political Islam when beneficial and so on. Their ideology had its own internal contradictions, yes, but for the most part, it was directed to resolve the issues of the other ones that were in circulation at the time. I theorize at this point that they could resolve the contradictions that they found in those movements only because Iraqi Shia political theology was being articulated at a later time than the other movements mentioned. Though I maintain that it predates by years, if not decades, the form that came to prominence in Iran, Iraqi Shias only mobilized in a sustained form in the 1930s and the first flowering of this mobilization (and perhaps its transition into a constant *organization*) was in the late 1950s and early 1960s, where this investigation begins.

Iraqi Shias were thus engaged in a process of defining what the problems of the current administrations were (as there were multiple during this time), what actions they could undertake to solve those problems and what the end result would be. In doing so, Iraqi Shias entered themselves into the broader Arab-Islamic world of social movements. Though they maintained a strongly theological core to their political action, they would be confronted by the many problems of the twentieth century world and in their articulations of that political theology, they met that task eagerly and face on. Though their many ideas were not allowed to come to fruition-

[19] Baram, "The Radical Shi'ite Opposition Movements in Iraq," 99-101.

this paper after all begins with essentially the last will and testament of Ayatollah al-Sadr- their words and actions helped define the contours of much of Iraqi politics and religion to this day.

The Question of Iraq

The Problem of Iraq

To begin, there are a number of issues embedded in the study of modern Iraq that confound historians and other scholars. Like all other countries in the modern Middle East, Iraq underwent a number of schizophrenic regime changes across the twentieth century, moving from an artificial, foreign-imposed quasi-theocratic monarchy to a secular, constitutional monarchy, undergoing a brief period of chaos in the WWII era following a coup d'état by a pro-German Prime Minister, emblematic of the opposing tensions within Iraqi politics as to whether to side with the Allies, who were their former colonial masters, or the Axis powers. On July 14th, 1958, the Kingdom was overthrown and the majority of the living members of the royal family murdered in a bloodbath.[20] The generals who took over Iraq did so under the guise of Arab socialism and pan-Arabism in a Nasserite fashion and they governed the country for ten years before it gave way to another coup d'état led by the Baath party in 1968. The first Baath era is marked by Ahmed Hassan Al-Bakr's premiership, which last until 1979, when Saddam Hussein formally took control of the nation, though he had been heavily involved in the Baath Party and in Iraqi politics since the early 1970s.[21]

With this basic, bare bones understanding of postcolonial Iraqi history, it is immediately clear why such an investigation as the one I will be undertaking is quite difficult. For one, Iraq was clearly undergoing numerous spasms in trying to work out its identity- in a matter of thirty years, it had gone from embracing the conservative, monarchical style of Jordan and Saudi

[20] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 144-156.
[21] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 186-214.

Arabia to the Arab socialist, militarist ethos of Egypt to the single-party sectarian politics of Syria.[22] There are thus numerous considerations to take into account here.

This investigation is built on the assertion that a Shia identity is of primary importance to understanding Iraqi history, politics and religious and civic life during the Republican era (1958 onwards). An opposing view would say that this is tantamount to a complete revision of Iraqi history; in fact, most of the Shias of southern Iraq were of very recent origin, having been converted in the nineteenth century in large groups according to tribal affiliations.[23] The only places where a Shia identity in Iraq can be said to be *historical* then would be the two shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala as well as Baghdad and perhaps Samarra.[24] Granted, none of these cities are insignificant; in fact, other than Basra, Najaf and Karbala were two primary centers of commerce and capital in southern Iraq, owing to the massive transfers of donations for the upkeep of the shrines that came primarily from Iranian and Indian Shia patrons.[25] However, the point still stands: a Shia identity for most Iraqi Shias can easily be explained away as part of their broader tribal identity, especially in southern Iraq where conversions occurred along lines of tribe and where tribal divisions are still quite salient. However, I uphold Yitzhak Nakash's thesis in explaining the continued salience of a Shia identity for most Iraqi Shias, even despite their recent tribal origin that would have mediated it.[26] In the transition to a postcolonial order, and in the face of the rapid industrialization and economic growth that accompanied the early Republican years, Iraqi Shias clung to their Shia identity as a marker of their identity in the midst

[22] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 143-150.
[23] Yitzhak Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 25-43.
[24] Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, 14-18.
[25] Jua Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shi'ite Islam* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 78-99.
[26] Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq,* 43-47.

of all these changes. Furthermore, their self-identification as Shias mattered little within the sectarian configurations of Iraq wherein they would always be Shia despite their explicit attachment, or lack thereof, to that identity. Since the times of the Ottomans, the Shias of southern Iraq were understood to be outsiders and faced the persecution of the Ottomans and their attempts at homogenizing the empire and were thus perceived as Shia in any case.[27] This legacy was handed down to the Kingdom of Iraq and Shias protested cohesively as a single unit bearing a single identity against what they saw to be an illegitimate power.[28] Thus despite their tribal origins, and the fact that most conversions took place in quite recent times historically speaking, the Shia identity of most Iraqi Shias was prominent enough and was certainly a means around which Iraqi Shias could organize. In any case, in a city such as Baghdad, where living arrangements are the geographical, material manifestation of sectarian configurations, a Shia identity, like a Sunni or Turkmen or Kurdish identity, would always be significant.

A second key feature of this investigation that bears consideration and qualification is the fact that it places a lot of attention and importance on the actions of the Iraqi Shia clergy. As many scholars have noted, unlike the robust activist stance of the Iranian clergy, Iraqi clerics tended to, until the mid-twentieth century, be of a more quietist bent, focusing more on the institutions of civil law and order as opposed to taking on a public role in the affairs of the state.[29] This can be seen even into the early twentieth century, when outside of periods of mass revolts by all members of the nation, Iraqi clerics were noticeably quiet, particularly in comparison with their Iranian colleagues, who used the shrine cities of southern Iraq as a way to

[27] Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War,* 16-30.
[28] Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq,* 66-70.
[29] Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq,* 75-88.

encourage and proselytize revolt among the Iranian people whilst in exile.[30] Though the explanation for this is outside of the temporal bounds of this paper, it is worth noting at this point: Juan Cole takes up the task quite well in explaining that, unlike in Safavid Iran where the clerics had enjoyed the patronage of the central state establishment as well as many private donors, Iraqi clerics under the Ottomans relied exclusively on the donations of foreign patrons until the mass conversions of the tribes in the nineteenth century. There were thus no funds for which to create a clerical establishment until well into the twentieth century.[31] Furthermore, Cole explains that the Akhbari-Usuli split took place relatively late in Iraqi history as opposed to Iranian. The split concerns the role of the Marja', or the referent, and his use of reason to create *Sharia*. Though the Usuli branch won out and managed to push the Akhbari clergy away (mostly to Basra and Kuwait), the fact that such a schism took place so late in Iraqi history meant that the clergy did not have a sense of itself as a cohesive unit in the nineteenth century but rather conceived of itself as factions.[32] I advance Cole's explanations here and state that the victory of the Usuli branch is critical. That branch, concerned as it is with the use of *ijtihad* among the Marja to create *Sharia* and provide references for Shias, was critical; its victory meant that a solid and singular clergy could be founded as it was now have a directed purpose.[33] The late timing of the split, especially considering the sway that Akhbari clerics had had in the shrine cities beforehand, was key in stagnating the class consciousness of the clerics and the triumph of the Usuli branch, then, catalyzed that process.

[30] Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War,* 58-60.
[31] Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War,* 78-85.
[32] Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War,* 70-77.
[33] Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War,* 60.

I thus assert that by the time the mid-twentieth century came around, and even slightly before that, the Iraqi Shia clerics, based in the two shrine cities, had come to have both a sense of themselves as a singular, cohesive unit that was influential in the class and sectarian formations of modern Iraq and came to have and understand themselves as having a large amount of sway over the Iraqi people. This is clear when looking at many of the key debates that the Marja' were having. Ayatollah al-Sadr is emblematic of this: he pondered questions of secular versus religious rule, what the role of the Marja' would be within a potentially secular state, how the *Sharia* created by the Marja' could be used to supplement secular law and how the Marja' could function as stewards in a sense in the absence of the Mahdi, the awaited savior of Shia Islam and the sole viceregent of God left on earth with any true divine authority.[34] Many other clerics debated these issues with Ayatollah al-Sadr and their back and forth and negotiations will be discussed at length later. What is important, however, is that they were even having these debates in the mid-twentieth century, debates that would have inconceivable in the nineteenth century, when the power of the Marja' barely extended outside of the shrine cities and was always met with the brunt of Ottoman central power and the ethno-secular authority of the local tribal leaders. These debates, then, are not merely symbolic of broader issues in modern Iraq, they are the proof that the clergy came to understand itself as a class of people with power who could take on a leading role. It is thus not too much of a leap to assert that they had an important role in mid-century Iraq and more than justifies their inclusion in this paper from a historical perspective.

[34] Dabashi, *Shiism,* 103-110.

Background

Though a brief sketch of postcolonial Iraqi history has already been provided, it is worth going through the history of Iraq in greater detail to better set the stage for the entry of the Shia clerics and their articulations of political theology in the mid-twentieth century at this point. The modern Republic of Iraq, being territorially the same since the state's inception in 1920, was created to be a British Mandate out of World War I from the Ottoman vilayets of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul and would be a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-sect state of the kind that was typical for many postcolonial nations the world over.[35] Though the concept of Iraq as a region was not manufactured by the British, it is not a stretch to state that the modern contours of Iraq were given to it because of its colonial legacy. Following the Great Arab Revolt that took place during the First World War, and to address the petitions of Arab nationalist leader Sharif Hussein and his two sons, Abdullah and Faisal, the sons were made kings of Jordan and Syria respectively as a way of both coopting revolt and providing some sense of heritage and legitimacy to the otherwise artificial postcolonial states. Following a revolt in Syria against King Faisal, and his deposition by the French, he transferred to Iraq, which then nominally became a Kingdom in 1920 and would remain so for the next nearly three decades.[36]

Like their Syrian counterparts, however, the Iraqis were not inclined to immediately accept their new overlord with open arms. From the time the mandate was announced until several months after King Faisal was made ruler of Iraq, Iraqis rose in what is known as the 1920 Revolt. This revolt is quite instructive in the way that it helps scholars understand the position of the clergy with respect to all other sectors of Iraqi society but also, on a more general note, the

[35] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 31-35.
[36] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 31-39.

state of revolt in Iraqi society. For this revolt, unlike the ones in 1935 to 1936, was not aimed at trying to enter the establishment or negotiate with the colonial power or state authority; rather, the 1920 revolt made the colonial imposition of a mandate on the Iraqi people and nation its target.[37] Bringing in a foreign king added insult to injury, particularly to Iraqi Shias, who saw themselves as becoming doubly marginalized as a minoritized majority that would be governed by a Sunni king.[38] Furthermore, the equated the imposition of a foreign Sunni ruler to historic times for it was foreign Sunnis, from the time of the Umayyads well until the Ottomans were finally removed, that governed Iraq's Shias.[39] A persistent theme of the denial of self-determination was felt and the British Mandate and Faisal's kingship were seen as the latest manifestation of a non-Iraqi, non-Shia authority over Iraqi Shias. Particularly within the contours of the new Iraqi state, Iraqi Shias saw themselves, rightly, as a demographic majority that thus had some claim to be the rulers of the new nation.[40] The 1920 Revolt is thus fascinating in the way that it reveals a number of the anxieties of Iraqi Shias: that they would be governed by yet another foreign Sunni ruler, that this ruler were persist in the persecution that they had for so long undergone, that they would not be able to meaningfully govern themselves and that this ruler, and the colonial superstructure of which he was a part, was simply unjust and illegitimate and needed to be removed.

For the first time in Iraqi history, then, the clerics entered the political scene. Like other Iraqis, they were enraged about the imposition of yet another foreign, colonial power on Iraq and this one would not even be Muslim (though it would operate through a Muslim proxy). The

[37] Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq,* 66-73.
[38] Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War,* 173-188.
[39] Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq,* 63.
[40] Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq,* 61-66.

British were gearing up to implement a number of other changes that would disrupt the shrine cities in particular. These included new regulations that would impede the already stagnating flow of patronage that came in from British India and Iran threatened the clergy in particular (here again, the clergy as a class not as individuals were seen to be under threat) and the raising of a new tax on burial services in the shrine cities to allow the colonial administration to profit from pilgrimages.[41] Ayatollah al-Shirazi immediately issued a fatwa about this, stating that under no terms was anyone to pay such taxes or deal in any way with the new British authorities.[42] When elections were held, Ayatollah Mahdi al-Khalissi, along with al-Shirazi, issued a fatwa ordering Iraqis- not simply Shias but Sunnis, Christians, Jews, etc. - not to participate in these colonial elections, which ended in a wild success for the Ayatollahs and a disastrous failure for the Faisal government that found itself unable to form a legislature and secular government alongside the new king.[43] Infuriated with what had so far been peaceful but firm revolt that demanded the immediate self-determination of the Iraqi people (though curiously accepting the mandate borders), the British attacked and violently suppressed the revolt, along with the concomitant Kurdish revolt in the north that had gone so far as to set up a rebel kingdom in Suleimaniyah. The role of the tribes in this revolt should not be understated; though a good chunk of the revolt occurred in and around the major cities of Baghdad, Mosul and Basra as they were former colonial centers under Ottoman rule, tribal leaders attempted to negotiate for greater

[41] Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq,* 197-203.
[42] Ayatollah al-Shirazi was a prominent cleric from an Iranian family based in Najaf who, like al-Sadr, spoke out frequently against the Baath regime, culmintating in his execution in May 1980, shortly after al-Sadr. A full profile can be found in Wiley, *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as*, 78. Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq,* 70.
[43] Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq,* 70-73.

autonomy within the new state and led the resistance movement once violence became the modus operandi of the British.[44]

Though the revolt was ultimately unsuccessful in achieving its aims of removing the colonial power (though the British did withdraw later) and their figurehead on the throne (who remained and whose family would continue to be a proxy power for the British through the Second World War), the 1920 Revolt is memorialized by Iraqi civil society as a catalyzing moment of Iraqi nationalism, though scholars have called into question whether it was truly as all-embracing and anti-sectarian as many would like to believe. It is remembered as a moment wherein Iraqis- though the Kurds are mysteriously absent- were able to put aside differences of sect, class and faith and unite against a foreign aggressor for the common good of the nation. Though this unity was not to last, the fact that the revolt is remembered in such a way is telling about modern anxieties as to the state of Iraq today. Three themes emerge out of this revolt: the first, that revolt in Iraq is necessarily a communal and a national affair, one in which all sectors of society come together and participate in from urban councilmen to tribal sheikhs to senior clerics.[45] In this way, whatever scholars' other problems with identifying the 1920 Revolt as an important moment in Iraqi nationalism, the 1920 Revolt can be clearly seen as a broad-based movement. Second, the 1920 Revolt was just that- it did not suggest reform, it in fact prohibited working through the system to effect change. The 1920 Revolt thus instilled the first seeds of a revolutionary ethos into Iraqi history political action. Finally, the 1920 Revolt revealed for the first time the idea that the clerics could affect revolutionary change not just among the Shias who did *taqlid* to them but across society. The later pretensions of Iraqi Shia clerics in their

[44] Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq,* 75-88.
[45] Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq,* 70-73.

articulations of their political theology to a kind of ecumenism under the supervision of the clerics has clear roots in this time and age.

The 1935-1936 Revolts are revealing in a different sense. With the backdrop of the Simele Massacre which targeted Assyrian Christians and with the parallel revolts in Kurdistan among Kurds and Yazidis, the 1935 Shia Revolts can be seen as part of broad-based dissatisfaction with the contemporary administration of Iraq, which was at this time a constitutional monarchy. Like the earlier revolt, the 1935 Revolt was led in part by the Shia clerics; Ayatollah Kashif Al-Ghita, for instance, helped draft a 'People's Charter' which was sent to the office of the Prime Minister and lay before him a list of grievances of the Iraqi Shias.[46] Curiously, unlike the 1920 Revolt, in this case the Iraqi Shias accepted the nation-state of Iraq, as well as the government of the king and his Prime Minister, and gave them a list of things they needed. The state was thus the target of their complaints but the agent of their reform- it was to the state that they petitioned in hopes that the state would deliver, unlike in 1920, when a revolutionary ethos disavowed the state and the monarchy behind it in favor of the people, led by the various factions, controlling it.

The sectarian nature of this revolt is very telling of broader currents that were running through Iraqi history at this time. Though, of course, the Shias of (what became) Iraq had been persecuted under the Ottoman administration and denied leadership, it was within the parameters of the nation-state of the Kingdom of Iraq in which the Shias most forcefully asserted their desire to enter the establishment. The People's Charter contained, among other things, the grievance that Shias were left out of positions within the Iraqi administration, that they lacked control of

[46] Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq,* 66-73.

their local education system, that there were not any avenues for advancement within the establishment offered to them and that they simply could not make a living in many cases.[47] Among the clerics, a key issue that Iraq was dealing with at this time was the rampant Sunnization of the administration and the concomitant secularization of the state. That is, though the state continued to be controlled more and more by Iraqi Sunnis, it moved in a secular direction and would, for instance, not patronize the religious schools of southern Iraq or take control at all for religious education in the new state.

This period also saw the beginning of rural-to-urban migration among the tribal Shias of the south; though Shias had always constituted a large population in cities like Baghdad and Basra, the shifts of the global economy and the Iraqi state propelled many Shias to leave their villages and take up residence especially in Baghdad, where the geographic framework of sectarian was once again reconfigured with the rise of whole new Shia neighborhoods of recent tribal emigrants.[48] Unlike the 1920 Revolt, then, this was not seen to be a revolt of the whole of the Iraqi people- many of whom did not have any legitimate complaint under the monarchy- but rather the grievance of a particular sectarian group who felt isolated from the establishment.

The urban-rural divide among the Shias is worth noting as well, for it is among the wealthy Shias of Baghdad that the revolt seemed to be more distant. Though the newly-enlarged urban proletariat of Baghdadi Shias had a legitimate series of grievances from poor housing to a lack of control over education, the wealthy Baghdadi Shias took it upon themselves to coopt the legitimate problems that plagued the Shia people. What they, the burgeoning Shia bourgeoisie, desired, as the clerics did interestingly, was control over the *waqf*, or the financial endowments

[47] Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq,* 66-73.
[48] Batatu, "Iraq's Underground Shi'a Movements," 580-584.

given to the shrine cities for the construction of mosques, hospitals, schools, etc.[49] This money, normally held by clerics in trust of the donors, was controlled at this time by the Iraqi state- the clerics articulated their desire to control the funds as did the merchant class of Baghdadi Shias. This shared desire led to a strong division between the two: the merchant classes saw the clerics as the vanguard of a time long past and the clerics saw the merchant classes as yet another symptom of the creeping secularization of the Iraqi state and the materialism of a new world system.[50] Moreover, the clerics saw themselves as the proper recipients and directors of the waqf by right of history and religion- the merchant class was thus in violation of proper Islamic dictates in trying to assert their claim. The merchant class thus did to a large extent coopt the legitimate problems that many Iraqi Shias had as a means to try and entrench their own class position; while this may seem harsh, it is true that when revolt actually broke out, the merchant class took no part in it and in fact supported the Iraqi state in crushing the revolt.

According to the clerics and the bulk of Iraqi Shias, the 1935-1936 Revolts, though mostly in 1935, were the result of the refusal of the Iraqi state to listen to or address their grievances. The demands heightened: they demanded the resignation of prime minister Ali Jawdat, who refused, and then demanded that the king dismiss him instead.[51] Though as a result of these revolts, Jawdat would vacate the position of prime minister for several years, their complaints generally fell on deaf ears until they took up arms in areas of Baghdad and allied themselves with rebelling tribes in the south, blocking off the routes between Najaf and Basra and generally being a nuisance. In the ensuing clashes with the state, hundreds of Iraqi Shias lost their lives and many were hanged by the state. Rebelling tribes, tentatively allied with the aims

[49] Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq,* 120-124.
[50] Batatu, "Iraq's Underground Shi'a Movements," 580-581.
[51] Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq,* 125-131.

of the clerics, invaded Baghdad but were repelled. Fierce bombing of the south, specifically in what is today the Al-Qadisiyya governorate, took place.[52] A key tactic of the Iraqi state was to divide the opposition; thus they dealt separately with each of the rebelling tribes as well as the main rebelling cleric, Ayatollah Kashif Al-Ghita; separate ceasefires were concluded with the tribes and Ayatollah Kashif Al-Ghita was compelled to urge those who continued to rebel to put down their arms.[53] Lack of viable community interest in containing the revolt ended it in early 1936, with little to none of their demands actually met and with the state in even greater control over Iraqi Shias regions now that the tribes were so divided amongst themselves (though, of course, it had always been a tactic of whatever central administration controlled the Iraqi south to play the tribes against one another).

The 1935-1936 Revolt is telling about the condition of Iraq's Shias in the interwar period. A strong urban-rural divide had produced new zones of possible resistance but also arenas wherein strong division could be had as is seen through the disputes between the clerics and the merchant class, groups that had once been tentatively aligned in many cases.[54] The presence of a burgeoning Iraqi Shia urban proletariat was in itself a new phenomenon and would have later ramifications. The role of the tribes cannot be discounted, as they were an important bulwark in resisting the state for a time. The tribes led the attack on Baghdad that pressured the state to respond, albeit with enough force to compel the tribes to surrender. The multivalent nature of Iraq's Shias can be seen here: an urban proletariat, a rising urban bourgeoisie, clerics based in the shrine cities and tribal peoples and sheikhs all formed the necessary components of Iraqi Shia society. Some scholars such as Charles Tripp state that the 1935-1936 Revolt was not necessarily

[52] Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq,* 120-125.
[53] Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq,* 128-131.
[54] Batatu, "Iraq's Underground Shi'a Movements," 584-585.

a Shia one, owing to the fact that it was so broad-based and occurred concomitantly with other revolts that targeted the Iraqi state; however, the clear sectarian basis for this revolt can be seen in the peoples who did list out their grievances to the Iraqi state and ended up taking arms against it.[55] Though ultimately unsuccessful, the revolt did articulate the needs of the Shia people in the new state and their desire to enter the establishment, even as they rebelled against it.

I challenge Tripp here, however; the reason the revolt may not be seen as a specifically Shia one by historians is due to the nascent nature of a collective Shia identity- this revolt can and should be seen as the first failure of a budding sense of sectarian identity. For all the unity among Shias in Iraq in taking up arms against the administration, that unity quickly fell apart: strong class division led the merchants to support the Iraqi state in the hopes that they would be able to administer the *waqf*; the urban proletariat, though joining in at times, was the first to surrender; the tribes, though they provided the bulk of armed resistance, were quickly played off against one another, and it is doubtful whether they ever had a sense of fighting as a cohesive Shia unit as opposed to supporting their own ends. The clerics, though supportive, were eventually coerced into surrender. I theorize that it was the clerics, who led the early petitioning stage of the revolt, who saw the most to gain out of a collective Shia identity that could be imparted to this struggle and that that identity was coopted and then shed by the merchant class and the tribes: the former quickly allied themselves against the aims of a Shia class and the latter reverted quickly back to their tribal identity. The weakened position of the clergy, particularly in the face of the rampant secularization that they themselves identified as a major issue as well as the loss of control over the funding that was their lifeline, led them to seek a broader base of

[55] Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq,* 132-140.

support.[56] A broad Shia identity that could surpass urban-rural and class divides and call on the support of a people who constituted the majority of Iraqis as they continue to do today seemed their best option. Thus their alliance with the tribes, with whom they normally had only cursory relations, was part of this. By reinterpreting the tribes and themselves, along with the Iraqis of Baghdad and other urban areas, as part of one cohesive class of people, they found a way to entrench themselves in something greater and gain a base of support that they had lacked.[57]

Crucially, the cultivation of a shared Shia identity by the clerics was also in their benefit. After all, they stood the most to gain from it: by identifying the Shia people as a single albeit sectarian-religious class, they also asserted their primacy within that configuration. After all, the natural leader of a class of people that identified itself with its religious and sectarian label would be the clerics who could be seen, at least by themselves, as the natural leaders of the Shia community, especially when they could appeal to the occultation of the Mahdi. The clerical class, led at this time by Ayatollah Kashif Al-Ghita, thus in part formulated a sense of collective Shia identity and imparted it to this struggle out of a need to articulate their own leadership over it, gaining back some of the authority that they perceived was under threat by the Sunnizing and secularizing Iraqi state.[58]

This is not to say, of course, that they lacked any basis for their litany of complaints against the Iraqi state. The Iraqi state was enacting a triple program of Sunnizing the administration to the purposeful exclusion of Iraqi Shias (as well as other ethnoreligious minorities), centering itself on urban areas where the clerics could not be found and secularizing

[56] Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq,* 115-120.
[57] Batatu, "Iraq's Undergound Shi'a Movements," 585.
[58] Mallat, "Iraq," 73-77.

the administration to a large degree.[59] The Iraqi state stepping back from religious education, then, is not merely one of the complaints but emblematic of a whole range of actions being undertaking by the Kingdom of Iraq at this point and against which the clerics, and the Iraqi Shias more generally, had legitimate grievances. Whether or not it can be surmised that Iraqi Shias organically had a sense of themselves as a single class of people is beyond the purview of this investigation. What is clear, however, is the intentional cultivation of that identity by the clergy to entrench their own position as leaders of that class as well as reach out to a community that they could identify with and that could give them support. The clergy, too, was in some part leaders of the early stage of the movement because many Iraqi Shias identified them as being arbiters with the state; in fact, as the revolt was winding down, Ayatollah Kashif Al-Ghita was asked to negotiate with some of the tribes that were still in revolt to ask for a ceasefire.[60] The relation between the clergy and the general Shia populace was thus multidirectional and while the clergy intentionally sought to grow that connection, there was a basis for it in Iraqi history and society.

The long discussion granted to these two early revolts is not meant to distract from the actual aim of the investigation. Rather, it is clear that these two revolts lay much of the groundwork for the period of 1958 to 1979 and that that period cannot be understood apart from them; rather, it is deeply connected to it. These two revolts are critical for the way that they are able to give a sense of what issues and ideas Iraqi Shias grappled with and they are emblematic of the core claim of this paper, which is an assertion that, for all the novelty of the later period, there is a clear sense that they drew on the advances and vocabulary made much earlier on. The

[59] Batatu, "Iraq's Shi'a, their Political Role and the Processes of their Integration," 206-208.
[60] Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq,* 130.

issue of whether to disavow the regime or work entirely within in it was central to these earlier revolts. The revolts took two entirely different approaches to the question but nevertheless grappled with that problem. Furthermore, the class and sectarian configuration of Iraq was a necessary component of the 1935-1936 Revolt and would continue to be on the minds of many Iraq Shias come the midcentury.[61] The question of ecumenism and unity among all of Iraq's disparate ethnoreligious groupings was central to the first revolt, which saw unity as necessary. The issue of leadership came up in the second revolt: though Iraqi Shia clerics were in some sense the leaders of that revolt in its earlier phases, it was necessary that they negotiate their leadership within the multifaceted nature of the entire Shia community and thus had to contend with the tribes, the merchant class and the urban proletariat. Finally, a key point that the second revolt brought up was the idea that the Iraqi state was undertaking a program of systematic exclusion of the Iraqi Shia population. The continued isolation of Shias from the establishment would continue to be a major source of grievance well into the modern day. It also raised question of whether or not a cohesive Shia identity existed and how it could be cultivated; I concentrate on the second question, as it was clear that Shia clerics desired the fostering of a collective Shia identity as means of gaining support and entrenching their own positions as leaders of that class. Iraqi Shias in the midcentury thus inherited the wealth of issues and frames that were given to them by those of this period of early revolt.

Immediate Circumstances

The 1958 Revolution led to a deposing of the constitutional monarchy that had ruled Iraq for almost forty years at this point. Many of the living members of the royal family were

[61] Batatu, "Iraq's Underground Shi'a Movements," 586-587.

executed and those that remained were forced into exile in Jordan or Saudi Arabia. Many in the old administration were purged and major figures, such as former Prime Minister Abd Al-Ilah, were executed by the new military establishment.[62] In the manner of Gamal Abdel Nasser and other revolutionary Arab generals, the new administration sought to cultivate Arab socialism but to a greater extent than those other ones; the new generals of Iraq, in their early stage at least, were explicitly Marxist in orientation.[63]

The beginnings of a new regime left many in the Shia clergy, as well as Shias more generally, hesitant and unsure of their place within the new regime. The Shia clergy based in the shrine cities were inflamed at this newest instantiation of secular authority. Marxism, as they saw it, was the height of secularism as it was an explicitly atheist, anticlerical ideology and was thus poised to be the greatest threat to their position and one that they immediately disavowed.[64] They were also threatened by the fact that the generals had drawn most of their support from urban peoples. Historically, Shias based in Baghdad, as well as other groups such as Iraqi Jews, had played importantly roles within the Iraqi Communist party and were thus sympathetic to the aims of the new regime.[65] The threat was thus two-pronged: not only did the clerics imagine the new regime as being specifically oriented against them, they also feared the loss of their population base in urban areas. The Shia clergy furthermore explicitly feared that the new administration would further the aims of the secularization program initiated under the kingdom to its fullest

[62] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 144-150.
[63] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 169-174.
[64] Batatu, "Iraq's Shi'a, their Political Role and the Processes of their Integration," 210-211.
[65] Baram, "The Radical Shi'ite Opposition Movements in Iraq," 95-96, Wiley, *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as*, 39.

extent, abolishing religious schools and religious endowments (the *waqf*) and thus eliminating their structural supports entirely.

Whether this was actually true is also something beyond the purview of this investigation- what is important is that the Shia clergy considered the new Marxist regime to be an explicit threat to their status and interpreted it as such. Some clerics went so far as to pass fatwas declaring membership in the new regime to be unlawful even as others attempted to have Shias integrate into the new administration. For all the confusion, though, their fears were not unfounded: the Shia clergy was at a weak point. As discussed earlier, the Shia clergy did not have a specifically, let alone essentially, activist bent to them. Political action, outside of organized episodes of revolt in coalition with many other groups, was not common to the Iraqi clergy and participation in the state, regardless of its Sunni or secular nature, was low as a general principle. Times of political action may be said to be the exception that proves the rule of little to not organized political involvement on the part of the clergy.[66] Reasons for this have already been given from a historical point of view: the Iraqi clergy had needed a necessarily longer period of time to consolidate itself as a class and to have the raw population base from which they could extract loyalty and support.

However, and here a comparison to the Iranian model is useful, a structural analysis of Iraqi history produces one clear fact: the clergy had never had any room to work within the confines of either the Iraqi state or the Ottoman administration. The Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran, when properly historicized, may be said to be the end product of decades of clerical involvement in popular protest. It is also true that the modern Iranian state under the Pahlavi

[66] Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq,* 75-88.

Shahs inherited a tradition of clerical political involvement from the Safavid and Qajar Empires. Clerics were a class of people specifically cultivated, for instance, by the Safavids who need them to help consolidate their role and advance their program of converting the population to Shiism.[67] Under the Qajars and the Pahlavis, many clerics were furthermore allied with the aims of the ruling dynasty and were members of the administration even though many others were united against the central authority. Iranian history thus bears testament to a long history of clerical involvement in the domain of politics, whether clerics were aligned with the aims of the dominant power or against it.[68] In fact, even those Iranian clerics based in Najaf were instrumental in aiding political action as can be seen from the revolt against the Tobacco Monopoly of 1890 or the Constitutional Revolution of 1905 or even Ayatollah Khomeini's political actions undertaken while in exile in Najaf.[69] The Iranian model of understanding political Islam, then, is an understanding of the way that the revolution of 1979 was the outpouring of an already consolidated network of clerical political action that was mobilized in support of the revolutionary aims of Khomeini and those allied with him.

The Iraqi model does not hold fast to this concept at all- the Iraqi clergy, being Shia, was specifically excluded from the upper echelons of the Ottoman Empire, which, despite being a purportedly pan-Islamic force, did not allow Shia clergy into its highest religious offices that were the exclusive purview of the Sunni clergy.[70] Under the kingdom, this continued to be true: Iraqi clergy simply had not place within the new Iraqi state.[71] Furthermore, the lack of a vibrant tradition of resistance against those forces is easily understood as the lack of cohesion among the

[67] Dabashi, *Shiism,* 132-140.
[68] Dabashi, *Shiism,* 140-159.
[69] Dabashi, *Shiism,* 190-205.
[70] Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War,* 16-25.
[71] Tripp, *A History of Iraq,* 82-86.

clergy and the low numbers of Shias outside of the shrine cities. The shrine cities were thus the main base of Shia clerical power and continued to be well into the middle of the twentieth century. Unlike the Iranian model, then, the Shia clergy had no tradition of political activism to call upon other than their recent one.

It must also be emphasized at this point that Iraqi Shias continued to be left out of the new administration and thus fears of Shia exclusion were not unfounded. Though the new administration was avowedly Marxist and Arab socialist, their main source of power was through the army and not party politics (which the Shias of Baghdad had taken an active part in). A tradition of Shia exclusion from the army thus left many Shias outside of the new apparatus of power under the new regime- those Shias who were sympathetic to the aims of crushing the old, conservative and outdated monarchy thus found themselves left behind by the new administration, which drew its power from an arena of society that Shias had traditionally found themselves outside of.[72] This is not to say that they did not make any advancements; in fact, under the new regime, many Shias entered into the Ministry of Education and were able to affect some changes there, although they still had no control over religious education.[73] However, it was clear that the new army regime drew its power from the military and as the Shias were always outside the military, they were excluded from the real positions of power under the new regime, which they understood had become the mainstay of Iraqi state politics.

[72] Batatu, "Iraq's Shi'a, their Political Role and the Processes of their Integration," 210-211, Mallat, "Iraq," 72.
[73] Batatu, "Iraq's Shi'a, their Political Role and the Processes of their Integration," 212-213.

The Da‘wa Party and Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr

This investigation necessarily concentrates on the figure of Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr and the Islamic Da‘wa Party with which he was affiliated as a means of contending with the broader issue of political theology as articulated by Shia clerics at this time. The rise of the Da‘wa Party was concomitant with all the factors heretofore discussed: the weakness of the clegy; increasing (perceived) secularization of the Iraqi state; the isolation of Shias from the establishment and, specifically in this case, the weakening of the system of religious education in the shrine cities. The latter was due to the fact that the clergy had lost control over the funding that normally came in via the *waqf* funds and foreign donors from Iran and India, whose contributions had dried up in the postcolonial era.

Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, though still young by the 1950s, had already published several works, among them an early critique of Marxism and other western philosophies as well as a treatise on Islamic banking systems as an alternative to capitalist banking structures and economics more broadly.[74] These two themes would animate much of his professional career as an ‘*alim* (cleric), jurist and legalist and would become the core of his political theology. That is, Ayatollah al-Sadr articulated at a very early stage in his political career a dissatisfaction both with the system of global capitalism and the main alternative of Marxist economics and philosophy.[75] His political theology, then, was, like many other Islamists, a ‘third way,’ a means of using Islam to create an alternative system that borrowed from the good of the two other systems but had a religious center to perfect them. Though Ayatollah al-Sadr is

[74] Wiley, *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi’as*, 31-32.
[75] Talib Aziz, “The Role of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr in Shi’i Political Activism in Iraq from 1958 to 1980,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25 (1993): 208-209.

generally credited with founding the Da‘wa Party, this fact remains unclear. Nonetheless, there is no denying his prominent role in it from a very early stage as the party’s chief ideologue and the cleric most targeted by the Baath regime for Da‘wa Party’s actions.[76] Thus Ayatollah al-Sadr came to be identified both by the party itself and by the Baath regime as its central personality, despite the fact that he may not have been among its earliest circles of founders.

The issue of the party’s exact date of founding is a contentious one and one that bears working through in some detail for the way that it illuminates a general party mythos that plays into its political theology. Abdul-Halim Al-Ruhaimi offers three separate potential dates for the party’s founding. First, according to official party documentation, the party was founded sometime in 1957, a full year before the 1958 Revolution. Al-Ruhaimi and others generally do not support this dating as it appears too early for the party and seems to be a way for the party to claim that it was not reactive to the new regime.[77] An alternative date, in 1958 several months after the coup d’état, is offered by some scholars.[78] Yet another alternative is that of 1960, which is theorized by some to be the day when the party first gave itself its name and existed in the form that it would for this period of time.[79] Hanna Batatu offers a much later date of 1967 in his work, citing that the early party was not a cohesive unit until this point and that it only existed as fragmented organizations that were loosely held together and did not operate as a single party until 1967.[80] What is at stake in these arguments is not merely the date, of course, but the party’s own official narration itself, the potential for the party to be seen as reactive rather than a proactive self-generating force and the early composition of the party. The last date appears to be

[76] Aziz, “The Role of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr,” 210.
[77] Al-Ruhaimi, “The Da’wa Islamic Party,” 151.
[78] Al-Ruhaimi, “The Da’wa Islamic Party,” 151.
[79] Al-Ruhaimi, “The Da’wa Islamic Party,” 152.
[80] Batatu, “Iraq’s Underground Shi’a Movements,” 210-211.

of most contention to many scholars. Dates of 1960 and 1967 and even, I argue, 1958, are all commentaries on the existence of the party as a weak coalition of several clerics and their affiliated followers prior to a later date of real consolidation and cohesion.

Al-Ruhaimi accepts the 1958 date as being the most likely for when the party took on its name. Before that, both he and Batatu accept that there were a number of smaller organizations led by several different clerics that loosely operated as some kind of coalition even though they were separate with disparate aims and lacking in a central ideology.[81] Al-Ruhaimi thus rejects the 1957 date offered by the party itself as wanting to be seen as a proactive force in Iraqi politics and not a mere derivation of the 1958 regime.[82] I advance Al-Ruhaimi and Batatu here by stating that the 1957 date that the party claims is not only a way of giving itself a legacy of proactiveness but also a way of connecting itself to those disparate organizations that the two scholars mention. By claiming a 1957 date, the party in fact asserts that those clerics that operated in some loose fashion as a whole were the party itself and it is from those that the party draws its strength. The party thus claims descent from those early groupings by stating 1957 as its official date, giving it a sense of grassroots movement but also a way to legitimize those earlier clerics. To connect this to the party's overall political theology, then, it is clear that the party had a sense both of the direction of the clerics and the support of the people. Whether or not the date is correct, it imparts a sense of grassroots power that the regime could perhaps not claim. Furthermore, the early date fits right into the idea of stages of revolution that the party would later offer as the necessary means of organizing people. Though they started off as disparate entities, they came together and united to affect change in Iraq. In this way, though I do

[81] Al-Ruhaimi, "The Da'wa Islamic Party," 152-153, Batatu, "Iraq's Shi'a, their Political Role and the Processes of their Integration," 588.
[82] Al-Ruhaimi, "The Da'wa Islamic Party," 151.

not dismiss the importance of the historical debate over the party's actual orientation date, there is more at stake in analyzing the chosen date of 1957 by the party itself as it is the one the party claims in official founding documents.

Curiously, the party chose to name itself the Islamic Da'wa Party (meaning the Party of the Islamic Call, or Invitation to Islam). Though I touch on issues of transnationalism later, the party's name is of immediate interest as it is easily read by some scholars as being a sign of the party's essential transnational ethos from its very early days. In fact, many of the party's official documentation appears in this same light; official literature such as party journals and other documents that were meant to be spread have titles like *Al-Risalah* (the message) or *Al-Adwa'* (the lights).[83] Though this seems to lend itself easily to a transnational interpretation for the Da'wa Party, the party intended to use such metaphors and symbolism as a means of propagating its 'message' to the Iraqi people; rather than attempting to spread it outwards into the nearby regions such as Lebanon, Kuwait, Iran or Bahrain, the focus was on guiding the people currently inside Iraq to join them and create a new society. This does not mean that the party did not have a transnational component- I do not deny that the party had a sense of itself, at a later stage, moving the creation of this society outwards in a process similar to but not analogous to the Iranian model of 'exporting revolution.' Rather, the party was primarily focused on the Iraqi people, a cornerstone of its ideology that enshrined the nation-state as the center of reform and the source of identity with transnationalism as product of this process, not an element intrinsic to it.[84]

[83] Aziz, "The Role of Muhamad Baqir al-Sadr," 210, Wiley, *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as*, 34.
[84] Baram, "The Radical Shi'ite Opposition Movements in Iraq," 102.

The fact that there were political parties at all is a classically unique aspect of Iraqi Shia history for heretofore, no Shia Islamic movement had thought to organize itself specifically into the form of a modern political party.[85] Though, for instance, many Iranian clerics participated in government, they did not do so through creating or affiliating themselves with political parties but worked through their positions within the central administration or, crucially, through their positions in society. As has been discussed, Iranian clerics commanded a much larger swath of respect and people than Iraqi clerics did and though they were concentrated in key areas such as Mashhad and Qom, their power was not confined to those regions but could extend outwards. Iran furthermore, under all three monarchical administrations- the Safavids, the Qajars and the Pahlavis- did not condone the forming of political parties. Although it may have been an act of rebellion to do so, clerics simply did not organize political associations in Iran, most likely because they were able to, with great success, affect change by working through the social and political channels that were available to them due to their country's unique history.[86]

On the other hand, Iraqi clerics did not have such boons- Iraqi clerics were confined generally to the shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala in the south and were surrounded by tribespeople. This is not to say that tribespeople were unwilling to listen to them or that they did not care about religious or theological matters; rather, the specific legalistic function of the clerics in Iraq was not of import to the tribes who handled matters internally.[87] Being confined to Najaf and Karbala by the Ottomans and the Kingdom of Iraq left the clerics in a weakened state and without avenues by which they could reach out to the Shias living outside of shrine cities, either those in urban areas such as Basra and Baghdad or those who lived in the northern Iraqi

[85] Mallat, "Iraq," 71-72.
[86] Dabashi, *Shiism*, 159-170.
[87] Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq,* 80-83.

hinterlands or in the semi-rural developing regions of southern Iraq such as Diwaniya or Samawa.[88] This isolation, and lack of feasible political channels, was a major stumbling block for them as they had to discover some other means of affecting political change. During the revolts, this came in the form of organizing small-scale political action via petitions or drafting charters and distributing them in Baghdad, for instance, but these actions were temporary and not institutionalized and were directed actions taken for certain ends that proved unsustainable as neither the 1920 nor the 1935-1936 Revolts produced any specific avenues through which Iraqi clerics could affect political change.[89]

The political party was thus the model that Iraqi clerics in the 1950s and beyond chose as the primary means of organizing themselves and reaching out the people living outside the shrine cities. It is important to stress here that Shia clerics had never heretofore organized themselves into political parties. Although short-term associations and coalitions had existed, they were not in the form of modern, bureaucratic political parties that had memberships, official organs and would, much later, contest for seats in the federal legislature.[90] The model of the political party was selected, of course, for its expediency but perhaps more than anything, it was a familiar model to those living in Iraq and one that the clerics who founded the party recognized and selected. The legacy of political parties in Iraq is a long one but such parties as the Iraqi Community Party or the Kurdistan Democratic had been around and thriving since the late 1930s and early 1940s, though both had come under attack by the official state.[91] The Iraqi people were thus familiar with this model and the clerics recognized this.

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[88] Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, 185-192.
[89] Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, 247-262.
[90] Batatu, "Iraq's Underground Shi'a Movements," 590-594.
[91] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 144-157.

Furthermore, in adopting the model of the political parties, the clerics were in fact inheriting the legacy of secular political organizing that had characterized the vibrant Iraqi political and civic sphere for at least a full decade and a half before the Da'wa Party's official founding (which, according to the party, was in 1957). The clerics did so not merely because the model was something that a majority of people would be familiar with or that the modern political party is an expedient mechanism by which to recruit and proselytize but because they had no effective non-secular means of recruitment and proselytization.[92] Unlike the Iranian model, wherein clerics had effective avenues by which to gather support and reach out to people, Iraqi clerics lacked such a means and thus had to turn to secular political means within a secular state in order to affect the change they so desired. Though this may seem hypocritical, it is actually characteristic of the bulk of clerical political action; as I contend, Iraqi Shias borrowed consciously from the vocabulary, ideas and institutions that were in circulation in contemporary Iraq. The political party is merely one such form that they adopted because of its familiarity, its expediency and its ability to provide them a channel for political action that they had lacked until now. The choice of a political party is thus a rational one and one that fits in line with the rest of their actions.

This does not mean that political parties were the natural choice for clerics. The choice was hotly debated and even after its founding, many clerics would not join because of what they perceived to be the overly secular and materialist nature of political parties. Many asserted that they would not join because as clerics, they simply did not need to do so and it would in fact be a step down for them to join.[93] These debates were in wide circulation and persisted well after the

[92] Aziz, "The Political Theory of Muhammad Baqir Sadr," 231.
[93] Al-Ruhaimi, "The Da'wa Islamic Party," 156.

party, and others like it, were founded and show that the issue of a political party was neither a natural nor the first choice for Iraqi Shias. Ayatollah al-Sadr, however, who had, by this time, risen to the party's upper echelons and would, in fact, become its primary ideologue, devised a rhetorical strategy by which to sanction political parties. He asserted that political parties were a sound and lawful means of political organization and were in fact the main ones available. To support this, he stated that there was "nothing against expressing ourselves as a party, a movement, an organization" as "the Islamic Shari'a ordains no specific method of proselytizing or change"; in fact, because they were the main modes of political organization of the time, they were the ones that should be used because according to him, had political parties existed at the time of the Prophet Muhammad, he too would have used them.[94] Under this explanation, then, it became silly not to use the primary form of political organization available to people, especially because it was not unlawful. To counter the idea that political parties were beneath the clerics or that they were too materialist, Ayatollah al-Sadr advanced the idea that this political party would not simply be one among many but the first among the rest, the rallying cry to all people to join into this new organization (hence the name Da'wa). In this manner, Ayatollah al-Sadr fulfilled the other two components of Iraqi Shia political theology at this time: he provided a theological and religious basis for political action, grounding it in sound Islamic legal theory, and he resolved the contradictions of simultaneous movements. Political parties could be described as a contradiction to many clerics because though their goals were lofty, their actual mechanism was base; by elevating it to the status of something the Prophet would have used, and stating that their party would unequivocally be the best, Ayatollah al-Sadr resolved this contradiction that was seen as inherent to the model of the political party. In this way, organizing through the use

[94] Al-Ruhaimi, "The Da'wa Islamic Party," 153.

of political parties, or whatever happened to be the main method of the time, became the sanctioned means by which Iraqi Shias should organize themselves.[95] This interpretation reveals Iraqi Shia political theology to be pragmatic in its bent; indeed, Ayatollah al-Sadr and other leading clerics were always aware of what was politically expedient and acted accordingly. Thus, as captured in the character of Ayatollah al-Sadr and the Da'wa Party, Iraqi Shia political theology is shown to be the product of many ideas in circulation that could provide a theological basis by which to resolve the contradictions Iraqi Shias and clerics were faced with.

Leadership and Action

Having thus explained how the Da'wa Party came into being, it is also important to analyze how it explained its political program and the means by which it would act with respect both the clerical establishment and the broader population of Iraq. The party had no qualms about making it clear that the leaders would be drawn from the clerics, even though the party also had a strong lay membership, particularly in Shia neighborhoods of Baghdad. The problem of leadership is the classic one in Shia Islam. During the occultation of the Mahdi, the time period of the present day, it is unknown who should be the leader as true leadership is the purview of the still-alive, hidden Mahdi.[96] Secular leaders have functioned in some capacity by not claiming religious authority or, in the case of the Safavids for instance, by allying themselves with the clerics to show that they acted in a righteous, Shia way and were thus able to rule in the absence of the Mahdi.[97] The Da'wa Party was, similarly, confronted with this problem of who and how they should lead and rule the country while the Mahdi was not among them. This was

[95] Baram, "Two Roads to Revolutionary Shi'ite Fundamentalism in Iraq," 533.
[96] Dabashi, *Shiism*, 29-35.
[97] Dabashi, *Shiism*, 132-140.

by no means a trivial concern and this question lies at the heart of Shia political theology in general; in what manner and through what means should the state be governed is thus the central question of all Shia political theology.[98]

To resolve this inherent contradiction within Shia Islam, Ayatollah al-Sadr and other clerics of the Da'wa Party devised a complicated structure for the new society- it mimicked the sort of constitutionalist systems that are around in many countries today wherein there are both secular courts for a variety of criminal cases and religious courts that legislate and preside over civil issues and cases.[99] However, this structure would also contain within it a system by which these two separate regions could interact by creating a group of clerics that would advise the executive branch of the secular parallel government and oversee the legislative process to ensure that laws passed did not infringe on proper *sharia*.[100] In this complex fashion, there would exist side-by-side secular and religious authority that would govern in a united fashion, though over separate issues and despite the fact that, within this new structure, a large amount of oversight was given to unelected clerics.[101] This structure, however, was seen to be the best model and gave a theological underpinning to a new government, even as it enshrined the secularism within the political structure that it borrowed from contemporary Iraq.[102]

The problem of leadership was thus tentatively resolved by Ayatollah al-Sadr in this form. Secular authority would remain in the hands of the laypeople but real authority would be given to clerics who would guide and oversee the political process, as they were the ones with

[98] Wiley, *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as*,120-124.
[99] Wiley, *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as*, 125-133.
[100] Aziz, "The Political Theory of Muhammad Baqir Sadr," 233-235.
[101] Aziz, "The Political Theory of Muhammad Baqir Sadr," 237-243.
[102] Aziz, "The Political Theory of Muhammad Baqir Sadr," 237.

true authority during the Occultation. This system, though not analogous by any means, is quite similar to the government structure devised for Iran by Ayatollah Khomeini who structured it along the lines of his *Wilayat Al-Faqih* (Stewardship of the Jurists) scheme; it contained the same secular/religious division but allowed for an immense amount of power to be reserved to a group of unelected clerics who held the true authority within the system.[103] What is interesting to note here, however, is that this system for government was devised both independently of Ayatollah Khomeini's model for Iran (which only came to fruition after the 1979 Revolution) and was created several years before it and anticipated many of Khomeini's political schematics.[104] I do not mean to suggest a one-to-one scheme wherein Ayatollah Khoemini and other clerics allied with him who created the political structure of the Islamic Republic studied and borrowed the model of Ayatollah al-Sadr. Rather, I contend that Ayatollah al-Sadr grappled with many of the same issues as Khomeini and came to his same conclusions but years earlier. This shows that there were many similar issues circulating in the field of political Islam broadly and Shia Islam specifically that both ayatollahs were aware of and saw as necessary to resolve- Shia political theology in Iraq thus had to deal with many of these same issues in order to create a proper political system for government, much in the same way as Iranian clerics did.

This model was not only meant to resolve the problems of Iraqi society and statecraft in general, however. Ayatollah al-Sadr and others identified major weaknesses within the clergy itself that needed to be fixed in order that the clergy, the designated leaders of the nation, could rise up to that status. The problems identified were many: clergy were considered lax and unwilling to engage in issues of social and political importance; the religious education system

[103] Dabashi, *Shiism,* 280, Aziz, "The Political Theory of Muhammad Baqir Sadr," 239-240, Al-Ruhaimi, "The Da'wa Islamic Party," 158.
[104] Aziz, "The Political Theory of Muhammad Baqir Sadr," 237-241.

for clerics based in the shrine cities (the *hawza* system) was outdated and in need of revamping; clerics simply recycled old debates and rehashed tired talking points rather than pushing the edge of scholarship and, as a result of the encroaching secularism that creeped into Iraqi Shias and the disenchantment of people with the clergy owing to their many aforementioned faults, there was a general sense of apathy among the Shia youth in becoming an '*alim*, a religious scholar.[105] These problems were thus necessary to confront and Ayatollah al-Sadr spoke of this process as developing an objective clergy. He centered his ideas in the principle of *marja'iyya*, the system of theological referents by which clerics would publish their range of legal decisions and codes and people would decide to whom they would refer.[106] This constituted the basis of his principle that the clerics should lead a new Iraq; after all, people had already listened to them and put a lot of stock in what the clergy had to say on a wide variety of issues. In order to reform the clerical system, then, the principle of *marja'iyya* became transformed into a regulated hierarchy, a system of deferences wherein one would defer to those higher up and at the top would sit the council that oversaw the secular and religious affairs of the state. This system, he theorized, would provide accountability and clear path for people to make legal decisions.[107] Importantly, this is a specifically Iraqi development; though Iraq, like Iran, had always had one clear cleric that was higher than the rest of them, it had not yet come to the point where there were specific gradations of scholarly level like in Iran.[108] The need to articulate an entire system of accountability and a hierarchy was thus unique to the Iraqi situation and shows, yet again, how they contended with ideas in circulation and borrowed existing solutions.

[105] Batatu, "Iraq's Underground Shi'a Movements," 586-587.
[106] Aziz, "The Political Theory of Muhammad Baqir Sadr," 237-240.
[107] Aziz, "The Political Theory of Muhammad Baqir Sadr" 240. Wiley, *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as*,74-76.
[108] Aziz, "The Political Theory of Muhammad Baqir Sadr," 210.

With respect to the clergy, Ayatollah al-Sadr furthermore theorized that they had a specific position within Islamic society more generally. He claimed the term *shahid* (plural *shuhada* from the concept of *shahada)* as the title for the clergy; though this term was already in broad circulation to mean 'martyr,' the literal meaning of it suggests someone who bears witness to something important. For example, the statement of faith in Islam is considered a bearing witness to the oneness of God.[109] The clerics were thus witnesses not only to the splendor of Islam but to the events of the state. They had a special role as those that would bear witness to what happened within the state, whether that be the secular affairs of the nation or religious affairs of the (then disorganized) clergy, and thus had the responsibility over what happened to it. This responsibility, of course, was a divine one and the clerics, being *shuhada* and having borne witness to the happenings of the nation, would be held accountable before God for what they saw and for what they did not resolve.[110] In this way, Ayatollah al-Sadr borrowed from a term that, like political parties for instance, was already in wide circulation, reinterpreted it for his own means and used it to provide a theological basis for the political involvement of the clergy in the affairs of the nation.

The question of leadership, however, was not simply the purview of the clerics and thus solely a religious affair; rather, as mentioned, there was a large lay membership in the Da'wa Party, as there was in any other Islamic political party, that also needed to be considered for leadership in some capacity. To deal with the problem of lay leadership in an otherwise specifically Islamic political party, Ayatollah al-Sadr created a term, *Insan Al-Hadif* or purposeful/guided people, to resolve this issue. These special people were considered to be

[109] Aziz, "The Political Theory of Muhammad Baqir Sadr," 237-238.
[110] Aziz, "The Political Theory of Muhammad Baqir Sadr," 236.

enlightened in some sense- this could be in the manner of simply having more faith in a sort of divine way or being more educated and aware of current issues in an obviously secular understanding.[111] Yet in this manner, Ayatollah al-Sadr created a theological basis for the entry of lay people into the upper echelons of the party and in the society that he and his cohort hoped to construct. The creation of this term thus resolved the issue inherent in most political Islam of what the position of those not among the clergy was; Ayatollah al-Sadr clearly anticipated this issue and resolved it easily by creating this category. These people were not merely the Elect, however, as they had a clear duty to proselytize the message of the party, engage in educational and consciousness-building programs to reach out to people and were responsible for leading the processes of social change once the upheaval of the current administration would take place.[112] In this way, they can be described as a kind of vanguard as along Leninist terms.[113]

As with all other vocabulary, it cannot be proven whether or not Ayatollah al-Sadr borrowed directly from other concepts (though he was clearly well-versed with the wide range of Marxist and Leftist thought); rather, I contend that the idea of a vanguard that would lead the revolution, or whatever political process was necessary to be undertaken, was an idea already in circulation at this time and would have been one that Ayatollah al-Sadr and other clerics were simply familiar with. For instance, the 1958 Revolution led by Iraqi generals was a kind of vanguard clearly influenced by Marxist-Leninist and Nasserist thought and political practice.[114] Though it is beyond the bounds of this paper to claim that Ayatollah al-Sadr borrowed directly from Leninist thought and vocabulary, this formulation of a special person who was endowed

[111] Aziz, "The Political Theory of Muhammad Baqir Sadr," 232-233.
[112] Aziz, "The Political Theory of Muhammad Baqir Sadr," 233-237, 240-242.
[113] Aziz, "The Political Theory of Muhammad Baqir Sadr," 232.
[114] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 169-175.

with the qualities necessary to lead a revolution was certainly one in circulation at the time. It also aided him in resolving the issues of leadership within the party (as well as in a future Iraq) and provided a theological basis for the entry of laypeople into the party administration.

Moreover, the creation of a vanguard-like group of people was instrumental within the broader political program that al-Sadr had planned for the Da'wa Party. In the manner of Leftist thought, from which whether or not Ayatollah Al- Sadr directly borrowed, he certainly owed a debt to, Ayatollah al-Sadr divided his political program into several stages: a transformative or ideological stage, a political stage, a stage in which power is seized and the final phase of governance.[115] The *Insan Al-Hadif* would be crucial in the first stage, which would be "inspired by the form of struggle waged to change the community," again illustrating al-Sadr's pragmatism. In this early stage, it was the duty of the party to undertake such actions that would deliver its message to the people, raise the consciousness and inspire them to take action.[116] These guided people were essential in this process as they were the ones that possessed the qualities necessary to help guide other people; there could in fact be no future stages without them. Thus Ayatollah al-Sadr's program enshrined the position of laypeople within the establishment by providing a specific role for them, grounded in a theological basis. The idea of dividing the 'revolution' or the political process more broadly into several stages, a clear borrowing from Leftist political programs (or rather, an Leftist idea in circulation in Iraq at the time) was a novel one and one that succeeded in assuaging the concerns and hesitation of clerics and laypeople alike.[117] The division of the program into these steps provided a linear logic for it

[115] Al-Ruhaimi, "The Da'wa Islamic Party," 153.
[116] Aziz, "The Political Theory of Muhammad Baqir Sadr," 233-235.
[117] Aziz, "The Political Theory of Muhammad Baqir Sadr," 231.

and managed to detail in clear terms how they should proceed, though these terms were still vague enough to be renegotiated if necessary.

Principles and Key Debates

Though the whole of the discussion has in one way or another dealt with the principles and the key debates that theologians and laypeople among Iraq's Shias were contending with at this time, a more specific discussion of those principles is necessary. For one, clerics struggled over which vocabulary to use. As mentioned, they frequently made use of vocabulary and concepts that were already present in Iraqi discourse at the time but they very often ran into trouble when using those terms. For example, the language of class (*tabaq*) was carefully avoided by many clerics, who were clearly aware of its implications; the language of class and thereby class struggle and class analysis were seen as too Marxist, too secular and too close to the language used by the regime (both the leftist generals and the later Baathist administration).[118] To speak of the masses of people then, they avoided speaking to the proletariat and spoke to people as a whole (*jama'a*). To speak to Muslims directly, though, the clerics would revert to the language of Islam, using either the terms *Muslimin* (Muslims)or *Mu'minin* (Believers).[119] In this way, the clerics and official party documentation carefully avoided using the language of class and its attendant synonyms such as *sha'b* or *jamaheer* (both meaning masses by with heavily leftist or populist connotations). Retreating into the language of Islam was also useful and expedient as it provided a familiar and intimate set of phrases for them to use, even as it was in some sense exclusionary. Their familiarity with the language in circulation and their ability to resolve the issue of potentially populist language was resolved through the use of those terms.

[118] Baram, "The Radical Shi'ite Opposition Movements in Iraq," 99.
[119] Baram, "The Radical Shi'ite Opposition Movements in Iraq," 108-109.

Moreover, the vocabulary used was, in many cases, meant to be explicitly religious owing to the grounding of the party in a specifically Islamic theological basis. Thus the party identified itself with being the inheritors of the legacy of Imam Hussain, for instance, and understood their struggle as the struggle of *Ashura*, the struggle against the injustice that he encountered but that they universalized.[120] The party claimed descent from the political action of Imam Ali and Imam Hussain and they propagated images and depictions of an activist interpretation of Sayyida Fatima and Sayyida Zaynab to encourage women, as well, to take up arms.[121] Ayatollah al-Sadr's first work was a discussion on the symbolism behind Sayyida Fatima's sermon at Fadak, which he identified as being the first struggle against injustice encountered by Shia Muslims after the death of the Prophet. His reinterpretation of this image in part lent easily to a reinterpretation and propagation of other images of activist icons in Shia Islamic history.[122] These figures were, furthermore, in wide circulation among Shia Islam and their easy reinterpretation and acceptance by the masses was a key component of the party's program; by providing alternative understandings of these historic icons that were expedient to the party's aims, the party made clear use of people's familiarity with these figures and used them to give their political action a theological grounding as well as a precedent and inherited legacy in Islamic history.

[120] Batatu, "Iraq's Underground Shi'a Movements," 584, Amatzia Baram, "From Radicalism to Radical Pragmatism: the Shi'ite Fundamentalist Opposition Movements of Iraq," in *Islamic Fundamentalisms and the Gulf Crisis*, ed. James Piscatori (Chicago: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1991), 40-41.
[121] Baram, "Two Roads to Revolutionary Shi'ite Fundamentalism in Iraq," 535-537.
[122] Rachel K. Feder, "Fatima's Revolutionary Image in Fadak fi al-Tarikh: The Inception of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr's Activism," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 41 (2014): 81-83.

A further problem that they contended with was the wide purchase that pan-Arabism had gained during this time. Pan-Arabism, the discourse that stated that all Arabs constituted a single nation and should thus work towards political unity, was in its heyday during the 1950s and early 1960s before its failure to defeat the Israelis in the 1967 War. Iraqis, like many other Arabs, were familiar with this discourse and saw themselves as a part of it. Curiously, however, many Iraqi Shias felt distant and isolated from the rhetoric of pan-Arabism for the simple reason that, despite its secularism, its understanding of a cohesive Arab culture was as much founded in a shared history and common language as it was in a supposed heritage of Sunni Islam, identified by many as being a uniquely Arab religion and the one from which Arabs descended.[123] Many Arab Christians, such as Michel Aflaq, a founder of the Baath Party, went so far as to claim that Islam was an institution unique to the history of the Arab nation and thus could not be so easily disavowed.[124] Iraqi Shias, as well as their Shia counterparts in Lebanon and Eastern Arabia, felt naturally distant from this rhetoric as it seemed to purposefully exclude them and in any case, they were unsure of their position within a united Arab nation, let alone their position within the Arab nation they found themselves in presently as a minoritized majority group.[125]

The Da'wa Party, as with all other major Islamic parties in Iraq, rejected the discourse of pan-Arabism that was already in circulation at this time. To them, pan-Arabism, and the retreat to an Arab identity more broadly, was a weak form of organizing based in an artificial, superficial category of race (and language) and thus could not be the means by which the Islamic movement of Iraq would organize itself.[126] Of course, these clerics were themselves estranged

[123] Baram, "The Radical Shi'ite Opposition Movements in Iraq," 100-102.
[124] Baram, "From Radicalism to Radical Pragmatism," 30-34.
[125] Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War*, 180-188.
[126] Baram, "The Radical Shi'ite Opposition Movements in Iraq," 99-102

from the political goal of the pan-Arab movement to merge all Arab nations; like many other Shias, they feared further marginalization within a united Arab state and in any case did not see a future in that.[127] Race and language were weak categories to organize an exalted movement such as theirs around. Though it had the potential to unite people, it was lacked the luster that could sustain a movement and was, like the language of class, a constructed category in any case without any substantial meaning behind it.

Furthermore, the Da'wa Party had a clear agenda behind its rejection. The 1958-1968 administration of leftist army generals followed the line of Arab socialism and were thus explicitly pan-Arab in their orientation. This legacy continued into the Baath era where the Baathist administration became aggressively pan-Arab in an effort to relocate the center of pan-Arabism to Iraq and proclaim it as the leading power within the Arab nation. As a political means of distancing themselves from the language used by the official administration, the Shia clergy, through the Da'wa Party, avoided and in fact rejected the language of pan-Arabism, preferring instead to retreat, as above, into more general terms where necessary or the language of Islam, which had a theological basis and not an artificially-constructed one. A further important point about pan-Arabism is that it had proven itself by this time to be quite a poor political ideology around which people, let alone nation-states, should organize themselves. The grand failure of the Arab coalition in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War had proven that a shared Arab identity was not enough to win critical wars.[128] Furthermore, the collapse of the United Arab Republic in 1961 proved that pan-Arab ideology was not sustainable nor could it surmount the

[127] Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War*, 173-188.
[128] Baram, "The Radical Shi'ite Opposition Movements in Iraq," 101.

specificities of nations and peoples.[129] In this manner, the Da'wa Party set itself apart from the terms in broad circulation in order to distance themselves from the regimes that patronized them.

To resolve the multiple contradictions present within pan-Arabism, then, Shia clerics, perhaps ironically, supported and enshrined the nation-state of Iraq. Though they unequivocally rejected organizing around the label of Arab, they promoted a cohesive sense of national identity and did not foresee the dissolution of the nation of Iraq nor did they see Iraq as needing to potentially meld with other Islamic entities.[130] This curious support for the Iraqi nation, of course, stands immediately against the charge they leveled against the Arab identity- that it was a poor identity to organize around because it lacked any substantial basis. However, to them, the nation of Iraq was a major point around which to organize because it was created. It was the work of the people and it was their homeland. They identified themselves strongly with it, curiously being in the same line of Iraqi nationalism as the ruling regimes.[131] By not rejecting the Iraqi nation, then, they also identified the nation as indispensable; it would not wither away nor would it dissolve under any circumstances. In fact, their support for the Iraqi nation-state only strengthened its legitimacy. Though the concept of Iraq had already existed from antiquity, the exact modern borders of the nation were clearly an artificial postcolonial construction. Yet their acceptance and exaltation of the nation disregarded that artificiality and promoted the nation as the basis for organizing.

There are a number of potential reasons for this that can be reduced to the problems that these clerics saw with the necessary transnational component of other ideologies in circulation.

[129] Tripp, *A History of Iraq,* 169-175.
[130] Baram, "The Radical Shi'ite Opposition Movements in Iraq," 102-107.
[131] Baram, "The Radical Shi'ite Opposition Movements in Iraq," 103.

That is, pan-Arabism, or even the political Islam being promoted under the Iranian model, was inherently transnational and had the deliberate intention to export its ideology in a way that would perhaps lead it to future merger with other entities.[132] Iranian transnationalism was clearly delineated after the Islamic Revolution, wherein the call to export the revolution received official sanction and state backing (with even a cabinet ministry designed specifically for this purpose).[133] Iraqis, however, did not see much to gain from an inherent transnationalism. Certainly, international coalitions were important and to that extent they supported revolutionary activities in Lebanon and Iran, for example, yet they were hesitant to embrace transnationalism wholeheartedly because they had already seen how, under the ideology of pan-Arabism, Iraq Shias could be marginalized within it. To the Da'wa theoriests, then, there was no reason to accept either pan-Arabism or pan-Islamism, both of which they saw themselves as being potentially disregarded under. The solution of promoting a specifically Iraqi national identity was thus their way of resolving this contradiction and contending with the ideologies in circulation. Curiously, of course, there is a clear contradiction embedded in supporting and perpetuating the ideology (Iraqi nationalism) under which many of them had been persecuted and through which the state continued to enact structural violence on Shias. This was certainly a contradiction within the nation and one that these clerics seemed to have accepted for it was the only structure in which they could position themselves. The Iraqi nation could, should and would be reformed by the revolutionary activity that they would undertake later on and it was through them that this identity would be constructed and consolidated.[134] As discussed, this did not mean that transnationalism was completely and specifically disavowed by the clerics of Iraqi Shia

[132] Baram, "The Radical Shi'ite Opposition Movements in Iraq," 103-104.
[133] Dabashi, *Shiism,* 277-295.
[134] Baram, "The Radical Shi'ite Opposition Movements in Iraq," 105-106.

political theology; rather, they identified a contradiction within it and thus subordinated it to being one potential action among many rather than the essential one of supporting the Iraqi state.

The issue of ecumenism was one fraught with many difficulties for the Iraqi people. Ecumenism here refers to the idea that Sunnis and Shias could and should unite and that there should no longer be any discrimination or systematic oppression based on one's sect. On the surface level, it is clear that many of these groups explicitly supported ecumenism and in fact used its language quite often. This paper opened, for instance, with Ayatollah al-Sadr completely disavowing sect (along with race/ethnicity) in his vision of a lofty and exalted future Iraq.[135] Like their imagining of the Iraqi nation, the clerics who articulated political theology saw it as politically expedient to borrow the language of ecumenism for its many benefits. It could be mobilized to appeal to a broad range of people, for instance, and the Da'wa Party went so far as to claim that it even had Sunni members in its administration. The use of ecumenism was also important for the fact that it countered the rampant Sunnization of the state regime and the official discourse of sectarianism promoted by it.[136] In rejecting sectarian and promoting ecumenism, Iraqi Shia clerics consciously refused to identify themselves with the oppressive rhetoric of the central regime and, like their appeal to Iraqi nationalism, positioned themselves as the figures that would unite a resplendent and glorious Iraq. Furthermore, the discourse of ecumenism was useful for its ability to reject the sectarianism through which Iraqi Shias had been most damaged and oppressed most violently. Sectarianism was identified with being an ill of the regime and not something that a future Iraq should include and thus was completely disavowed in favor of ecumenism.[137] While their claims to having Sunni members have not been

[135] Baram, "The Radical Shi'ite Opposition Movements in Iraq," 108-109.
[136] Mallat, "Iraq," 75-77.
[137] Baram "The Radical Shi'ite Opposition Movements in Iraq," 107, 110.

analyzed at length by scholars (but are still called into doubt), the fact that they promoted ecumenism was their means by which to resolve the problem of sectarianism inherent within Iraqi nationalism as promoted by the regime and in rejecting the discourse of sectarianism that it spread. Moreover, by asserting a common Muslim identity to all Muslims regardless of sect parallel with an Iraqi identity regardless of race, Iraqi Shia clerics provided a religious counterpart to the secular discourse of nationalism and the nation-state.[138] In their support for ecumenism, then, they attacked an official discourse in circulation, resolved the contradictions of nationalism and gave a somewhat religious basis to their program.

The record does not exactly hold true in practice for their purported ecumenism, however, as can perhaps be expected. Despite their pretensions to having a Sunni members, it was clear that in the state structure that they envisioned, Sunnis and non-Muslims could only hope to be junior members for they were naturally excluded from the overseeing political organ that essentially controlled all state affairs.[139] Though they could continue to operate local civil courts, their ideology and religious interpretations would be subordinated to those of the Shias who would hold final say on judicial and legislative matters and whose religious ideologies and interpretations would be the official ones of the state.[140] The figures of Islamic history they promoted were clearly Shia and they had a distinct distaste from those that were lionized by the Sunnis such as Abu Bakr, Umar bin Al-Khattab and Uthman bin Affan.[141] In fact, Amatzia Baram specifically criticized Ayatollah al-Sadr for this, citing one speech wherein Sunnis were given the designation of *Muslimin* whereas Shias were referred to as *Mu'minin* (meaning

[138] Baram, "From Radicalism to Radical Pragmatism," 28-40.
[139] Aziz, "The Political Theory of Muhammad Baqir Sadr," 237-240.
[140] Aziz, "The Political Theory of Muhammad Baqir Sadr," 239-240.
[141] Baram, "The Radical Shi'ite Opposition Movements in Iraq," 109.

believers and one step ahead of merely being a Muslim) as evidence that the Shia clergy were not as ecumenical as they purported.[142]

This is, of course, to be expected and not at all surprising for the attentive student of Islamic history. Even pan-Islamism, a decidedly Sunni-based ideology, promoted ecumenism as a means of gaining broad support.[143] Though they cannot be said to be one hundred percent behind the rhetoric of ecumenism in practice, there is no denying that, to these Da'wa scholars, ecumenism was an essential part of their rhetoric and their political theology. Ecumenism was not merely politically expedient, it was the necessary outcome of their long persecution under the sectarian policies of the Iraqi state. It was essential to resolving the problems inherent within the paradigm of Iraqi nationalism that they adopted and was a key component of their theology. Thus, though ecumenism was unlikely to have been lived out in practice, there is no denying its central place within formulations of Iraqi Shia political theology.

Finally, Iraqi Shias made purposeful use of the language of social justice in their writings, a key ideology and set of discourses already in circulation and with which they were not unfamiliar. Many of them, as part of the broader trend of Islamic and religious movements more broadly worldwide, identified social justice and liberation as being something inherent to the religion itself. It did not exist outside of it and in fact, it could not be achieved without the faith. Ayatollah al-Sadr put this within his broader formulation of an Islamic economic system: social justice, to him, was "embodied in Islam," "crystallized within a specific social plan" and containing the principles of "mutual responsibility" and "social balance," all of which could be

[142] Baram, "The Radical Shi'ite Opposition Movements in Iraq," 110.
[143] Baram, "The Radical Shi'ite Opposition Movements in Iraq," 109-111.

achieved through a recourse to Islam as the vehicle of social justice.[144] Though Batatu critiques Ayatollah al-Sadr's writings on social justice as being nothing original or innovative in the field, I argue that this was typical of his style as well as that of other clerics.[145] Rather than imagining something completely new, Ayatollah al-Sadr took a concept that was already in circulation and gave it a particular religious language that could be mobilized as part of a broader political program and that could be used to resolve the contradictions inherent in the two competing world economic systems of the time. Though not being entirely original, his intervention was important for the fact that it articulated a specific language for social justice and placed it within the confines of his political program. In this manner, social justice became an indispensable component of Iraqi Shia political theology.

[144] Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, "Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr and the Principle of Social Justice," in *A Documentary History of Modern Iraq,* ed. Stacy E. Holden (Florida: University of Florida Press, 2012), 220-223.
[145] Batatu, "The Radical Shi'ite Opposition Movements in Iraq," 580.

Conclusion

As can be seen, then, Iraqi Shias made meaning out of the situations that they found themselves in as they developed and articulated their political theology. This political theology, coupled with their exact political program, was intended to resolve the contradictions inherent in the other ideologies that they were presented with, provide a theological basis for their movement (and such a basis was, of course, necessary for a specifically Islamic movement) and came out of the ideas and discourses that were already in circulation in contemporary Iraq. It was developed in the specific context of Iraq and thus contended with a variety of issues from the Sunnization and exclusion of Shias from the political establishment, the weakness of the Iraqi clergy and their non-activist history, the recent history of Iraqi political revolt and the new trends articulated by Ayatollah al-Sadr and others in the midst of the broader ideologies that captured the attention and political imagination of the broader Arab and Islamic worlds such as pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism.[146] In this manner, then, the political theology that was developed was truly Iraqi Shia in character; it contended with the specific conditions of the Shias of Iraq and emanated out of their specific theological tradition at the same time that it enshrined the Iraqi nation.

Acting in their own way is thus a characteristic of the Iraqi model and one that stands in stark contrast to that of Iran. The specifically transnational nature of Iranian revolt, the way that it emanated out of centuries of clerical involvement within politics and its specifically revolutionary bent are all points of comparison between the Iraq and Iran models that I have offered as means of studying political Islam. The true 'edge' in decentering Iran from the study

[146] Baram, "The Radical Shi'ite Opposition Movements in Iraq," 95.

of political Islam, then, is not merely than Iraq offers an alternative or even, in many senses, a counterpoint to the Iran model; rather, it prevents scholars from assuming too many things as essential and necessary to Shia political Islam itself. Though it is important to properly account for the history of political Islam, and thus state that many of the debates that took place in Iran had already been flourishing in Iraq for several years beforehand, it is of greater importance to state that preventing the Iran model from completing dominating the study and thus assuming that Shia political Islam broadly defined can be equated to the nation-specific developments that occurred in Iran. Not only does this prevent the Iran model from being over-generalized and decontextualized from its specificities within Iranian history, culture and politics, it also challenges scholars to shed the idea that the Iran model is the be all end all to the study of Shia political Islam. An active decentering of that model, and a proper historicizing of the study that takes it back several years and resituates it in Iraq, consequently does that; the multiple counterpoints that the Iraq model brings up are enough of a reason on their own for scholars not to assume or posit that the Iran model can be taken to be representative of Shia political Islam more broadly. Though there are clearly political reasons for the concentration of the study of Iranian political Islam, I contend that the sole focus on Iran is shortsighted and incomplete. Decentering Iran and focusing on its neighbor Iraq is but one means of extending the scholarship of political Islam outwards geographically and historically to get at the broad range of ideologies and actions that were undertaken and debated by those who fall under the broad umbrella of Shia political Islam. By doing this, the field may come to shed its assumptions that come out of the generalization of the Iran model. For instance, scholars may stop assuming that transnationalism was a core principle of all Shia political Islam when they observe the model of Iraq. Iraq thus does not merely provide a counterpoint, which would make it into the great Other of Shia

political Islam. Rather, the proper integration of its study coupled with the decentering of Iran come together to advance the field in new and fruitful directions.

At the close of this paper, it is, of course, of great importance to state quite clearly that though these Iraqi clerics and activists and cleric-activists had rigorous and lively debates over the course of the two decades covered herein, these debates and ideas were never actually translated into real life circumstances. By all measures, the clerics of this era failed in overthrowing the state, establishing the one they envisioned or even integrating themselves into the establishment better. In fact, the period since then has been marked by the 1991 Shia 'Intifada,' the First Gulf War, the US invasion of Iraq and the subsequent overthrow of the Saddam Hussein regime and the new Republic of Iraq, which has to some extent reversed the sectarian power balance of the pre-invasion era.[147] This is not to say that, now that Shias can be described as tentatively 'in power,' that the movements of this time succeeded. On the contrary, the current Iraqi state is nothing as they would have imagined and entirely dissimilar to their aims. The secular state has become more entrenched, revolt has passed out of the hands of the clergy and into the various paramilitary organizations that plague Iraq and the clergy has, with some obvious exceptions, reverted to a large extent into its old quietist stance (with some exceptions). Thus not only did these movements fail within their own time, they failed to come to fruition during the post-invasion era when circumstances may have been more favorable for them. It is beyond the purview of my research to get at the reasons for this, though there are many and they are varied and complex and have much to do with the character of the Saddam Hussein regime that this paper did not cover. I argue, however, and here I move to the present, that many of the issues grappled with today find their root in the time of the clerical involvement

[147] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 267-291.

in early republican Iraq. The movement of Shias into sectarian political parties, for instance, or the way official discourse has come to coopt ecumenism have clear origins in this time and are the inheritors of that legacy.

This study thus concludes by suggesting that scholars undertake two tasks: first, an active and purposeful decentering of the Iran model of studying Shia political Islam must be undertaken for the simple reason that Iran's history, being specific and rooted in its history, is not representative of the wide history of Shia political Islam. This does not mean that scholars should immediately move over to the study of Iraq or that they should embark on endless studies that compare and contrast the two nations. Rather, they should use comparative studies as a means of illustrating that political Islam was always mediated through the specificities of nation and era and that to assume that anything is inherently innate in political Islam tends towards poor scholarship rather than accuracy. Second, this time period is reified by the fact that it has passed into the present in modified form. I do not mean here to call on scholars to undertake specific examinations of contemporary Iraq and attempt to see where their roots lie in the time period heretofore discussed. Instead, scholars should attempt to adequately historicize this process. It is without a doubt true that the movements of this time failed in actualizing their goals in any concrete, significant manner yet the legacy that they left behind can clearly be seen. In their failures, then, how did these Shia political parties transition into the form that they exist in the modern day, for many of these parties are still around? How does the ghost of Ayatollah al-Sadr and the legions of activist clerics around him have salience and make claims on the present and on the ever-evolving relationship between clergy and state? What was the process by which these organizations were able to regroup after their failures and how did they endure the Saddam Hussein era? This paper thus does not end with the final year of the time period it discusses;

rather, just as the cleric-activists of that time found themselves in the midst of many different political circumstances and as the inheritors of the legacies that preceded them, so too do the movements of today. A rigorous accounting for them and for the histories they emanate from is a necessary direction in the scholarship of Iraq, Shia Islam and political Islam more generally.

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