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# Shrines of Dissidence: Shi'a Clerics and Political Mobilization in Baathist Iraq

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**Shrines of Dissidence:  
Shi'a Clerics and Political Mobilization in Baathist Iraq**

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**Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
Of the  
Prerequisite for Honors  
In Political Science**

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## Abstract

This paper explores the role of Shi'a clerics in inciting political mobilization in Baathist Iraq, looking particularly at four case studies: the 1991 Intifada, the First Sadr Revolts of 1977-1979 and the Second Sadr Revolt of 1999. It asks two questions: 1) Is the symbolic power of Shi'a clerics heightened during religious holidays, thereby making political mobilization more likely in religious, rather than regular, time? And 2) is the symbolic power of Shi'a clerics strengthened by geographical location, thereby making political mobilization more likely to occur in sacred spaces? The evidence suggests that there is a correlation between religious holidays and uprisings as well as between sacred spaces and uprisings. However, this link does not extend to the religious establishment. In fact, the data provides evidence that clerics are less likely to incite an uprising and more likely to either be co-opted or to act opportunistically and join when the movement gains success.

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## Introduction

On March 21st of 1991, a 90 year old Shi'a cleric appeared on Iraqi National television to denounce the uprisings that had sprung up all over Iraq.<sup>1</sup> His name was Abu Al-Qasim Al-Khoei and he was the Shi'i world's most eminent Ayatollah. His presence on National Television, although allegedly of his own volition, came a day after Republican Guard division tanks rolled into the holy city of Najaf with the words "No more Shi'a after today" painted on them.<sup>2</sup> Earlier that month, on one of the biggest Shi'i holidays of the year, an uprising had sprung up in the Shi'a-dominated south. The uprising, dubbed "The Page of Treason and Treachery" by Saddam Hussein had spread to all the Shi'i and Kurdish provinces within a span of less than two months and seriously threatened the Baathist power structure.<sup>3</sup> In retaliation, the Baathist regime arrested thousands of Shi'i clerics, levelled the Holy Shrines and executed thousands of Shi'is.

It is hardly surprising, given the tyranny of Saddam Hussein's rule, that Iraq's Shi'a population would want to rebel. But the 1991 uprisings raise a host of puzzles for scholars of ethnic conflict. How, in the absence of legalized civil society, did the Shi'a seemingly coordinate these massive uprisings? Moreover, the Shi'a were not successful in fomenting resistance in all places and all times. Can we explain, then, how and when resistance proved possible? And finally, what was it about the elderly cleric that caused Saddam to believe that he held the power to weaken, if not end, the uprisings? In this paper I argue that Baathist-era uprisings occurred through the political space that was provided by the dual force of religious holidays and sacred spaces.

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<sup>1</sup> Kanan Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence: War, Tyranny, Uprising and the Arab World*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1993), 97.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>3</sup> David D. Palki, Mark E. Stout and Kevin M. Woods, eds, *The Saddam Tapes: The Inner Workings of a Tyrant's Regime, 1978-2001*.(New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 207.

Social Movement theorists have long stressed the importance of using the right frames to incite a population.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, I argue that the method with which to determine the timing and location of uprisings lies in symbolic politics. At certain times in the Islamic Calendar, revolutionary leaders and clerics are more likely to mobilize the population in revolt. Because Shi'ism has several holidays with a strong focus on anti-oppression, the symbolic power of the clerics is significantly heightened at particular times of the year.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, I argue that Shi'a religious leaders have more power in certain sacred spaces like holy cities, holy shrines, seminaries, and mosques. It is because of the power of these symbols that the Shi'a proved capable of organizing resistance, even in the absence of resistance-coordinating institutions normally afforded by legal civil society. Furthermore, I argue that while clerics' power is heightened at religious holidays and in sacred spaces, non-clerical dissident leaders are also using religious symbolism to frame their revolt. Furthermore, these non-clerical leaders are also conjuring the clerics' names to gain legitimacy with the public.

The paper examines these hypotheses by exploring four case studies of uprisings in Baathist Iraq: the 1991 Intifada, the First Sadr Revolts of 1977 and 1979 and the Second Sadr Revolt of 1999. For the 1991 Uprisings, the data comes from a set of 154 interviews with witnesses and participants. The 1999 uprising is based on a set of sermons from 1997-1999 that are available online on popular Shi'a sites in audio format.<sup>6</sup> I also use secondary sources to find Baathist government documents, government meeting records and official Baathist publications. Looking at uprisings over this twenty-two year period allows us to control for key variables, including state strength as measured by Iraq's participation in external conflict. The Iraqi state was relatively strong and rising to prominence in the Middle East prior to 1991.<sup>7</sup> However, after the draining wars and sanctions, Iraq became a relatively weak state.<sup>8</sup> Holding the state strength constant across two sets of case studies (1991 and 1999 as weak, 1977 and

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<sup>4</sup> Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indian University Press, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam will Shape the Future* (New York: WW Norton & Company Inc, 2006) 43.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.shiavoice.com/> and <http://www.al-shia.org/>

<sup>7</sup> Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 206.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

1979 as strong) allows us to avoid attributing the revolts to state weakness exploited by rebels.

This research project has significant theoretical and empirical significance. The symbolic power of religion is something that is neither confined to Baathist Iraq nor to Shi'a. Religious symbolism has played a huge role in both relatively modern events like the Iranian Revolution and historical events like the Crusades. Iraq's situation is precarious and an understanding of how leaders can use religious symbolism to impact government formation and legitimacy is absolutely vital to the success of the state. But this goes even beyond Iraq; the entire Middle East is a region undergoing quick and unexpected change, and analyzing the role of religious institutions in mobilization will be key to understanding broader processes of social movement and conflict.

This paper proceeds by firstly defining the terms used. Then, it turns to an empirical overview of the proposed case studies. This is followed by a literature review on Social Movement Theory and Islam, which concludes the introductory chapter. The following three chapters are in-depth studies of each of the cases (beginning with 1991, then 1977-1979 and ending with 1999.) The last chapter concludes with an analysis of how the data derived from each of the cases lends support to the proposed hypotheses.

### **Definition of Terms:**

#### ***Political Mobilization:***

I define political mobilization as both a populist and vanguard-led social movement in which actors challenge the existing regime directly and employ violent and non-violent methods to disturb the status quo, effectively garnering the regime's attention and challenging its stability. Examples of Political Mobilization include demonstrations, mob riots, revolts, revolutions as well as smaller acts of organized violence such as assassination attempts.

#### ***Shi'a Clerics:***

When looking at religious leaders, I have only focused on one type of religious leadership: the clergy that have received formal education and have attained a certain status (as a *marji'i*) and *not* petty clerics who have received informal education or very



little formal education. The first type of clerics are those that most commonly issue jurisprudence and deal with theoretical issues. The second class of clerics are more involved in preaching, leading the population in public acts of worship (i.e. prayer, leading in pilgrimage, passion plays, etc...). Additionally, the higher-ranking clerics are more likely to lead acts of worship in famous mosques (like Masjid Al-Kufa)

### ***Religious Space:***

I define religious space as both religious holidays<sup>9</sup> and sacred spaces. The holidays include both holidays that all Muslims celebrate (i.e. Ramadan) and holidays that are particular to the Shi'a (i.e. Eid Al-Ghadeer). Many Shi'a holidays are simply days commemorating the birth or mourning the death of one of the Imams.

Sacred Spaces are any sites with religious significance, including the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala. Holy shrines, mosques, seminaries, *husainiya* (a gathering space particular to Shi'a) and religious schools and universities are all considered sacred spaces.

### **Review of the Cases**

Although political mobilization is not limited to revolts, the four cases studied in this paper are all revolts. More importantly, they are all Shi'i revolts. The first case of the 1991 Uprisings consists of a set of southern uprisings in the Shi'i territories and a Northern Kurdish uprising. This paper focuses only on the Southern Uprisings, as they occurred distinctly from the Kurdish uprisings. The First Sadr Revolts consist of a set of smaller revolts that occurred in 1977 and 1979. They are known as the Marad Al-Ras Revolt (in 1977) and the Rajab Intifada (1979) and both are associated with Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir Al-Sadr. The final case is the 1999 Safar Uprising that took place after the assassination of Ayatollah Muhammad Sadeq Al-Sadr. All four uprisings were unsuccessful and violently quelled by the Baathist regime.

Other instances of political mobilization in Baathist Iraq include the Dujail Crisis in which the Shi'a in the town of Dujail orchestrated a very sophisticated assassination

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<sup>9</sup> See Appendix for Shi'i calendar.

attempt on Saddam's life.<sup>10</sup> Assassination attempts were also made on key government officials and on Saddam's sons. However, this paper focuses solely on revolts and it relies on a set of primary sources that include witness interviews, clerical sermons, and official government documents. More details on the data and how it was collected will be presented in the introductory paragraphs to each of the cases.

### **Literature Review: Linking Social Movement Theory and Islamic Politics**

Social Movement Theory (SMT) underpins my understanding of resistance and revolution. However, this study focuses on social movements in a particular authoritarian context. Current SMT has only recently begun to delve outside of the realm of Western liberal democracies.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, this project uses careful historical understandings of Iraqi politics to assess the validity of broad SMT in the specifics of my case. Past theories have always presented specific reasons and cogent arguments as to why mobilization occurs; but few theories have attempted to answer *when* and *where* mobilization occurs. This is a question that the available literature fails to answer and that this research project hopes to illuminate.

SMT is an interdisciplinary study that explains the causes of social action, it can be defined as "a persistent and organized effort on the part of a relatively large number of people either to bring about or to resist social change."<sup>12</sup> In its earliest stages, SMT was limited to the study of mass behavior through the lens of social psychology.<sup>13</sup> In this understanding, there is a linear causal relationship between structural strains which induce psychological discomfort and result in social mobilization.<sup>14</sup> This classical model of collective action was applied to early studies of the Middle East. Amongst them was the argument that "Westernization" had led to income inequality in cities like Tehran, Algiers and Cairo, leading to events like the Iranian Revolution.<sup>15</sup> Another structural

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<sup>10</sup> James Menendez, "Seeking Justice in Dujail," *BBC News*, November 25, 2005, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4350104.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4350104.stm)

<sup>11</sup> Wiktorowicz, 10.

<sup>12</sup> James Defronzo, *Revolutions and Revolutionary Moments*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2011, 9.

<sup>13</sup> Wiktorowicz, 6.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

strain that is sometimes applied to Islamist mobilization is Western cultural imperialism.<sup>16</sup> However, when SMT was applied to Islam, it proved itself to be a weak theory because it could not establish a causal link between structural grievances and Islam. In particular, scholars could not explain why Islam was the salient ideology rather than another available ideology like pan-Arabism or Nasserism.<sup>17</sup> Early SMT approaches to Islam failed to explain the salience of Islam toward motivating collective action. Moreover, this approach could not predict the timing and location of social movements.

Resource Mobilization theory (RMT) was the response to the failures of socio-psychological social mobilization theory. RMT stresses that grievances manifest themselves in rational and organized movements and institutions.<sup>18</sup> RMT is centered on the ability of a movement to mobilize resources, recruit followers and to organize efficiently. Institutions, in an RMT understanding, are both formal and informal. They range from things like an official political party, a club, a formal religious space or a clandestine space.

Though RMT is heavily entrenched in theories of social movement in Western liberal democracies; its applicability to Islam is most commonly seen in the space that the mosque provides.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps one of the best examples of an Islamic RMT case is the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. They operated both officially and clandestinely at certain times, providing the space to air grievances and to alleviating economic hardship through social services neglected by the state. Similarly, Islamic cultural centers and Islamic NGOs all throughout the Middle East provide space for collective action.

The strength of this theory is that it allows for political space to exist in repressive regimes, such as Mubarak's Egypt or Baathist Iraq, by stressing the importance of informal institutions whose existence is invisible to the state. The idea of a vibrant space that exists outside of the state's notice has most recently been highlighted by studies of the Arab Spring. In the uprisings that spread throughout the Middle East, scholars and political commentators all were astounded by the power of the space of social media

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 11.

networks.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, students of the Iranian Revolution study the space provided by dissident cassettes smuggled across the border.<sup>21</sup> Political space can be discovered in the most unusual and unexpected forms, but it remains that its primary function is to provide its followers with the capacity to air very real--and potentially-- very dangerous grievances.

Despite the fact that RMT has traversed, intellectually speaking, far beyond the classical model of SMT, it still maintains similar shortcomings. While RMT does a much better job at explaining the Islamic roots of social movement in the Middle East, it fails to address questions of location and timing. RMT can explain the cause of an uprising only after it has occurred because it does not have the capacity to predict its occurrence. The study of SMT in more recent years has moved beyond RMT and into an explanation of political processes.

This political process model is based on three variables that are used to study the cause of collective action: structural, organizational, and ideational.<sup>22</sup> As Wiktorowicz emphasizes in his book *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, “social movements do not operate in a vacuum.”<sup>23</sup> The structural constraints consider exogenous factors such as the state institutional capacity, level of state repression, level of access to political institutions, government attitude towards opposition, and the stability of the elite.<sup>24</sup> Organizational constraints are the ability to mobilize resources (both financial and human resources). Finally, social movements cannot exist outside of the ideational factors of the culture that surrounds them.<sup>25</sup>

These variables are also present in studies of revolution. For example, DeFronzo attributes political mobilization (in the form of revolutions) to five factors: mass frustration, a fragmentation of the elite, unifying motivations, political crisis, and a permissive world context.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, in *Mobilizing Islam*, Carrie Wickham introduces more variables including a repressive state, a coercive security apparatus, economic

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<sup>20</sup> Habibul Haque Khondker, “Role of the New Media in the Arab Spring,” *Globalizations*, Vol.8, no.5 (October 2011): 675-679.

<sup>21</sup> Defronzo, 312.

<sup>22</sup> Wiktorowicz, 13.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>26</sup> DeFronzo, 12-20.

grievances, a lack of social welfare, a disenchanting intellectual class and an increased sense of social solidarity.<sup>27</sup>

A brief history of Baathist Iraq proves that all the aforementioned factors were present. Prominent books on the repressive Baathist state, such as Kanan Makiya's *Republic of Fear*, stress the existence of factors like a coercive security apparatus.<sup>28</sup> The level of state repression was extremely high in Iraq and the government's attitude towards opposition was negative.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, the state was controlled by elites encased in a system that did not allow access to other political parties (like Hizb Al-Dawa or the Iraqi Communist Party.)<sup>30</sup> However, dissidents' ability to mobilize human and financial resources was much higher than their ability to organize legally, because they did not rely on state institutions for their resources. For example, the Grand Ayatollah who leads Al-Hawza holds the allegiance of almost all the Shi'a in Iraq, in addition to being the recipient of a hefty tithe. Despite the presence of all these factors in Iraq, the Shi'a were not successful in fomenting collective action against the regime at all times and all places. The political process model does not offer leverage in explaining variation in the four cases under review in this study.

Scholars also study the use of frames in explaining the emergence of social movements. Frames are used to make sense of all experiences in the world that fall outside of the rigid fence of institutions.<sup>31</sup> When frames resonate with a population, they turn potential for collective action into tangible collective action.<sup>32</sup> Framing is prominent in studies of Islam and Islamist rhetoric. For example, scholars point to the common frame used by Islamists of "gharbzadegi" or "Westoxification."<sup>33</sup> These terms refer to the idea that a disease stemming from the West plagues the development and success of the Muslim world and that the recovery of a true and authentic Islam will

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<sup>27</sup> Carrie Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002)

<sup>28</sup> Kanan Makiya, *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq* (California: University of California Press, 1989), 44.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 228.

<sup>31</sup> Wiktorowicz, 15.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>33</sup> Valentine Moghadam, *Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), 158.

cure this disease.<sup>34</sup> In other words, they call for a return to Islam. When this frame resonates with people, it convinces them of its validity and it leads to social mobilization. Historically, we have seen this frame's resonance in the Iranian Revolution. The instigators of the Iranian revolution relied upon symbols of religion and a call for ending the Westernization of Iran that was imposed by the Shah's regime. This frame is also evident in revolutionary chants that, "Islam is the solution!" More radically, Al-Qaeda relies on the idea of a "western disease" juxtaposed against a pure essence of Islam to mobilize followers.<sup>35</sup> Ideational factors can be complicated because they are unique to their environment and cannot be applied universally with ease. However, they possess a unique strength in their ability to catalyze the process of social mobilization regardless of the environment they stem from.

Carrie Wickham in *Mobilizing Islam* argues that Islamists draw on the feeling of political alienation that the people have towards the regime to argue for an Islamic reform.<sup>36</sup> Although Shi'ism is the second largest branch of Islam, the followers of Shi'ism have developed a particular culture associated with their beliefs that sometimes not only separates, but isolates them, from other Muslims.<sup>37</sup> Scholarship on Shi'ism shows that its followers are highly sensitive to the ideas of oppression, subjugation, and injustice.<sup>38</sup> In studying Shi'ism it is important to emphasize the symbolic power of holy spaces, like shrines, as a space for gathering *and* as a symbol of overcoming oppression.

In this paper, I argue that these symbols are not only being used by clerics, but by non-clerical leaders to incite political mobilization. Sidney Tarrow, a prominent social movement theorist stresses that "modular forms of protest" (responding to grievances, use of institutional and organizational resources, and production of symbolic frames that are used to evoke a sense of injustice) can be used by anyone, anywhere.<sup>39</sup> In short, Islamic Activism is not unique, much like other forms of activism, it uses modular forms

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<sup>34</sup> Roxann Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought: texts and contexts from al-Banna to Bin Laden*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 11.

<sup>35</sup> Usama Bin Laden "Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Spaces" in Roxanne Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought: Texts and Contexts from al-Banna to Bin Laden* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009), 425-436.

<sup>36</sup> Wickham, 87.

<sup>37</sup> Nasr, 43.

<sup>38</sup> Baqer Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*. New York, New York: St.Martin's Press, 1999, 15.

<sup>39</sup> Wiktorowicz, 3.

of protest. Like many other groups, Islamic activists range from the extremist terrorist groups, to the politically- oriented groups that seek to achieve a particular agenda, to inward-looking spiritual groups and the list goes on.

In this paper, I rely on the study of symbolic logic resonance in authoritarian settings. I question the power of the frames that Shi'a clerics and non-clerical leaders used to mobilize the masses in revolt. In Iraq, the frames are specifically the symbolic power of Shi'i holidays and holy places. Baathist Iraq presents itself as a perfect place to study the timing and location of social movements.

## Chapter 1: The 1991 Intifada

Perhaps the most famous uprising in modern Iraqi history, the 1991 Intifada spread from the very southern city of Basra to the northern Kurdish cities of Duhok and Suleymaniya in a little bit over a month.<sup>40</sup> Because central Iraq remained under the control of the Baathist regime, the intifada is commonly interpreted as two separate uprisings: a Southern Shi'a-based uprising and a Northern Kurdish uprising. In fact, the intifada can more commonly be seen as a series of uprisings that erupted in various cities whose citizens had faced oppression at the hands of the Baathist regime. As a result of the uprisings, the Shi'a were brutally punished for their "treason." However, the coalition forces (namely, the United States) established a "safe haven" for the Kurds, thereby granting them defacto independence.<sup>41</sup>

This paper is particularly concerned with the series of uprisings that occurred in the Shi'a-dominated south. Because the entire intifada found its origins in the Shi'a-dominated south, it raises the question of the role of religion in inciting political mobilization. In this chapter, I will explore the spaces in which the southern uprisings occurred in order to determine whether or not Shi'a clerics played a causal role in inciting the rebellion, or if non-clerical leaders used religious symbolism to their advantage.

I propose the following hypotheses:

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<sup>40</sup> Makiya, 57-104.

<sup>41</sup> Edmund Ghareeb and Majid Khudduri, *War in the Gulf, 1990-1991: The Iraq-Kuwait Conflict and Its Implications*. (USA: Oxford University Press, 1988.) 207.

**H<sub>1</sub>: At certain times in the Islamic Calendar, Shi'a clerics are more likely to mobilize the population in revolt. Therefore, political mobilization is more likely to occur during holidays than during regular times.<sup>42</sup>**

**H<sub>2</sub>: Shi'a clerics have more power in certain sacred spaces (i.e. shrines, mosques). In particular, clerical power is heightened by geographical location (i.e. Najaf and Karbala). Therefore, political mobilization is more likely to happen in these sacred spaces.**

In order to test the hypotheses, I look at four broad sets of primary resources: cleric fatwas (jurisprudence), eye-witness accounts, Baathist publications, and official government documents. These resources will help determine the presence or absence of political rhetoric in religious practices.

I measure political rhetoric used in fatwas to see if there is a correlation between political rhetoric and the time of the uprising. I have conducted interviews with 154 Iraqis from different provinces who were participants, victims, and uninvolved observers to see what motivated the everyday people of these various cities to rebel. Finally, I look to the Baathist response to the rebellion to see whether or not they conceived it to be a religious uprising. Concerning the Baathist response, I would like to note, in particular, the “othering” rhetoric taken up by the regime. The Baathist regime has a long history of accusing Iraqi Shi'is of being loyal to the Islamic Republic of Iran on account of their shared religious identity.<sup>43</sup> In all speeches or official documents (from either side), comparing the timing of their release with the progress of the rebellion can help explain both the actual and perceived role of the clergy.

This data has provided partial support for the first hypothesis. According to this data, there is a positive correlation between religious holidays and political mobilization. This link, however, does not extend to any clerical establishment. Therefore, the data suggests that political mobilization is *more likely* to occur during a religious holiday; however, clerics will not necessarily be responsible for starting the uprising. I do not find

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<sup>42</sup> See Appendix for Shi'i calendar

<sup>43</sup> Makiya, *Republic of Fear*, 12.



support for my second hypothesis in the data set. The data does not decisively point to any correlation between political mobilization and holy spaces. Similarly, the data does not stress a link to a clerical establishment.

The data further identifies broader causal variables that align with SMT and rationalist approaches. For example, the data suggests that clerics are more likely to join an uprising *after* it has achieved a certain level of success. We can use rational choice theory to explain why religious clerics have little incentive to lead dissident movements. As rational actors, clerics are unlikely to lead a revolt if there is no pre-existing support for the movement that would assure its success. Because clerics are frequently targeted by oppressive regimes, they are less likely to be involved in any uprising unless they are sure of its success.

SMT explains that certain frames are employed by the leaders of a movement in order to garner mass support. The data provides evidence that religious frames are indeed components of an uprising, and are used heavily in the rhetoric of an uprising. The frames are embedded in the culture, they *are* the religious spaces and holidays. More specifically, certain holidays and certain places carry associations that resonate with the public. For example, some prayers that are associated with a particular holiday emphasize a sense of overcoming oppression that can be evoked by clerics in a different context. Clerics can use these frames to illicit a response from their audience. However, the data shows that while these frames were being used by the revolutionaries, it was *not* the clerics who first started using them.

In order to maintain the accuracy of the results, I will look at the variable of state strength across the four case studies. In 1991, for example, I characterize the Iraqi state as weak. It had just emerged from an 8 year war with Iran, invaded Kuwait, engaged with a coalition of international armies in the Gulf War, and was placed under sanctions.<sup>44</sup>

In this case study, I will follow the uprisings chronologically and geographically through the cities of Basra, Najaf, and Karbala. Although this does not cover every city in

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<sup>44</sup> Edmund Ghareeb and Majid Khadduri, *War in the Gulf, 1990-91: The Iraq-Kuwait Conflict and Its Implications*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) 79.

the rebellion, these cities present a wide range of the population and a study of the intifada, as it unfolded in each of them, will help us in determining the role of the Shi'i religious establishment. I will then conclude by re-assessing the questions I posed earlier and attempting to answer them for the 1991 case study.

### **1. Basra in the Intifada**

Scholars of modern Iraq are in agreement that Basra is the city in which the uprisings started.<sup>45</sup> An oil rich governorate situated in the very southern tip of Iraq, Basra played a huge role in the annexation of Kuwait and in the Gulf War.<sup>46</sup> The majority of its residents are Shi'a, although it is not a center of Shi'ism like Najaf and Karbala. It is a major economic city in modern Iraq, due to its role as a petroleum refining and exporting center.<sup>47</sup>

Despite the general consensus that the intifada started in Basra, scholars cannot agree upon the exact moment of its birth. According to various sources, the 1991 intifada was sparked by a commander of the Iraqi Army who had just returned from the war in Kuwait.<sup>48</sup> Shamed by the recent defeat, he denounced Saddam Hussein in a speech that ignited a revolution. The general then blasted a large portrait of Saddam with a tank, gathering a large, cheering crowd in the process.<sup>49</sup> While this story spread quickly throughout Iraq there are no witnesses that are able to confirm its validity. What this story represents, as Kanan Makiya argues, is the breaking of the barrier of fear that had previously prevented citizens from voicing their dissatisfaction with the regime.<sup>50</sup>

This act of rebellion was said to have happened on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1991, only shortly after the ceasefire that ended the Gulf War.<sup>51</sup> Many Iraqis, particularly soldiers,

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<sup>45</sup>Kanan Makiya, Khadduri & Ghareeb, Charles Tripp and Dina Khoury.

<sup>46</sup>*Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s. v. "Basra," accessed March 27, 2013, <http://o-www.britannica.com/luna.wellesley.edu/EBchecked/topic/55385/Basra>.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Makiya, 59.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

are adamant that the failure of the war and the dire conditions of the sanctions led to the mass restlessness and demoralization that caused the uprisings.

### **1.1 Demoralization and the First Gulf War**

The financially draining Iran-Iraq war had just ended when Iraq invaded and annexed Kuwait in August of 1990.<sup>52</sup> Iraq emerged from its eight-year conflict as an economically, militarily and morally exhausted state.<sup>53</sup> Although Iraq claimed historical ownership of Kuwait as the 19<sup>th</sup> province of Iraq (or, alternatively, as a part of the Basra governorate during the Ottoman Empire), many scholars and policymakers point to Iraq's \$70 billion debt to Kuwait (to finance the Iran-Iraq war) as the primary motivation for the invasion.<sup>54</sup> In addition to this, Kuwait increased its oil production after the Iran-Iraq war, causing the price of oil to drop, and thereby negatively impacting oil revenues in Iraq.<sup>55</sup>

The Iraqi government's decision to engage with the international community had domestic repercussions. In my interviews with Iraqis, two dominant themes emerged from our discussion of the invasion of Kuwait. Firstly, many people had been certain that Saddam had a "secret plan" up until the U.S. involvement, after which they realized that Saddam's attack on Kuwait had been *ashwa'i* (haphazard). Secondly, many people complained about their standard of living and the lack of resources (particularly gas and petrol for transportation).

In addition to the dismal domestic economic situation, the defeat of the Iraqi armed forces demoralized both the military and the general population. This demoralization was recognized by the military leaders, who were too afraid to report it

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<sup>52</sup> Ghareeb and Khadduri, 121-122.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 6 and 87.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 87.

to Saddam.<sup>56</sup> The general population seemed to have experienced a similar demoralization.<sup>57</sup>

The nature of the defeat also seems to be a cause of troop demoralization. Before Iraq and the other Arab countries had even properly discussed the invasion, the United Nations had imposed sanctions on Iraq under Resolution 661 on August 6, 1990.<sup>58</sup> The U.S. immediately intervened by establishing an international coalition force designed to drive Iraq out of Kuwait.<sup>59</sup> Under the infamous Operation Desert Storm, U.S. troops began with aerial attacks aimed to destroy Iraq's command, control, and communications.<sup>60</sup> On February 26<sup>th</sup>, Iraq accepted the UN's terms and Iraqi soldiers retreated using any vehicles available to them.<sup>61</sup> En route to Iraq, on Highway 80 (also known as the "highway to hell"), the troops were assaulted by coalition air strikes.<sup>62</sup> This demeaning retreat was only one aspect of the degradation the soldiers were subjected to. Interviewed soldiers complained that they "had nothing to eat" and that they "were left to fend for ourselves, we were degraded and [expendable]".<sup>63</sup> In addition to this, these interviews reveal a struggle between feelings of guilt towards what happened in Kuwait and feelings of animosity towards Kuwait, which some viewed as "a legitimate part of Iraq".<sup>64</sup>

This background of war demoralization is the birthplace of the intifada. This sentiment plagued not only troops, but the general population as well. However, demoralization is not sufficient enough an explanation to account for the mass uprisings in the South. In fact, this general mood of dissatisfaction and demoralization was reinterpreted through the use of religious frames, leading to a wider incidence of uprisings.

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<sup>56</sup> The Saddam Tapes, 203.

<sup>57</sup> I-57K, Interview Appendix.

<sup>58</sup> Ghareeb and Khadduri, 136.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> I-48K, Interview Appendix.

<sup>64</sup> I-136SAM, Interview Appendix.

## 1.2 The Birth of the Iraqi Intifada

While there is no doubt that war demoralization was *one* of the causes of the intifada, it alone cannot account for their distinctly Shi'i geographical aspect. Everyone, Sunnis and Shi'is alike, had participated in the war. And yet, the Southern Uprising was a predominantly Shi'i event. Kurds, of course, participated in a Northern Uprising but there were still a significant population of Iraqis who had been in both wars and had not participated in an uprising. The question of whether or not the Southern Uprisings *were* Shi'i is no doubt a controversial issue, however, when studying it in retrospect, there is an undeniably Shi'i rhetoric surrounding it.

This rhetoric manifests itself in the name commonly given to the 1991 intifada as *Al-Intifada Al-Sha'abaniya* which can be interpreted in two ways. The first interpretation, which is not religiously motivated, can refer to the duration of the intifada. It ranged from February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1991 to March 29<sup>th</sup>, 1991, which corresponds with Thursday, the 14<sup>th</sup> of Sha'ban 1411 to Friday, the 12<sup>th</sup> of Ramadan 1411 in the Islamic Calendar.<sup>65</sup> This interpretation derives the name *Al-Sha'baniya* from the name of the month "Sha'ban".

However, "Al-Sha'abaniya" is more commonly known as the name given to the Shi'i holiday that occurs on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Sha'ban. This holiday celebrates the birth of the hidden twelfth Imam, Muhammad Al-Mahdi. The intifada started slightly before one of the biggest Shi'i holidays of the year and gained momentum as the holy month of Ramadan came along. Unfortunately, very few cleric lectures and sermons are preserved to this day, so I am unable to trace the development of political rhetoric with time progression. However, through witness interviews, I am able to assess the importance of these days for the general public.

When asked whether or not the months of Ramadan and Sha'ban motivated them to join the intifada, 80% of respondents answered positively. The 20% who answered negatively were either Sunni and/or Kurds. Of the residents of Basra that I interviewed,

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<sup>65</sup> I used a Gregorian to Hijri calendar convertor.  
[http://www.islamicfinder.org/dateConversion.php?mode=ger-hij&day=29&month=3&year=1991&date\\_result=1](http://www.islamicfinder.org/dateConversion.php?mode=ger-hij&day=29&month=3&year=1991&date_result=1)

all answered positively that they had been impacted by the holy months. Though my results are based on a small sampling of the population, they are still indicative of the importance of the timing of the uprising.

Al-Sha'baniya, in particular, resonated strongly with the participants of the intifada. The birth of the twelfth Imam represents the historical Shi'i struggle against oppression and against the "*taghiya*" (tyrant). This notion of "rising against oppression" is prevalent in many Shi'i prayers and *ziyarat* (a form of Shi'i supplication that is commonly made on pilgrimages to holy shrines). The prayer that would have resonated most strongly at the time was the *Dua'a Al-'Ahd* (prayer of allegiance). In this prayer, the believer asks God to bring Imam Al-Mahdi to save the world from oppression and injustice.

*"O Allah make him [Imam Al-Mahdi] the refuge for Your oppressed servants  
and a helper for him who has no other helper besides You"*

*"O Allah place him [Imam Al-Mahdi] among those whom You have protected  
from the oppression of the oppressors."<sup>66</sup>*

From the verses of this prayer, the reader can distinguish the language in which Shi'is operate in. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of Sha'aban of any year in any Shi'i community (particularly an Arab speaking community), this prayer is the easily the most popular and relevant prayer. Historically, the Shi'a have been unable to establish a real conception of an Islamic state, instead they practiced *taqiya* (dissimulation) and tended to reluctantly accept the status quo government because they believed that true sovereignty rested with Imam Al-Mahdi, who has yet to appear.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, in Al-Mahdi's absence, scholars and clerics have all found themselves unable to assume the sovereignty required for governance.<sup>68</sup> However, despite the fact that they shied away from

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<sup>66</sup> Abbas Al-Qummi, *The Keys to the Heavens*.

<sup>67</sup> Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic*. (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1993.), 18.

<sup>68</sup> Euben and Zaman, 158.

governance, Shi'is have generally had a strong conviction that fighting oppression is a religious obligation.

When describing their feelings during the time of the uprisings, participants were more likely to use words like “thulm” (injustice) and “taghiya” (tyrant). These same words appear often in Shi'i writings (including the prayers and the ziyarat). Similarly, the sentiment of historical oppression was frequently repeated by Shi'i participants.

Although the people interviewed made no particular mention of the opening of a *physical space* by the Sha'baniya (for example, an increase in their mosque attendance), they did stress the importance of the timing. From a purely ideological perspective, it is clear from witness interviews that their religious beliefs were heightened by the Shi'i holiday, thus empowering them to participate in the intifada.<sup>69</sup>

This information aligns with the nature of the uprising in Basra. For example, some of the chants of the uprising were “maku wali ila Ali” and “la hakim ila Ja'afari”, meaning “There is no authority but Ali” and “No ruler other than a Ja'afari”<sup>70</sup> Of course, “Ali” refers to Ali Ibn Abi Talib, the founder of Shi'ism, while “Ja'afari” is simply another way to say Shi'i. This is a clear example of the use of religious rhetoric in the uprisings. However, while these chants called for a religious leader, there is no evidence that religious leaders introduced these chants.

It appears that the citizens of Basra were driven by the anti-oppression message brought forth by the occurrence of the Sha'abaniya. Religion only drove them to a certain point, it was neither the cause nor the central message of the uprising. While the Iraqi Government and some international actors worried about the relationship between the Iranian government and the Iraqi clergy, the participants displayed a relative nonchalance towards Iran's role as a Shi'i state, most of the rebels did not seek nor necessarily welcome Iranian interference. For example, when asked what government they had expected to create after the intifada, only 25% of the respondents in Basra said

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<sup>69</sup> Interview Appendix.

<sup>70</sup> Ghareeb and Khadduri, 193.

they wanted a theocracy. The rest demanded a democracy. Moreover, these rebels did not approve of clerics who aligned themselves ideologically with the Iran. Merely because Iran was not invited by the rebels does not mean that Iran did not attempt to influence the uprisings through the manipulation of some Iraqi clerics.

Iranian interference was much stronger in the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala than it was in Basra. Members of the Badr Brigade, organized by the Supreme Islamic Council for the Revolution in Iraq (led by Muhammad Baqir Al-Hakim) entered Basra, and started burning down the Basra Sheraton, bars, and casinos.<sup>71</sup> According to some sources, they even announced the establishment of an Islamic Republic.<sup>72</sup> Days later, on March 13<sup>th</sup> 1991, Khamenei officially encouraged the establishment of an Islamic Republic.<sup>73</sup> This came a day after the rebellion collapsed in Basra.<sup>74</sup>

There are two conclusions that we can draw from the reports of the course of the intifada in Basra. Firstly, the evidence suggests that although the residents of Basra were cognizant of their religious identity as Shi'is, this did not naturally align with a desire to emulate Iran, despite the association some Iraqi clerics (like Al-Hakim) with Iran. If anything, it seems as though the average citizens of Basra had quite forgotten about the Iranian Revolution. To external observers, this might seem preposterous since the Iranian Revolution was practically earth-shattering; however, it is important to draw a line between historical hindsight and between the decisions made by oppressed people.

Secondly, the example of Basra brings forth another puzzle. The evidence gathered from interviews shows that the motivations for starting the uprising were not religious. However, religious rhetoric was significantly present in the intifada. This puzzle brings forth several questions: who introduced this rhetoric, when did they introduce it, and what purpose was it meant to serve? In the proceeding sections, this paper will continue with an exploration of the uprisings in the Holy cities of Najaf and

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<sup>71</sup> Makiya, 90.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ghareeb and Khadduri, 194.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.



Karbala, which suggest that the rhetoric was introduced by non-clerics and exploited by the government in an attempt to rob the Shi'a of their Iraqi and Arab identity.

## 2. The Holy Cities: Najaf and Karbala

### 2.1 The Historical Context of Iraqi Political Shi'ism

Najaf is located to the west of the Euphrates, south of Baghdad and north of Basra.<sup>75</sup> It is a historical center of Shi'i knowledge, as it is the burying place of the first Shi'i Imam, the Prophet Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, Ali Ibn Abi Talib.<sup>76</sup> The holy shrine of Imam Ali has historically attracted Shi'i scholars and has housed the *Hawza*, the most important center of Shi'i scholarship in the world, where the most eminent Ayatollahs in Shi'i history have studied. At the time of the intifada, the leading cleric in the Shi'a world was Ayatollah Abu Al-Qasim Al-Khoei who resided in Najaf and taught at Al-Hawza. Historically, Najaf has always been the center of Shi'i resistance to the Sunni governments in Baghdad.<sup>77</sup>

Karbala, Iraq's other holy city, is situated north of Najaf on the west bank of the Euphrates.<sup>78</sup> It is the setting of the most famous massacre in Shi'i history in which the third Imam, Al-Hussein Ibn-Ali (Ali's son and the Prophet's grandson) and his family were murdered on the plains of Karbala by the forces of the Umayyid Caliphate, Yazid Ibn Mu'awiya.<sup>79</sup> Perhaps the most influential figure in Shi'ism, Imam Al-Hussain was cruelly killed because he refused to recognize the sovereignty of a tyrannical ruler.<sup>80</sup> According to Shi'i tradition, the people of Kufa (near Najaf) had invited Imam Al-Hussein to Iraq to become their leader instead of Yazid, however, when Yazid set out to murder the Imam, the people of Kufa abandoned him and his family. This act of betrayal continues to haunt Shi'is today, who revive the battle every year in the month of Muharram and mourn for forty days. Because Imam Al-Hussein and his family are

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<sup>75</sup> Mazyar Lotfalian, "Najaf." *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*. Ed. Richard C. Martin. Vol. 2. New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004. 501. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*. Web. 27 Mar. 2013.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Syed Akbar Hyder, "Karbala." *Encyclopedia of Religion*. Ed. Lindsay Jones. 2nd ed. Vol. 8. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005. 5088-5089. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*. Web. 27 Mar. 2013.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Moin, 16.

buried in the holy shrines of Karbala, the city became a center of international pilgrimage. More importantly, Karbala represents the ingrained Shi'i tradition of opposing the *taghiya* (the tyrant). The rhetoric of overcoming oppression and injustice is present in almost every Shi'i prayer and ziyara, particularly the ones associated with the story of the Karbala massacre.<sup>81</sup>

Karbala is also a center of Shi'i scholarship as Iraq's clerical classes are split between the two cities. Depending on where clerics are educated and who they are educated by, their ideas on political participation vary significantly. For example, Shi'a clerics educated by the Karbala-based Shirazi and Mudarisi families are more likely to be politically traditionalist and in favor of the rule of *'ulama* (scholars) than their Najafi counterparts.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, leading clerics in the international Shi'i community are split in their opinions of the role of politics within Islam. For example, Ayatollah Al-Khoei was opposed to Khomeini's *Vilayat e-Faqih* (the rule of the jurispudent), arguing that there is a quietist way to fight oppression.<sup>83</sup>

The ideological strife between the leading clerics of Karbala and Najaf manifested itself in the creation of several Shi'i religious-political organizations. The first and most well-known is Hizb Al-Dawa, established in 1958 in response to the increasing secularization of the Iraqi state.<sup>84</sup> The founders and leaders of the Dawa party were primarily from the clerical and merchant classes of Najaf.<sup>85</sup> The party had a transnational composition and spread its branches throughout the Shi'a Arab world, particularly in the gulf region (Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia).<sup>86</sup> Despite its multinational context, Hizb Al-Dawa's primary enemy was the Iraqi Baathist Regime.<sup>87</sup> The goals of the party were the eventual establishment of an Islamic polity.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Al-Qummi.

<sup>82</sup> Faleh A. Jabar, *The Shi'ite Movement in Iraq*, (London: Al-Saqi Press, 2003.), 218.

<sup>83</sup> Mahdi Abedi and Michael M.J. Fischer, *Debating Muslims: Cultural Dialogues in Postmodernity and Tradition*. (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin University Press, 1990.), 129.

<sup>84</sup> Jabar.,78.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>86</sup> Laurence Louer, *Transnational Shia Politics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.,114.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.,82.

The second most well-known political-religious group in modern Iraqi history is the Supreme Assembly for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (or SAIRI), established in 1982 in Tehran, Iran by Muhammad Baqir Al-Hakim, another Najafi cleric.<sup>89</sup> Composed of exiled Iraqi clerics and displaced Shi'i organizations, the group was created to pursue an agenda of political activism leading to revolution in Iraq.<sup>90</sup> Unlike Hizb Al-Dawa which strove to be a politically-independent Iraqi nationalist party, SAIRI was dependent on and inspired by the Iranian revolutionary establishment. One of the most startling developments in SAIRI was the establishment of *Faylaq Badr* (or, the Badr Brigade) composed of Iraqi deportees and prisoners of war.<sup>91</sup>

While Hizb Al-Dawa and SAIRI were both Najaf-founded, the Karbala Mudarisi and Shirazi families established a political organization of their own- the *Munathammat Al-Amal Al-Islami* (The Islamic Action Organization"). MAI was also established as a response to an increased secularization in the state. It allowed Karbala clerics to operate under their own understandings and rules without having to consult with what they considered to be a modernizing Najafi group.

Not only were these groups illegal and underground in the Baathist regime, but any person associated vaguely with them or with Iran was deported in the 1980s.<sup>92</sup> At the time Saddam Hussein's regime was engaged in expelling many Iraqi Shi'is because he claimed they were of Iranian origin and were thereby disloyal to the Iraqi state.<sup>93</sup> This historical persecution of the Shi'a coupled with the schisms between the Iraqi clerical classes is vital for understanding the role of religion in the intifada. Particularly, the political ideologies of the various religious-political organizations are critical in uncovering the role of the religious establishment in anti-government movements.

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<sup>89</sup> Jabar, 235.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Jafar., 253.

<sup>92</sup> Makiya, 218.

<sup>93</sup> Makiya, *Republic of Fear*, 19.

## 2.2 The Intifada in Najaf

News of the commander in Basra who had shot Saddam's picture reached the holy city of Najaf by noon of the same day.<sup>94</sup> Days later, on the 1st of March, the residents in Najaf began hearing news that the youth of the city were planning a demonstration.<sup>95</sup> The next day, which happened to be the Sha'abaniya, the youth postponed the demonstration to 2:30 pm of March 3<sup>rd</sup>.<sup>96</sup> At this point, the people of Najaf were skeptical about the occurrence of the demonstration. Because of Najaf's historical position as a Shi'i hub, the citizens of the cities did not believe that there was enough of a security void for a demonstration to be possible.<sup>97</sup> In addition to this, they did not think the political quietism of their religious leader, Ayatollah Al-Khoei, encouraged such things.<sup>98</sup>

Despite the skepticism of some of the citizens of Najaf, the planned demonstration did take place.<sup>99</sup> One citizen of Najaf reported that the demonstrators were mostly young men.<sup>100</sup> They started near the tunnel in Maidan Square and marched towards the holy shrine.<sup>101</sup> They came in large groups from the many different side-streets of Najaf, reports one witness.<sup>102</sup> Their chants were similar to those in Basra, "Saddam sheel iydak; sha'b al-Najaf ma yridak" (Saddam move your hand, the people of Najaf don't want you) and "Maku wali illa Ali; inreed hakim Ja'fari" (there is no governor but Ali, we want a Shi'i ruler).<sup>103</sup>

The rebels clashed with some security forces as they made their way to the holy shrine. Some of the rebels had weapons and by the time they reached the holy shrine, both rebels and security-men had been killed in the clash.<sup>104</sup> The rebels were successful in taking over the holy shrine that very same day. The fighting continued throughout the

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<sup>94</sup> Makiya. *Cruelty and Silence*, 64.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 65

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

night until the rebels had captured the police headquarters by 4 a.m. the next morning.<sup>105</sup> The man who witnessed the demonstration ended his account of the event by saying that it was Saddam's security forces who were responsible for instigating the violence.<sup>106</sup> This testament, the identities of the rebels, and my own personal interviews with witnesses speaks to the spontaneous nature of the uprising. Nothing in it seems planned, much less by a religious establishment. If, in the city of Najaf, the demonstration was turned into a violent clash it was not done so under the direction of Najaf's religious leader nor with the cooperation of Najaf's clerics.<sup>107</sup>

The role of the clergy of Najaf is perhaps most illustrated by the stance taken by Ayatollah Al-Khoei. On March 5<sup>th</sup>, the third day of the uprising, Al-Khoei issued his first fatwa since the uprisings started.<sup>108</sup> A traditional cleric, Al-Khoei had meticulously avoided involvement in politics throughout the entirety of the Iran-Iraq War.<sup>109</sup> In the intifada, however, Al-Khoei was pressured into taking some sort of action by Najafi citizens, who had grown wary of the state of anarchy that their city was experiencing.<sup>110</sup> Because he held the highest position in the Shi'i world, Al-Khoei's fatwas were the closest thing to law at the time. In fact, his fatwas were carried beyond Najaf- one witness recalled people who claimed to be Al-Khoei's agents entering the city of Afak (part of Al-Diwaniya Province) relaying the Ayatollah's instructions.<sup>111</sup> Despite the power and legitimacy that he possessed, Al-Khoei only issued fatwas that were concerned with keeping the peace.

In his first intifada fatwa, Al-Khoei urged the people to protect "people's property, money, and honor, likewise all public institutions".<sup>112</sup> He repeatedly instructed the people to follow the "laws of the Islamic Shar'ia".<sup>113</sup> Interestingly, Al-Khoei did not resort to the inflammatory language Shi'is usually use, he avoided the usual words that connoted injustice, tyranny and oppression. Even right after the high point of the revolt,

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Mahdi Abedi and Michael M.J. Fischer, 129.

<sup>110</sup> Makiya, 73.

<sup>111</sup> I-108D, Interview Appendix.

<sup>112</sup> Makiya, 75.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

when he could have easily moved the intifada in whatever direction he wanted to, Al-Khoei's primary concern was to avoid a state of lawlessness. Unfortunately, we do not have access to the words and actions of other clerics, however; we can easily assume that Al-Khoei's word abrogates any other fatwas issued by lesser jurists.

Two days later, Al-Khoei issued his second fatwa in which he established a Supreme Committee made up of nine high-ranking clerics who were charged to oversee the administrative tasks of running daily life.<sup>114</sup> Al-Khoei did not specify which territories they were charged to overlook, but based on the witness reports of Al-Khoei's agents, it is safe to assume that this committee was meant for all rebel-held territory.<sup>115</sup> Although this committee might seem like an explicit involvement in politics, it is important to remember that Al-Khoei was invited to act by the rebels. His actions were taken only after the rebels had captured Najaf and the committee's work consisted of preserving the peace by protecting prisoners, minimizing crime, distributing food and resources amongst the population, and providing access to basic services like healthcare.<sup>116</sup>

When interviewing Iraqis who were present in the South in the intifada, almost 60% of them described Al-Khoei's role as "positive" and "tawgihi" (instructional). 20% even went as far as to say that Al-Khoei was not political, but was forced into the political scene by the rebels. Another 10% of respondents did not know who he was<sup>117</sup>, and the remaining 10% viewed his role as "negative" (when pressed for further information, some participants' response was that he was *too* apolitical).

However, when asked to describe the role of the religious establishment (all clerics, regardless of their rank) in the intifada, only about 30% of the respondents used the word "tawgihi". 20% of the respondents claimed that they had played a "critical leadership role". However, another 20% insisted that the religious establishment played *no* role. 10% responded that the religious establishment played a negative role in the

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Interview Appendix.

<sup>116</sup> Makiya, 76.

<sup>117</sup> I-SAM, I-S, I-A, Interview Appendix.

intifada. Most interestingly, 20% of the respondents distinctly said that the religious establishment played a very minimal role because they feared the repercussions.

According to the timing of the fatwas issued by Ayatollah Al-Khoei, their content, and the opinions of the witnesses, it appears that the clerics in Najaf had not started the intifada in that city. It was a popular revolt led by the youth, it was only after the youth had taken over most of the city that the religious establishment became involved in maintaining the peace. This, however, does not mean that a certain class of clerics (specifically those with Iranian ties), did not try to hijack the uprising.

### **2.3 The Intifada in Karbala**

The intifada reached Karbala at 2:30 pm of March 5<sup>th</sup> when rebels, army deserters and civilians began attacking government buildings.<sup>118</sup> The rebels had captured the troops returning to Karbala (most of them being Karbalai citizens who had been in the army) and took their weapons and vehicles.<sup>119</sup> Most of these soldiers, returning from the horrors and destroyed camps of the war, had immediately joined the rebels.<sup>120</sup> By the morning of the next day, not only had the rebels controlled the entirety of the city, but they had also killed all the Baathist officials.<sup>121</sup> Interestingly enough, the first office that the rebels took control over was the *Awqaf* office or the Holy Endowments office (which controls the shrines of Imam Al-Hussein and Imam Al-Abbas).<sup>122</sup> They then moved to the police headquarters and established check points at the city's borders.<sup>123</sup> Similarly to Najaf, the rebels used the shrines as a base, as a prison for loyalists and as a make-shift hospital.<sup>124</sup> The people of Karbala viewed the shrines not only as their base, but as a safe haven. In the end of the intifada, Saddam infringed upon the sanctity of these holy spaces.

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<sup>118</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Endless Torment: the 1991 Uprising in Iraq and its Aftermath*. (New York, 1992), 53.

<sup>119</sup> I-78K, Interview Appendix.

<sup>120</sup> I-45K-I-46K and I-77K and I-78K, Interview Appendix.

<sup>121</sup> Endless Torment, 53.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> I-77K, Interview Appendix.

<sup>124</sup> Endless torment, 54.

In a few days, the number of rebels grew tremendously to a reported 50,000 consisting of the civilian rebels from Karbala, the army defectors, and an additional force from the SAIRI supposedly sent into Iraq by the exiled Muhammad Baqir Al-Hakim.<sup>125</sup> The SAIRI forces presence is hugely contested as there are various reports from Iraq that either contradict or confirm it. For example, in one of my interviews with a Karbalai soldier who had defected from the army to join the rebels, he states that he was running the Karbala border control when he saw Iraqis who had been in Iran enter the city.<sup>126</sup> Another Karbalai soldier-turned-rebel claims that there was no aid sent by Al-Hakim into Karbala.<sup>127</sup> Similarly, a rebel who had fled to the Rafha refugee camp in Saudi Arabia recalls that an agent of Al-Hakim came to visit the refugees to explain why the Badr Brigade had not come to their rescue.<sup>128</sup> The agent had said that Al-Hakim did not aid in the intifada because it was “an American conspiracy to get Iran involved in Iraq”.<sup>129</sup> Further confirming this report is an interview with an Iraqi man who had been exiled into Iran with SAIRI who recalled the Iraqi expatriates in Iran asking Al-Hakim to allow them to return to Iraq to help with the intifada but he had refused because the Iranian government was opposed to the involvement.<sup>130</sup>

According to the participants that I had interviewed from throughout Iraq, Al-Hakim played no serious role in the uprising. The majority of respondents either said that he played no role or merely a supportive non-involvement role. A few of the participants described his role as either “negative” or “very negative” but when pressed they explained that he had allowed Iran to control him. Either way we interpret the evidence of Al-Hakim’s role in Karbala, it all suggests that any involvement by the religious establishment (whether domestic or foreign) happened after the intifada. There is no evidence that the religious leaders had started the intifada in the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala. Despite this, the clergy paid a hefty price for the uprising when Saddam Hussein’s Revolutionary Guards quelled it.

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<sup>125</sup> Ghareeb and Khadduri, 194.

<sup>126</sup> I-46K, Interview Appendix.

<sup>127</sup> I-47K, Interview Appendix.

<sup>128</sup> I-143SAM, Interview Appendix.

<sup>129</sup> I-94D, Interview Appendix.

<sup>130</sup> I-103D, Interview Appendix.



### 3. The Baathists and the End of the Intifada

When the intifada started, religion was not the cause, but it was linked to the identity of the rebels. Although there is a correlation between the times of year and the occurrence of the rebellion, this correlation does not extend to the religious establishment. The intifada was not planned by anyone, particularly not the religious leaders. All of the participants in the intifada that have been interviewed for this paper described it as “ashwai’iya” or “spontaneous”. Furthermore, around half of them described it as *Al-Intifada Al-Shabiya* (the popular revolt) as opposed to the other half who described it as *Al-Intifada Al-Shabaniya*. Despite this lack of clerical involvement, there is a retrospective emphasis on religion today that does not align with the narratives we have just reviewed.

The most blatant example of this is when the Republican Guard entered Najaf on March 20<sup>th</sup> with “la Shi’a ba’ad al youm” (No Shi’a after today) painted on their tanks.<sup>131</sup> Or, when Saddam Hussein coerced Ayatollah Al-Khoei to denounce the uprisings on public television.<sup>132</sup> In official Baathist rhetoric, the intifada was considered to be the “page of treason and treachery” in modern Iraqi history.<sup>133</sup> The official Baathist newspaper, *Al-Thawra*, ran numerous editorials in which the Shi’a rebels were referred to as “ghawghai’iyin” (mob demagogues) or “rabble-rousers” in the words of Saddam Hussein.<sup>134</sup> *Al-Thawra* also labeled the rebels as “alien to Iraq”, it further degraded their religion as superstitious, calling their love for the Prophet’s descendants “primitive” and “uncharacteristic of a true Arab”.<sup>135</sup> *Al-Thawra* also compared Saddam Hussein (who supposedly mixes with ordinary people) with the Sayyids (descendants of the Prophet) and the clerics (who attempt to maintain their authority on ignorant people).<sup>136</sup> This rhetoric was thoroughly spread in non-Shi’i cities, residents from Samawa reported that all that they had heard about the uprisings was that they were caused by demagogues.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Makiya, 96.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>133</sup> *The Saddam Tapes*, 200.

<sup>134</sup> Jabar, 271.

<sup>135</sup> Makiya, 102.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> I-133SAM, Interview Appendix.

According to Saddam, it was the Americans and the Iranians who wanted to “hurt Iraq”.<sup>138</sup> The Americans in particular supported the intifada because it lowered the army’s morale.<sup>139</sup> Iran, on the other hand, trained the Shi’a leaders in “Persia”.<sup>140</sup> The use of the word “Persia” is meant to establish a sense of historical “otherness” in which Iraqi Shi’is are attributed to foreigners. By evoking the classic Arab-Persian conflict, Saddam is emphasizing the betrayal of the Shi’a.

This “other-ing” rhetoric was widely enforced by Saddam’s regime immediately after the intifada. For example, the Republican Guard soldiers who were dispatched to quell the uprisings were from Sunni areas and from the Yazidi community (who have a historical conflict with the Shi’a).<sup>141</sup> Not only was the punishment directed at Shi’is, but it was also excessively cruel. Escaped soldiers reported that they were offered a reward of 5000 dinars for killing an adult male, and 250 for killing a women or a child.<sup>142</sup> When the Republic Guard entered the southern cities, they did not hesitate to use napalm, cluster bombs and SCUD missiles to destroy the cities.<sup>143</sup> In Karbala, one resident recounts how pamphlets were distributed from planes that warned the residents that chemical weapons were going to be used against the rebels.<sup>144</sup> These pamphlets advised the residents to evacuate through a particular road, but then helicopters machine gunned them while they were on that road.<sup>145</sup> Downtown Karbala was totally destroyed, there were bodies on the streets and a pile of bodies extending outside the building reserved for washing the dead.<sup>146</sup> Regular homes were shelled and the residents of Karbala had either been killed, rounded-up, or escaped to neighboring cities.<sup>147</sup> In the aftermath of the intifada, there was a distinguishable Baathist effort to destroy everything and everyone that could be labeled Shi’i.

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<sup>138</sup> The Saddam tTapes, 200.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Makiya, 97.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>144</sup> I-70K, Interview Appendix.

<sup>145</sup> Makiya, 98.

<sup>146</sup> I-79H, Interview Appendix.

<sup>147</sup> I-K, Interview Appendix.

Even in Basra, which was not considered a holy city, soldiers shot at the residents and engaged in mass executions of civilians on the street.<sup>148</sup> Later the Baathist government attributed a mass grave 18 miles northeast of Basra to “Iranian and Shi’i rebels”.<sup>149</sup> In Najaf and Karbala, the Baathist regime took this Shi’ification of the intifada to extremes. After an initial round of indiscriminate bombing to recapture the city, they rounded up all the clerics.<sup>150</sup> The families of the clerics (including the family of Ayatollah Al-Khoei and the well-known Bahr al-Uloom family) were also captured by the soldiers.<sup>151</sup> Over 100 people associated with Ayatollah Al-Khoei were captured including his staff, students and colleagues.<sup>152</sup> The Holy Shrines of both Najaf and Karbala were bombed and looted.<sup>153</sup> Important mosques, libraries, religious schools, seminaries, houses of notable scholars, and the ancient cemeteries of Najaf were also destroyed.<sup>154</sup>

If the intifada had been started by what Kanan Makiya calls the “breaking of the barrier of fear”, then Saddam Hussein had managed to re-build it and to enclose the Shi’a within it forever. In previous sections, it became apparent that the uprising was not a religious movement. However, in quelling the intifada, Saddam Hussein clearly interpreted it as a Shi’i uprising. It is not Shi’i because of the political rhetoric of Shi’is, but rather it is Shi’i because Saddam Hussein engaged in a massive “Shi’ification” of the intifada. There is a danger in attributing religion to a popular revolt. When the people of Karbala, Najaf, and Basra revolted, they did it because they lived under a coercive regime that dehumanized them. For Saddam Hussein to later re-interpret the uprisings as “Shi’i”, is an attempt to remove himself from the equation.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In this paper, I have relied on evidence from the 1991 Iraqi Uprisings to explore two hypotheses about the role of religious leaders in political mobilization. The evidence collected in this paper came from a variety of sources and is meant to reflect the views of

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<sup>148</sup> Endless Torment, 48.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>151</sup> Makiya, 100.

<sup>152</sup> Endless Torment, 52.

<sup>153</sup> I-Karbala, I-Najaf, Interview Appendix.

<sup>154</sup> Makiya, 100.

participants, bystanders, the government, and the clerics. According to the first hypothesis, the power of religious clerics is heightened in holidays, meaning that political mobilization is more likely to occur in holidays than in regular time. Though the findings are inconsistent, the evidence generally provided support for this hypothesis. Particularly, interviews with participants reflected a heightened sense of religious affiliation during religious holiday. Similarly, Baathist sources expressed worries of the empowerment provided by the holidays.<sup>155</sup> The inconsistency, interestingly, occurs with the *non-participation* of clerics, who were not instigators of the revolt but, rather they joined once it had gained political momentum.

The second hypothesis had suggested that the heightened empowerment was provided by religious space. The evidence from this case study, particularly in the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala, does not provide support for this hypothesis. Rather, it appears as through the progression of the uprisings is more geographical than religious.<sup>156</sup> Although the rebels in Najaf and Karbala were focused on capturing the holy shrines, their movement did not rise out of these shrines: they were not the students of *Al-Hawza*, but were more often laymen or soldiers.

Regardless of whether we consider the role of religious space or religious time, it is clear that religious leaders played no role in *inciting* the revolution. However, based on the evidence from the cities of Basra, Najaf, and Karbala it appears as though the religious leaders joined the revolt only after they had been certain of its success. In fact, the majority of the rebels (with the exemption of a few skeptics) had been sure that the uprising was going to succeed. It was in *this* atmosphere that clerics joined the rebellion. Although the evidence cannot always explain the intentions of the clerics, it does prove that their power was heightened in religious holidays and it was used to advance the rebels' cause, whether or not they sanctioned it.

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<sup>155</sup> I-81H, Interview Appendix.

<sup>156</sup> See appendix for map of progression of Intifada.

## Chapter 2: The First Sadr Intifadas

### 1. Introduction

Al-Sadr is perhaps the most evocative surname in modern Iraqi history, belonging to a clerical Najafi family which has produced countless Ayatollahs and continues to play a huge role in contemporary Iraqi politics.<sup>157</sup> In the late 70s, Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir Al-Sadr was killed by the Baathist regime, and became an Iraqi legend and symbol of resistance and martyrdom.<sup>158</sup> Later in 1999, his brother, Ayatollah Sadiq Al-Sadr was assassinated by the regime after he had built a mass movement through his Friday sermons. Today, the family's namesake is Sadr City in Baghdad and its legacy is carried by Muqtada Al-Sadr, who has capitalized on his family's legendary martyrdom to seek political influence in post-2003 Iraq. However, despite Muqtada's excessive political dissidence, the true revolutionary in the family is the first Sadr.

What is now known as the First Sadr Intifada (which, in reality, is a series of smaller uprisings) started two years before the Iranian Revolution. Despite this, the story of Muhammad Baqir Al-Sadr and Hizb Al-Dawa's revolts are intrinsically tied to the story of the Iranian Revolution.<sup>159</sup> From the first revolt in 1977 to the assassination of Ayatollah Al-Sadr in 1980s, the Shi'a of Iraq and Iran voiced their discontent with the regime and, to some extent, their desire for a religious leadership. This time period also marks a monumental shift in Shi'i political thought. For the first time in Shi'i history, clerics like Khomeini and Al-Sadr shed their traditional apolitical roles and vocally politicized religion.

Like Khomeini, Al-Sadr believed in and called for a social revolution against oppression, injustice and exploitation in order to establish an Islamic polity and society.<sup>160</sup> He looked to the Islamic Republic of Iran as a prototype of Islamic society.

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<sup>157</sup> Jabar, 25.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Patrick Cockburn, *Muqtada: Muqtada Al-Sadr, The Shia Revival, and the Struggle for Iraq* (New York: Scribner, 2008) 37.

<sup>160</sup> Juan Ricardo Cole and Nikki R. Keddie, *Shi'ism and social protest*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986, 180.

Considered to be the “Khomeini of Iraq” by Iranians, Iraqis and the Baathist government, he posed a real threat to the Iraqi government.<sup>161</sup> Unlike Khomeini, however, Al-Sadr never directly espoused the idea of *vilayet e-faqih* (rule of the jurisprudent) though both scholars believed in the need for revolution and an establishment of an Islamic State.<sup>162</sup>

Because of the similarities between the two scholars, many people consider the Sadrist movement to be an attempt to export the Iranian Revolution into Iraq. Because of this, the first Sadr Intifada is usually studied as a revolt that was inspired by foreign interference. However, this chapter studies both the 1977 and 1979 revolts as corresponding to, and not caused by, the Iranian Revolution. In support of this, both revolts confirm the hypothesis that religious space and timing incite political mobilization. Moreover, the data from these revolts provides evidence that clerics do not incite uprisings, but rather, they join for one of two reasons: first, clerics are co-opted by rebels (an example of this is Ayatollah Al-Khoei in the 1991 intifada) and second, clerics act opportunistically and join a movement if they anticipate it being successful.

## **2. Sadr and Al-Dawa: A History of Political Dissidence**

Al-Sadr was one of the key founders of Hizb Al-Dawa, Iraq’s oldest and most well-respected religious-political party.<sup>163</sup> Because of this, the Sadrist political movement is tied to the leadership of the Dawa party. In its formative years, Al-Dawa faced two challenges: the first was an inner-Shi’a threat posed by the schism between the clerical families of Karbala and Najaf. The second and more important threat came from the secularists, better known as the Baathist state.<sup>164</sup>

Prior to 1968, the Baath party was preoccupied with internal fighting and with conflicts with the communists, leaving the Shi’i leaders relatively free to pursue their own agendas. <sup>165</sup> It was in this time period that Al-Sadr established Usul-al-Din College

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>162</sup> Islamic Dawa Party FAQ. <http://www.islamicdawaparty.com/?module=home&fname=faqs.php>

<sup>163</sup> Jabar, 96.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>165</sup> TM Aziz, “The Role of Muhammad Baqir Al-Sadr in Shii Political Activism in Iraq from 1958 to 1980,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25, no.2 (May, 1993): 6.

and worked on research, while Hizb Al-Dawa increased its membership.<sup>166</sup> Everything came plummeting down when the Baathist regime fully grasped power in 1968. The Baathists attempted to eliminate the Shi'a religious establishment by shutting down religious schools and colleges (including Al-Jawadain and Usul-al-Din College) as well as confiscating the money set aside for the University of Kufa and shutting down the only religious journal, *Risalat Al-Islam*.<sup>167</sup>

Al-Sadr and Muhsin Al-Hakim collaborated in an attempt to orchestrate a mass demonstration to protest against the government.<sup>168</sup> In response, the government accused Al-Hakim of attempting a coup d'état.<sup>169</sup> The government then tried to expel any foreign students from Al-Hawza, but Ayatollah Al-Khoei issued a fatwa counter-acting that, forcing the government to cancel their plans.<sup>170</sup> In response, the regime resorted to arresting and executing Al-Dawa leaders.<sup>171</sup>

### **3. The First Sadr Uprising: Marad Al-Ras, 1977**

The First Sadr Revolt occurred in Safar of 1977, falling in the *Arbaeen* (literally “forty”, in reference to the final days of the mourning period for Imam Al-Hussein and the martyrs that had been killed in Karbala). Because of the timing it was known as the “Safar Intifada” by Hizb Al-Dawa and “Marad Al-Ras”<sup>172</sup> or “The Arbaeen” by the people.<sup>173</sup> It was preceded by the Baathist regime's attempt to prohibit the religious procession of thousands of Shi'is from Najaf to Imam Al-Hussein's shrine in Karbala to commemorate his martyrdom.<sup>174</sup> The government's ban was ill-timed, coming after 15,000 Shi'a soldiers were killed in a war against the Kurds.<sup>175</sup> To further add to the

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> “Marad Al-Ras” literally means “the return of the head” in allusion to the story where when Imam Al-Hussein dies, his enemies behead him and parade his head around the cities in victory. His son reclaims the head and takes it back to bury it with Imam Al-Hussein's body in Karbala. His son, also the 4<sup>th</sup> imam Zain Al-abedeen, is walking along the same path the pilgrims are taking in the procession.

<sup>173</sup> Jabar, 208.

<sup>174</sup> Aziz, 9.

<sup>175</sup> Jabar, 208.

people's frustration, the building of a dam on the Euphrates had triggered a destructive drought in the south.<sup>176</sup>

Not unlike the 1991 Intifada, the revolt was not only a response to the ban but to the dire domestic situation as well. It was started in Najaf on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Safar (five days before Al-Arbaeen), when the youth began to distribute pamphlets throughout the city, urging the citizens to participate in the annual procession from Najaf to Karbala.<sup>177</sup> This led to small revolts within the city where people shouted "Noble Najafis, hoist aloft your banners".<sup>178</sup>

When the procession started, thousands of people held up banners that proclaimed that "The power of God is above theirs [the Baathists]".<sup>179</sup> As they reached Khan Al-Rubi'i (which marks the first quarter point between Najaf and Karbala), the police attempted to stop the march but failed. The protestors obstinately moved forward, ignoring the government's negotiation attempts and promises of lifting the ban.<sup>180</sup>

In response, the government attempted to use security forces to stop the procession from entering Karbala in *Khan Al-Nus* (the halfway point between Karbala and Najaf), the protestors fired back and attacked the local police station.<sup>181</sup> Al-Sadr, worried about the protestors, sent them a message with Muhammad Baqir Al-Hakim urging them not to chant against the regime (particularly not against Saddam Hussein or President Ahmad Hassan Al-Bakr). The protestors did not heed his advice, and began chanting "Saddam take your hands off, neither our army nor our people want you."<sup>182</sup>

The government failed to stop the procession at first, because many of the security forces were Shi'i and therefore sympathetic to the people.<sup>183</sup> The Baathists retaliated brutally by calling upon special security forces and fighter jets.<sup>184</sup> Nearly

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<sup>176</sup> Cockburn, 37.

<sup>177</sup> Jabar, 212.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Aziz, 9.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Cockburn, 38.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Aziz, 9.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.



sixteen people were killed and two thousand were arrested in this attack, including many clerics.<sup>185</sup> Muhammad Baqir Al-Hakim and Muhammad Baqir Al-Sadr were amongst them, but had to be released because the government feared the Hawza's reaction.<sup>186</sup>

The case of this first revolt provides support for both hypotheses because it took place during the height of a religious holiday (the Arabaeen) and between the two holiest cities in Shi'ism (Najaf and Karbala). Although clerics did not capitalize on the political space provided by the procession, the rebels certainly did. The leaders of the revolt were not clerics, they were Najafi youth who were mostly students, merchants, or conscripts.<sup>187</sup> Ten of them were executed or tortured to death by the Baathist regime, and one (Abu Yusra Balaghi) went into exile in London.<sup>188</sup> Additionally, none of them were affiliated with any Islamic group, particularly not Al-Dawa.<sup>189</sup> Clerics played a similar role in Marad Al-Ras to the role they would play in 1991, that of being co-opted by the rebels. Al-Hakim, for example, was not only the emissary sent by Al-Sadr to the rioters but also the one responsible for the negotiations between the rioters and the government.<sup>190</sup>

Marad Al-Ras was the uprising that made the Baathist regime aware of the tremendous power of religion in Iraq. Their reaction was shrewd, they attempted to adopt the religious symbolism to serve their own ends. For example, they declared the birthday of Imam Ali a national holiday.<sup>191</sup> Saddam Hussein also made a show of giving money to the holy shrines and visiting them.<sup>192</sup> However, this attention is obviously insincere as it is also accompanied by a ban prohibiting any member of the Baath party from participating in the annual procession to Karbala.<sup>193</sup> Baath members were also told to discourage people from participating in these events and to instead encourage people to participate in more nationalistic and patriotic practices. Furthermore, clerics were

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<sup>185</sup> Cockburn, 38.

<sup>186</sup> Aziz, 9.

<sup>187</sup> Jabar, 211.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>190</sup> Aziz, 9.

<sup>191</sup> Jabar, 215.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

warned that their religious freedom would only be respected if they kept away from politics.<sup>194</sup> At the same time, the Baathist regime began to exploit crevices in the religious establishment and to emphasize the differences (like the Arab-Persian dynamic).<sup>195</sup> The strength of these tactics would not withstand the next few months when the Iranian Revolution unfolded and shook the world around it.

#### 4. The Iranian Revolution and the Rajab Intifada

Though the Iranian Revolution took the world by surprise, Hizb Al-Dawa's leaders immediately capitalized on it by going to Al-Sadr and asking him to assume a leadership role.<sup>196</sup> Initially, Al-Sadr was cautious, claiming that the timing was not right and that he required several more years to increase his academic ranking in the Hawza.<sup>197</sup> Despite his words, Al-Sadr still voiced support for the revolution, even while Khomeini was in Paris.<sup>198</sup> The success of the revolution emboldened Al-Sadr and altered his previously cautionary approach to political Islam.<sup>199</sup>

When Khomeini assumed power in Iran, the first thing Al-Sadr did was to declare a three day holiday at the Hawza. He also organized a peaceful procession to Al-Khadra mosque in celebration, where Ayatollah Al-Khoei led prayer.<sup>200</sup> Al-Khoei and his disciples distanced themselves from Al-Sadr and his movement.<sup>201</sup> When congratulating Khomeini, Al-Sadr not only addressed him as the supreme marji'i but as the *Imam* as well.<sup>202</sup> Al-Khoei, by contrast, addressed Khomeini as "hujjat al-Islam" which is a much lower-ranking title.<sup>203</sup> In a further show of support, Al-Sadr sent one of his disciples, Sayyid Muhammad Al-Hashimi to Iran as his representative.<sup>204</sup>

The affable and somewhat constructive correspondence between Al-Sadr and Khomeini alarmed the Baathist government, particularly when Khomeini discouraged

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 225.

<sup>197</sup> Cockburn, 40.

<sup>198</sup> Aziz, 10.

<sup>199</sup> Jabar, 227.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 228.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Cockburn, 40.

Al-Sadr from visiting Iran and instead instructed him to remain in Najaf, despite the government's harassment.<sup>205</sup> Khomeini, of course, was alluding to Al-Sadr's political role in Najaf. Al-Dawa's leadership decided that it was now a religious obligation for them to stage demonstrations to protest the regime, much like what had happened in Iran.<sup>206</sup> Al-Dawa and Al-Sadr reached an agreement to co-organize the demonstrations, with Al-Sadr as the central leader and decision maker.<sup>207</sup>

The result of this collaboration was the Rajab Intifada which lasted from May 22<sup>nd</sup> to May 31<sup>st</sup> 1979.<sup>208</sup> The dates correspond to 25<sup>th</sup> of Jamad Al-Thani through the 5<sup>th</sup> of Rajab in the Hijri calendar. Rajab is not only one of the four sacred months of Islam but also the month in which there are six Shi'i holidays, three of which fall in the time period of the Rajab Intifada.<sup>209</sup> In the intifada, Hizb Al-Dawa established a movement called *al-mubaya'a* (the allegiance) in which thousands of Shi'is went to Najaf to pledge allegiance to Al-Sadr.<sup>210</sup> Some of the verses chanted by the crowd were "In the name of Khomeini and al-Sadr, Islam will always be victorious".<sup>211</sup> Al-Sadr did not approve of *al-mubaya'a*, because it brought too much danger to the people that came to his house.<sup>212</sup> More importantly, he was disarmed and worried by the regime's lack of response to the mass movements.

Al-Sadr's fears were realized; the mass uprisings had allowed the Baathists to trace the Al-Dawa networks.<sup>213</sup> In reality, they had only allowed the *al-mubaya'a* movement to continue as long as it did so that they could film the visitors and register their identities.<sup>214</sup> After they arrested Al-Sadr, a series of demonstrations took place throughout the Shi'a cities in Iraq on the 17<sup>th</sup> of Rajab.<sup>215</sup> The regime then released Al-Sadr to put him under house arrest, and arrested some 4000 to 5000 Al-Dawa

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<sup>205</sup> Jabar, 231.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 230.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> See appendix for list of holidays

<sup>210</sup> Jabar, 230.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid. 232.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 232.

members, executing over 200 of them.<sup>216</sup> They then asked Al-Sadr to appear at a press conference to prohibit joining Al-Dawa (thereby undoing his previous fatwa that prohibited Baath party membership.) They also asked him to publically support the Ba'athist regime.<sup>217</sup> Al-Sadr, of course, refused.<sup>218</sup>

A few days before, on March 31<sup>st</sup>, it was decreed that Al-Dawa membership was a capital offense.<sup>219</sup> This decree added to the destruction of Al-Dawa's human and financial capital, causing the party to dwindle into virtual non-existence. The rebels then realized that the best way for them to protest is individually, thereby putting an end to mass political mobilization. Examples of individual attacks include the attack on Baath officials during the Ashura and the attempted assassination of Foreign Affairs Minister Tariq Aziz while touring Al-Mustansiriya University, both at the hands of members of the Munathammat Al-Amal Al-Islami (a Karbala based Islamist group).<sup>220</sup> Al-Sadr himself agreed that these individual attacks were more potent, as some of his students and disciples reported that he began to establish connections with high ranking officials in an attempt to disrupt the regime from the top.<sup>221</sup>

Despite both the mass movement and individual attempts, the Sadrist movement failed. On April 4<sup>th</sup>, the government arrested Al-Sadr and his sister Bint Al-Huda.<sup>222</sup> Their torture and execution ignited several small demonstrations in the Shi'i districts of Baghdad and in Najaf and Karbala, but they were subdued by the security forces.<sup>223</sup> Al-Sadr is now known as the first martyr, his execution marks the point of no return between the Baathist regime and the Shi'a of Iraq. Before Marad Al-Ras and the Rajab Intifada, the relationship between the Baathists and the Shi'a was strained. After the government's excessively brutal reaction to the uprisings, the Shi'a of Iraq confirmed their status as the oppressed majority. This anger would brew inside of them for years,

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 233.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 234.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 233.

<sup>221</sup> Cockburn, 41.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 234.

<sup>223</sup> Cockburn, 43.

and their later attempts to revolt would only intensify the perpetual state of fear and tragedy that they lived in.

## 5. Conclusion

The case of the First Sadr Revolts provides support for both hypotheses. The series of revolts that occurred in the late 70s were centered in the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala and took place during religious holidays. More importantly, both cases provide evidence that aligns with the findings from the 1991 case study: clerics do not start uprisings, but they join them when they either are co-opted by the rebels (or, in this case, by Hizb Al-Dawa) or they act opportunistically and join a movement when it achieves a level of success. Al-Sadr is a perfect example of this: he did not intervene in Marad Al-Ras until the situation became dire, forcing him to assume a cautionary role similar to Al-Khoei's in 1991. Later in the Rajab Intifada, he was buoyed by the success of the Iranian Revolution and Khomeini's faith in him. In both cases, neither Al-Sadr nor clerics associated with him began any of the uprisings. While Marad Al-Ras was instigated by youth, the Rajab Intifada was a product of Al-Dawa's political ambition fanned by Iran's spectacular success.

## Chapter 3: The Second Al-Sadr Revolt of 1999

### 1. Introduction

When Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir Al-Sadr was killed by the Baathist regime in the late 70s, he became an Iraqi symbol of resistance and martyrdom.<sup>224</sup> His brother, Ayatollah Sadiq Al-Sadr became the official grand Ayatollah of Iraq after the death of Ayatollah Al-Khoei in 1992.<sup>225</sup> This official recognition was orchestrated by the Baathist regime which hoped to control him and pit him against what they viewed to be the traditionally Persian clerical class of Ayatollah Al-Sistani and Al-Khoei.<sup>226</sup> This move, however, backfired as Ayatollah Al-Sadr organized an impressive base of supporters and began to challenge the government, culminating in his assassination. Much like his elder brother, he became a symbol of Shi'a resistance that was later

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<sup>224</sup> Jabar, 25.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 272.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., 183.

abused by his son, Muqtada Al-Sadr, for political power. Muqtada capitalized on the fame of his father and uncle and used it to sabotage government legitimacy and national cohesion in post-Baathist Iraq.

The assassination of Sadiq Al-Sadr led to widespread dissidence from the Shi'i community and culminated in the deaths of many Iraqi Shi'is in one of the least known massacres in modern history.<sup>227</sup> The Second Sadr Revolt, as it is called, took place across many Southern Iraqi cities including Najaf, Karbala, Basra, and Baghdad.<sup>228</sup> The revolts began in Basra on the night of March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1999.<sup>229</sup>

As the following sermons will reveal, Ayatollah Al-Sadr was successful in building a politicized mass base using religious symbolism. He relied on his location in the holy mosque of Kufa and on the many holidays celebrated by Shi'is, to slowly demand changes of the government and incite dissidence amongst the people, most notably by using religious chants. The uprising, however, took place *after* his death (or, it can be argued *because* of his death). While the 1991 revolt was motivated by structural grievances that were later captured by the religious establishment; the second Sadr revolt was motivated by an individual using religious frames to incite the people. The first revolt reflects support of a structural SMT perspective while the latter movement reflects the perspective of resource mobilization theory. Though both movements were instigated in different ways, a common theme is the strategic basis of decision making.

The data used in this chapter is a set of Friday sermons from 1997 through 1999 that are available online on most Shi'i websites in audio and textual format.<sup>230</sup> In order to confirm the accuracy of these sermons, I used data triangulation to verify the contents of the sermons that I have relied on in this chapter.

The data from the Second Sadr Revolt provides evidence for both hypotheses. Ayatollah Al-Sadr was successful in utilizing religious space and religious holidays to build a mass movement. His case is different from the 1991 Intifada and the First Sadr

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<sup>227</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Ali Hassan al Majid and the Basra Massacre of 1999* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2005), 10.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Websites included <http://www.shiavoices.com/> and <http://www.al-shia.org/>

Revolt in that he played the role of the instigator, and was not being co-opted by rebels or acting opportunistically.

## 2. Holidays and Sermons

### 2.1 Muharram 1998

In the early days of Muharram, the month associated with the martyrdom of Imam Al-Hussein, Ayatollah Al-Sadr delivered two Friday sermons every week from the great mosque in Kufa.<sup>231</sup> His sermons on the 4<sup>th</sup> of Muharram (a few days before the *Ashoura*, the day of Imam Al-Hussein's murder) were primarily concerned with Friday prayer as a social obligation. He begins with a disclaimer, stating that although scholars tend to focus on Imam Al-Hussain's story in Muharram, he has decided to focus on the importance of Friday prayers. He delves into the historical context of Friday prayers, explaining that the prayers were politicized by the Sunni sect in the days of the Caliphate. In the days of the Abassid and Ummayid dynasties, Caliphates used Friday prayers to legitimize their rule; equating the Imam of the prayer to the Imam of the community. In order to avoid legitimizing the rule of the Sunni caliphates, the Shi'a have historically eschewed attending Friday Prayers. Al-Sadr then stresses the importance of following in the Prophet's footsteps and hosting Friday prayers now that there can be a Shi'i cleric to lead them. He refers to the hadith (narratives) of both the Prophet and the Imams, which extol the benefits of Friday prayers. In his second sermon, he instructs scholars to deliver Friday sermons that are accessible to the general public. He ends by stating that he will take on a new role as a scholar, one who is willing to engage in all aspects of public life and is not limited to merely issuing fatwas from a distance.

In this brief period before Ashoura, Al-Sadr uses his sermon time to encourage Muslims to attend Friday prayers and to encourage scholars to preach to the general public. The next Friday marks the height of Ashoura and he begins by boldly demanding: "*Ask yourselves, who killed Al-Hussein?*" He then declares that anyone who approved of the act is complicit in the murder, not only the people who physically

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<sup>231</sup> Friday prayers generally consist of 2 sermons and a short prayer. It is prayed at the same time as the noon prayer, Duhr.

carried it out. More importantly, he begins a discussion of historical criminal states and tyranny, which, by virtue of the ideals they espouse, are also complicit in the murder of the Imam. Although he focuses on the Byzantine Empire in particular, one cannot help but wonder if he is alluding to another tyrannical state.

The speeches for the next few weeks are concerned with the temporary nature of this world, the importance of Friday sermons, and the importance of the role of the Hawza in solving “problems on the street” (social problems). Nearing the end of Muharram, he encourages religious people to act with calmness. He also tells a story of one of the Imams who has the courage to stand up to tyranny. He ends the month by telling people that God does not help those who do not help themselves, so the people have to “wake up”.

In terms of political rhetoric, we see it increasing as we reach the days of Ashoura, and gradually decreasing into generalities afterwards. The example of Muharram provides support for the first hypothesis, in which clerics are more likely to attempt to mobilize the population in religious holidays. Al-Sadr uses Muharram to encourage Friday prayer attendance, something that is relatively new to the Shi’a of Iraq.

## **2.2 Sha’ban 1998**

Ayatollah Al-Sadr delivered two Friday sermons the day before the Sha’baniya, and two sermons the week before. His sermons from the week before are concerned with discussing the virtues of Ahl Al-Bayt<sup>232</sup>, and thus are more general. He focuses, in particular, on Imam Al-Hussein and urges his audience to visit his shrine on the Sha’baniya. Additionally, he also discusses the role of the Imam as the leader. As the time for the holiday approaches (on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Sha’ban), Al-Sadr begins to focus on two particular issues: the world and society that Imam Al-Mahdi will create and the role of this current community in creating the right conditions for Imam Al-Mahdi’s appearance.

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<sup>232</sup> “Ahl Al Bayt” translates into “The People of the House” which refers to the family of the Prophet, the descendants of Fatima and Ali Ibn Abi Talib.



For the first, Al-Sadr focuses on how Imam Al-Mahdi will rid the world of evil and oppression and fill the earth with justice. He explains that the world will be safe for the people and unlike the Imams before him, Imam Al-Mahdi will not have to be politically quietist in order to avoid pledging allegiance to tyrants.

Secondly, Al-Sadr encourages the people to use their untapped energy for the good of society. In particular, he mentions that he had asked people to construct a monument or work of art that depicts the importance of Friday prayers. He says that a lot of people have responded and that he is pleased to announce the opening of an art gallery showcasing the pieces. In addition to this, he announces a poetry contest Ramadan.

His sermons from Sha'ban follow a pattern similar to Muharram, in which Al-Sadr makes general comments before the holiday and only begins to hint at politics during the holiday. At the height of the holiday, Al-Sadr perhaps alluded to his own situation with Saddam Hussein when he spoke of historical tyrants who have sought legitimacy from religious leaders.

### **2.3 Ramadan 1998**

Ayatollah Al-Sadr begins his Ramadan sermons before the month has even started. Before Ramadan, his sermons are focused on *ibadat* (acts of worship) including prayer, fasting, and being good to others (he focuses on orphans, in particular). He encourages people to use God's holy month to pray and seek redemption. Before the month of Ramadan, he makes no mention of politics nor attempts to build society (through prayer, contests, etc...)

However, this all changes on the 6<sup>th</sup> of Ramadan. He begins the first Friday sermon of the month by leading the crowd in a chant:

*“No, No to the wrong, no, no to America, no, no to Israel, no, no to colonialism, no, no to arrogance.”*

Although it is clearly political, the chant does not seem at all threatening to the Baathist regime. In fact, the chant is an attack on the enemies of the Baathists. The rest of his speech follows a similar dynamic: he begins by directly attacking the West, then

implicitly alludes to other corrupt regimes. He then recites a Quranic verse which promises that God will destroy and replace [those nations] who act with arrogance and believe themselves invincible. As an example of this, he brings up the fall of the “might” British Empire. This undeniably political rhetoric is by no means a direct attack on the status quo, however it is hard not to make the connection between the fall of the British Empire and the seemingly impossible fall of Saddam’s regime. Interestingly, he manages to insert the Hawza into the equation without directly challenging the regime. He does this by tying the U.S. and Britain to colonialism and by then stating that the Hawza and colonialism are “mutually exclusive”. In this way, he is not only legitimizing the *political* role of the clerics and identifying their enemy, but he is doing it in such a way that the Baathist regime cannot deny their political role.

In the following week, he takes it further by leading the masses in a chant that is in the local Iraqi dialect and not in the traditional *fusha* (classic) Arabic. The use of the local dialect is a means of increasing accessibility to the public. Firstly, speaking in *amiya* (local Arabic) makes Al-Sadr accessible to a broad base of people, because not everyone is comfortable with *fusha*. Secondly, the local dialect is more powerful in igniting feelings in people as it is the language they both think in and use in informal prayer (i.e. some of the chants, supplications, stories and passion plays from Shi’a oral history and literature). The chant says:

*“This, this is our goal, this, this is our work, this, this is our Imam, this, this is our enemy, this, this is our Hawza, it, it is our glory, it, it is our leader, it, it is our goal.”*

What begins as an innocuous pledge of allegiance to the Imams quickly turns into a glorification and politicization of the Hawza- as it is deemed the “glory”, “leader” and “goal” of the people. This can easily be interpreted as a direct challenge to the regime- after all, Al-Sadr has just asked a mass of people in the holy mosque in Kufa to recite, in the local dialect, a chant that pledged their allegiance to the religious establishment. He has done this in the middle of the holy month of Ramadan. Perhaps as a strategic move, Al-Sadr chooses to use his second sermon to talk about the benefits and linguistic

origins of the word *sawm* (fasting). Though his motives cannot be determined, it is clear that he used the power provided by Ramadan.

The next sermon follows a similarly mellow tone, discussing the merits of Imam Ali, the virtues of Laylatul Qadr (the night in which the Quran was revealed), and God's mercy. Then, in what appears to be a pattern, he uses the sermons from the 27<sup>th</sup> of Ramadan to thank God that electricity has returned to Iraq and to the "noble Hawza". Though the Hawza's relationship with the electricity seems vague, Al-Sadr continues to appeal to the people by saying that in God answering their prayers, he has brought victory to those who are right, to those who are oppressed, and to the noble Hawza.

He concludes with an interesting remark about how religious holidays and holy spaces allow people a chance at redemption, citing the example of closed coffeehouses in Ramadan. With this, he continues past Eid to the month of Shawwal, which has no important religious holidays. During Shawwal, Al-Sadr limits himself to discussing the importance of remembering religious holidays and the linguistic origins of the word "Eid", both being subjects that pose no threat to the regime. The increase in political rhetoric during Ramadan and the consequent decrease in Shawwal provides support for the first hypothesis, which stresses increasing political rhetoric during religious holidays.

#### **2.4 The Kufa Mosque: Eid Al Ghadeer**

Eid Al-Ghadeer fell on a Thursday, meaning that the first Friday sermon that dealt with it occurred a day later.<sup>233</sup> In these sermons Al-Sadr focuses on three key issues: the historical context of the Kufa Mosque, the importance of Friday prayers and the sovereignty of the *mujtahids*<sup>234</sup>. Al-Kufa Mosque is Imam Ali's mosque and possibly the oldest mosque in history (pre-dating the Ka'aba, as it used to be the mosque of ancient Prophets). Al-Sadr evokes the image of Imam Ali delivering a sermon from the very same place Al-Sadr and his followers are standing in at that moment. He also mentions other Shi'i figures including Muslim Ibn Aqeel, Sayeda Zaynab and, most

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<sup>233</sup> See list of Shi'i holidays in appendix for more details.

<sup>234</sup> High ranking Shi'a clerics who have the necessary knowledge to be able to interpret Sharia and make a decision.

importantly, Al-Mukhtar. The image of Al-Mukhtar, the man who avenged Imam Al-Hussein's death, is particularly powerful because it is the image of the man who had stood up for *Ahl Al Bayt* and attempted to right the wrongs committed by the umma (the Muslim community). He then continues to explain why Friday prayer is better than simply praying *Dhuhr* (the mid-day prayer) on Friday. He ends by explaining why Friday prayer is permissible by reasoning that while sovereignty rests with God and governorship with the Imams, in the absence of Imam Al-Mahdi, the *mujtahids* are capable of assuming this responsibility.

While he makes no direct political references in the day after Eid Al-Ghadeer, Sayed Al-Sadr clearly appeals to the holiness of the mosque that he stands in and the religious significance of the historical figures that had once stood within it. Simply because of this, we see that religious clerics do take advantage of holy spaces during holidays, thereby providing support to both hypotheses.

### **2.5 Death of Imam Al-Sadiq: Assassination and Uprising**

The atmosphere in which the uprisings occurred in was one of tension on both an international and domestic level. At the time, the U.S. had launched Operation Desert Fox (which Sayed Al-Sadr refers to several times in his sermons) and the Baathist regime's relationship with the Shi'a community was becoming more tenuous.<sup>235</sup> The Baathists had assassinated members of the Shi'a clergy as well as thousands of Shi'a who had participated in the 1991 intifada.<sup>236</sup> As Saddam Hussein's grip on power was being challenged by the international world, he sought to legitimize his rule through Al-Sadr. Saddam Hussein demanded that Al-Sadr declare him as the leader of Iraq in his Friday sermon.<sup>237</sup> Al-Sadr refused and when told to cancel Friday prayers, he replied with "I will pray. I will pray. I will pray".<sup>238</sup>

Knowing that his dissenting relationship with the government could only end in one way, Al-Sadr soldiered on in his sermons. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of Shawwal, which marks the death of the 6<sup>th</sup> Imam, Ja'far Al-Sadiq, Al-Sadr began his Friday sermon by leading tens

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<sup>235</sup> Cockburn, 103.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid. 104.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

of thousands in a chant that demanded the release of clergy from the Baathist prisons.<sup>239</sup> He announced that the arrest of any believer is like arresting him and that if the prisoners were “not released by next Friday, then it becomes incumbent upon all Friday lecturers in Iraq to demand their release”.<sup>240</sup> The chant was equally powerful and direct “We want, we want, we want, immediately, immediately, immediately”.<sup>241</sup>

Tensions began to escalate after this speech. Witnesses report the presence of non-Najafi and non-Kufi security forces in the Kufa Mosque as well as government officials attending the prayers and demanding that Sayed Al-Sadr refrain from hosting them.<sup>242</sup> It is also reported that Ahmed Chalabi, the Iraqi opposition leader living in London, received a message via members of Hizb Al-Dawa from Al-Sadr which allegedly read “I need help. Saddam is going to kill me.”<sup>243</sup> Saddam did arrange the assassination of Al-Sadr and two of his sons (Mustafa and Muhammad.) While driving in Najaf, they were machine-gunned by a mysterious car.<sup>244</sup> When Al-Sadr was taken to the hospital, his entry was delayed and doctors later reported that security forces did not allow them to enter his room. Ayatollah Al-Sadr and his two sons had bled to death.<sup>245</sup>

In the wake of his murder, the Al-Sadr Intifada emerged. Though by no means as large as the 1991 intifada, it was also brutally suppressed by the Baathists. Although it was originally planned for February 28<sup>th</sup> (9 days after the murder of Sayed Al-Sadr), it occurred more spontaneously because it was delayed by Al-Hakim and SCIRI who were supposed to bring the Badr Brigade to aid the rebels.<sup>246</sup> Al-Hakim (as well as many other scholars) had previously condemned Al-Sadr for supposedly being a collaborator. The Iranian Government had also been outraged at Al-Sadr’s announcement that he was the supreme leader of Iraq (thereby challenging Khamanei of Iran).<sup>247</sup> This probably led Iran to forbid Al-Hakim from aiding the rebels, much like what had happened in 1991.

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Sermon from 25<sup>th</sup> Shawwal

<sup>241</sup> Sermon from 25<sup>th</sup> Shawwal

<sup>242</sup> Cockburn, 105.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid. 109.

The uprisings were smaller, the biggest was in Basra on March 17<sup>th</sup>, in which armed citizens attacked government buildings and killed Baathists.<sup>248</sup> In the end, however, the uprising had failed for the same reasons that 1991 failed: lack of organization and support. What is truly remarkable about it was that Al-Sadr had managed to build an entire movement publically and that he did not have to resort to underground tactics. Even more remarkably, this movement (although having failed in 1999) continues to this day under the fire-and-brimstone mentality of its leader and Al-Sadr's youngest son, the notorious Muqtada Al-Sadr.

### 3. Conclusion

An analysis of the celebratory and mourning holidays shows that Ayatollah Al-Sadr encourages the building of civil society and social movement on these holidays. He uses both his own power as a high-ranking cleric as well as the power of Shi'a symbols (the Imams, etc...) to encourage his listeners to become active members of society. The most important example of this is the stress he places on attending Friday prayer. He encourages it through many mediums- including, but not limited to, his own words, public art galleries and poetry contests. He equates this participation in society with the higher purpose that the Imams represent- that of creating a safe and just society. Though this is by no means a direct attack to Saddam's regime, it is still an active buildup of civil society. This buildup can culminate in a violent social movement, like the one we see after Al-Sadr's assassination.

However, the idea of building civil society through Friday prayers was actually a controversial issue amongst Shi'a.<sup>249</sup> Traditionally, Shi'a clerics avoided Friday prayers because they believed that only a just ruler could lead Friday prayers and they did not want to legitimize the Sunni state. By encouraging Friday prayers, some critics argued that Al-Sadr's move meant that he, as a Shi'i leader, was embracing the Baathist State as a legitimate state.<sup>250</sup> Al-Sadr's own sermons tell a different tale, as do his followers. Like

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<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 89.

Al-Sadr said in his sermon, Friday prayers are the symbol of a cleric who is involved in society and was accessible to his constituents. This outlook is further expressed by his sending out emissaries to remote areas to announce Friday prayers and to deliver sermons that dealt primarily with social and economic issues, while mostly avoiding the political.<sup>251</sup> According to the Al-Sadr sermons that are studied in this paper, there is a noticeable increase in the usage of political rhetoric during holidays. Al-Sadr's appeal to the everyday people and his clear departure from the traditional stance taken by others (like Al-Sistani and Al-Khoei), allowed him to build a power-base that remains well-defined to this day.<sup>252</sup>

Ayatollah Al-Sadr played politics at a larger scale than most people credit him for. After establishing a mass support base through his interest in the lives of everyday people, he began to use common Shi'i symbols, particularly Imam Al-Mahdi, to change society. The most vivid example of this is his how Al-Sadr repeatedly explained to his followers that the Shi'a had to create a world in which Imam Al-Mahdi could appear in, not expect him to do to the work that they should have done for the betterment of their own societies.<sup>253</sup> Al-Sadr was also successful in garnering the support of the youth and in restoring the traditional Islamic customs. This build-up of social capital and youth could only be interpreted as a latent threat to the Baathist regime.

The example of the second Sadr Revolt provides evidence for both hypotheses. Through the careful reading of Al-Sadr's sermons, it becomes clear that his usage of political rhetoric increased in holidays, and he was able to lead large crowds in chants. Similarly, Al-Sadr was successful in evoking the image of Imam Ali, the most important figure in Shi'ism, by lecturing from Imam Ali's mosque in Kufa. This usage of religious space and time allowed him to build a strong base of supporters that revolted because of his assassination and continue to revolt in his name today.

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<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., 93 and *Shabaniya* sermons.

## Conclusion

This paper has three main findings. Firstly, it proves that there is a correlation between religious holidays and political mobilization. Specifically, under the Baathist regime, uprisings were more likely to occur during religious holidays than during regular time. Research from interviews and Friday sermons collected from the 1991 and 1999 case studies show that participants in revolts are *conscious* of the religious timing.

Secondly, uprisings are more likely to occur in sacred spaces (mosques, shrines, seminaries and holy cities). In all but the 1991 case study, the revolts started in the holy city of Najaf. The 1999 case study in particular started in the Kufa Mosque. In addition, the 1977 Marad Al-Ras revolt erupted during a religious procession between the two holy cities of Najaf and Karbala.

Thirdly, non-clerical rebel leaders use the power of religious space to incite mobilization. In fact, the data shows that clerics, for the most part, *do not* play a role in inciting an uprising. Rather, the data proves that religious leaders join an uprising in one of two ways. The first possibility is that clerics are co-opted by either rebels or by worried locals. In 1991, Al-Khoei was asked by Najafi notables to assume a leadership position. Rebels also evoked Al-Khoei's name and repeated his fatwas to gain legitimacy. In 1977, both Al-Sadr and Al-Hakim were co-opted by the rebels and forced to interfere in the rebellion.

In 1979, Al-Sadr hesitantly accepted a leadership position when asked by Hizb Al-Dawa. However, his resistance wore off and he eagerly assumed leadership of the revolt after witnessing the success of the Iranian Revolution and receiving direct support from Khomeini. He represents the second possibility: that of clerics acting opportunistically when they believe that a revolt is going to be successful.

These findings are summarized in the following table:



Uprising	1991 Intifada	1977 Marad Al-Ras/ Safar	1979 Rajab Intifada	Second Sadr Revolt
<b>Date (Gregorian)</b>	Feb. 28 <sup>th</sup> – March 29 <sup>th</sup> , 1991	Feb. 4 <sup>th</sup> - Feb. 10 <sup>th</sup> , 1977	May 22 <sup>nd</sup> - May 31 <sup>st</sup> , 1979	Feb. 28 <sup>th</sup> - March 17 <sup>th</sup> , 1999
<b>Date (Hijri)</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> Sha'ban- 12 <sup>th</sup> Ramadan, 1411.	Safar 15 <sup>th</sup> - Safar 20 <sup>th</sup> , 1397.	Jamad Al-Thani 25 <sup>th</sup> - Rajab 5 <sup>th</sup> , 1399.	Thul-Qi'ida 12 <sup>th</sup> - Thul Qi'ida 29 <sup>th</sup> , 1419.
<b>Religious Timing?</b>	<b>Yes.</b> <i>Al-Sha'baniya</i> and Ramadan.	<b>Yes.</b> <i>Al-Arbaeen</i> .	<b>Yes.</b> Celebrating birth of Imam Ali, Imam Al-Sadiq, Imam Al-Hadi and Imam Al-Jawad.	<b>Yes.</b> Mourning death of Imam Al-Sadiq.
<b>Religious Space?</b>	<b>No.</b> South cities (Shi'i cities) and Kurdistan	<b>Yes.</b> Road from Najaf to Karbala	<b>Yes.</b> Najaf, near Al-Sadr's house.	<b>Yes.</b> Southern Cities (Shi'i cities) and Kufa Mosque.
<b>Instigators</b>	Soldiers <b>Non-clerics.</b>	Youth <b>Non-clerics.</b>	Youth <b>Non-clerics.</b>	Instigated by the assassination of Sadiq Al-Sadr.
<b>Clerics' Role</b>	Instructional (Al-Khoei), <b>co-opted</b> by notables. Supportive noninvolvement (Al-Hakim), <b>opportunistic</b>	Instructional (Al-Sadr) Supportive (Al-Hakim) Both <b>co-opted</b> by rebels.	Al-Sadr was at first <b>co-opted</b> , but then <b>opportunistic</b> after Iranian Revolution and support from Khomeini	<b>Inciting</b> , built a mass movement through Friday sermons at Kufa Mosque.
<b>State Strength</b>	<b>Weak</b> (emerged from two wars)	<b>Strong</b>	<b>Strong</b>	<b>Weak</b> (under sanctions and Operation Desert Fox)

Taken together, these findings are aligned with SMT and rational choice theory. SMT places importance on frame resonance. This paper proves that leaders successfully use religious frames (in the form of religious symbolism derived from religious holidays and sacred spaces) to incite mass movements. Furthermore, rational choice theory emphasizes that actors are self-interested, which aligns with the co-optation and opportunistic reaction of clerics.

This holds several implications for the future of Southern Iraq and other highly-religious societies. Firstly, it means that policy-makers and scholars should worry less about the power of religious clerics and more about the ability of *any* actor to utilize religious frames to incite revolt. The example of Muqtada Al-Sadr is the most poignant at this point. Al-Sadr has used the legacy of his father and uncle to mold himself into the

third Sadr, even though he lacks the religious credentials, he is still able to incite the population using the same frames that his predecessors used.

In future research, students of Middle Eastern Studies and Political Science should study whether the example of a nearby successful revolution induces clerics to join a revolution. In the First Sadr Revolt in 1979, Ayatollah Al-Sadr acted opportunistically because he was inspired by the success of Khomeini and the Iranian Revolution.

The opportunistic behavior of clerics is particularly worrisome in our world today. In the wake of the Arab Spring, there is a fear that clerics will “hijack” the revolution. The data from this paper, although stemming from Southern Iraq, provides findings that are applicable to any religious society in which clerics are rational actors. Unfortunately, the four revolts studied in this paper all proved to be unsuccessful. However, had they been successful (particularly the First Sadr Revolt), would it have led to a theocracy à la Vilayet e-Faqih? More importantly, now that Islamist parties are reaping the spoils of the Arab Spring Revolutions, what does this mean for the political future of these states?

On the other hand, it is important to note that non-religious leaders use religious symbolism, *even when clerics do not*, to incite revolt. These leaders are not necessarily well-versed in religion and exploit its resonance with the masses to achieve their own political aims. This can have the unintended consequence of causing observers to inaccurately attribute religion to political actions (including violence and acts of terrorism). This is particularly significant in religiously and ethnically fragmented regions, like the Balkans or Iraq, where leaders are more likely to trigger their constituents through the use of religion. This can pose a problem for members of ethnic or religious groups that are associated with certain social movements by virtue of their identity, and not their beliefs.

Ultimately, this paper highlights the importance of understanding that both religious leaders and non-religious leaders who use religion in social movements are rational actors. In contemporary politics, many of our problems stem from the unfounded belief that leaders with whom we do not agree with are irrational. The data

from this paper shows that, on the contrary, religious symbolism is used rationally by leaders.

## Appendix

### Interviews

#### 1991 Intifada

The ages and occupations of the interviewees is reflective of their status during March 1991. Their ages/status today is not relevant, therefore not listed.

#### 2013

**[B = Basra, N= Najaf, S = Suleymaniya, K = Karbala, H= Hilla (Babylon), BAG = Baghdad, SAM = Samara, SIM = Simawa, A = Arbil, D= Al-Diwaniya]**

I-1B: University Student [education], Male, February 11, 2013

I-2B: University Student [trade & economics], Male, February 11, 2013

I-3B: University Student [trade & economics], Male, February 11, 2013

I-4B: University Student [Education], Female, February 11, 2013

I-5B: Soldier, Male, February 11, 2013

I-6B: Soldier, Male, February 11, 2013

I-7B: Soldier, Male, February 11, 2013

I-8B: Soldier, Male, February 15, 2013

I-9B: High school student, Female, February 12, 2013

I-10B High school student, Male, February 12, 2013

I-11B: Government Employee [Ministry of Oil], Male, February 12, 2013

I-12B: Teacher [Biology, High school], Female, February 12, 2013

I-13B: Teacher [English, Middle School], Male, February 11, 2013

I-14B: Middle School Student, Male, February 13, 2013

I-15B: Soldier, Male, February 12, 2013

I-16B: Soldier, Male, February 12, 2013

I-17B: Soldier, Male, February 12, 2013

I-18B: Soldier, Male, February 12, 2013

I-19B: Soldier, Male, February 12, 2013

I-20B: Business owner, Male, February 13, 2013

I-21B: Business owner, Male, February 12, 2013

I-22B: Business owner, Male, February 12, 2013

I-23B: Business owner, Male, February 11, 2013

I-24B: Business owner, Male, February 12, 2013

I-25B: University Student, Female [History], February 13, 2013

I-26B: Government Employee, Male, February 12, 2013

I-27B: Government Employee, Female, February 12, 2013

I-29B: Government Employee, Male, February 12, 2013

I-30B: Government Employee, Male, February 14, 2013

I-31SIM: Teacher [Arabic], Female, February 15, 2013

I-32SIM: Teacher [Math], Male, February 15, 2013

I-33SIM: Soldier, Male, February 16, 2013

I-34SIM: Soldier, Male, February 8, 2013

I-35SIM: Soldier, Male, February 8, 2013

I-36SIM: Business Owner, Male, February 9, 2013

I-37SIM: University Student [Mechanical Engineering], Male, February 10, 2013

I-38N: University Student [Trade & Economics], Male, February 11, 2013

I-39N: High School Student, Female, February 18, 2013

I-40N: Soldier, Male, February 14, 2013

I-41N: Soldier, Male, February 14, 2013

I-42N: Teacher [Arabic], Male, February 12, 2013

I-43N: Teacher [Chemistry], Female, February 11, 2013

I-44N: Business Owner, Male, February 14, 2013

I-45K: Soldier, Male, February 17, 2013

I-46K: Soldier, Male, February 17, 2013

I-47K: Soldier, Male, February 17, 2013

I-48K: Soldier, Male, February 17, 2013

I-49K: Soldier, Male, February 17, 2013

I-50K: Business Owner, Male, February 12, 2013

I-51K: High School Student, Female, February 14, 2013

I-52K: Government Employee [Ministry of Agriculture], Female, February 13, 2013

I-53K: University Student [Trade & Economics], Male, February 13, 2013

I-54K: University Student [Engineering], Male, February 11, 2013

I-55K: Unemployed, Female, February 12, 2013

I-56K: Unemployed, Female, February 12, 2013

I-57K: Unemployed, Female, February 9, 2013

I-58K: Unemployed, Female, February 12, 2013

I-59K: Unemployed, Female, February 12, 2013

I-60K: Business Owner, Male, February 17, 2013

I-61K: Business Owner, Male, February 17, 2013

I-62K: Business Owner, Male, February 17, 2013

I-63K: Business Owner, Male, February 17, 2013

I-64K: Middle School Student, Male, February 14, 2013

I-65K: Government Employee [Ministry of Transportation], Male, February 10, 2013

I-66K: Shopkeeper, Male, February 16, 2013

I-67K: Business Owner, Male, February 16, 2013

I-68K: High school Student, Male, February 16, 2013

I-69K: University Student [Biology], Female, February 16, 2013

I-70K: Unemployed, Female, February 16, 2013

I-71K: Unemployed, Female, February 16, 2013

I-72K: Unemployed, Female, February 16, 2013

I-73K: Middle School Student, Female, February 16, 2013

I-74K: High school Student, Male, February 15, 2013

I-75K: Business Owner, Male, February 15, 2013

I-76K: University Student [Trade & Economics], Male, February 15, 2013

I-77K: Soldier, Male, February 14, 2013

I-78K: Soldier, Male, February 14, 2013

I-79H: Teacher [English], Female, February 12, 2013

I-80H: Teacher [Art], Female, February 12, 2013

I-81H: Government Employee [Security- Amin], Male, February 14, 2013

I-82H: Soldier, Male, February 12, 2013

I-83H: Soldier, Male, February 12, 2013

I-84H: Soldier, Male, February 12, 2013

I-85H: Soldier, Male, February 12, 2013

I-86H: University Student [English], Female, February 18, 2013

I-87H: University Student [Architecture], Male, February 16, 2013

I-88H: University Student [Art], Female, February 15, 2013

I-89H: Teacher [history], Male, February 16, 2013

I-90H: University Student [Political Science], Male, February 12, 2013

I-91H: Female, Unemployed, February 8, 2013

I-92H: Business Owner, Male, February 12, 2013

I-93D: Soldier, Male, February 4, 2013

I-94D: Soldier, Male, February 4, 2013

I-95D: Soldier, Male, February 4, 2013

I-96D: Soldier, Male, February 4, 2013

I-97D: Soldier, Male, February 4, 2013

I-98D: Soldier, Male, February 4, 2013

I-99D: Soldier, Male, February 4, 2013

I-100D: Policeman, Male, February 6, 2013

I-101D: University Student [Veterinary Medicine], February 13, 2013

I-102D: Unemployed, Female, February 13, 2012

I-103D: Business Owner, Male, February 13, 2012

I-104D: Cleric, Male, February 10, 2013

I-105D: High school student, Male, February 13, 2013

I-106D: High school student, Male, February 13, 2013

I-107D: University Student [Engineering], Male, February 14, 2013

I-108D: Government Employee, Engineer, Male, February 12, 2013



I-109D: Teacher [Math], Male, February 10, 2013

I-110D: Unemployed, Female, February 12, 2013

I-111D: University Student [Pharmacy], Female, February 14, 2013

I-112D: Business Owner, Male, February 3, 2013

I-113D: Business Owner, Male, February 19, 2013

I-114D: Business Owner, Male, February 3, 2013

I-115BAG: University Student [Medicine], Female, February 23, 2013

I-116BAG: Soldier, Male, February 17, 2013

I-117BAG: Soldier, Male, February 11, 2013

I-118BAG: Soldier, Male, February 11, 2013

I-119BAG: Soldier, Male, February 11, 2013

I-120BAG: Government Employee [Ministry of Agriculture], Male, February 19, 2013

I-121BAG: University Professor [Technology], Male, February 14, 2013

I-122BAG: University Student [Veterinary Medicine], Male, February 12, 2013

I-123BAG: University Student [Veterinary Medicine], Male, February 12, 2013

I-124BAG: University Student [Veterinary Medicine], Male, February 12, 2013

I-125BAG: University Student [Veterinary Medicine], Female, February 12, 2013

I-126BAG: Dentist, Male, February 16, 2013

I-127BAG: Teacher [History], Female, February 14, 2013

I-128BAG: High School Student, Male, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013

I-129BAG: Business Owner, Male, February 15, 2013

I-130BAG: Bank Employee, Female, February 13, 2013

I-131BAG: University Student [Agriculture], Female, February 14, 2013

I-132BAG: University Student [Foreign National, Agriculture], Male, February 14, 2013

I-133SAM: Middle School Student, Male, February 17, 2013

I-134SAM: Middle School Student, Female, February 17, 2013

I-135SAM: Soldier, Male, February 14, 2013

I-136SAM: Soldier, Male, February 17, 2013

I-137SAM: Soldier, Male, February 17, 2013

I-138SAM: Soldier, Male, February 17, 2013

I-139SAM: Business Owner, Male, February 14, 2013

I-140SAM: University Student [Medicine], Female, February 12, 2013

I-141SAM: Unemployed, Female, February 17, 2013

I-142SAM: Business Owner, Male, February 17, 2013

I-143SAM: University Student [Math], Male, February 17, 2013

I-144S: Business Owner, Male, February 16, 2013

I-145S: High School Student, Male, February 16, 2013

I-146S: Teacher [Geometry], Female, February 16, 2013

I-147S: University Student [Engineering], Male, February 18, 2013

I-148S: Soldier, Male, February 11, 2013

I-149S: University Student [Law], Male, February 11, 2013

I-150S: Unemployed, Female, February 2, 2013

I-151A: Unemployed, Female, February 2, 2013

I-152A: Soldier, Male, February 11, 2013

I-153A: Soldier, Male, February 11, 2013

I-154A: High School Student, Female, February 16, 2013

## The Shi'i Islamic Calendar

\* The bolded days are widely recognized Shi'i holidays. The other days are sometimes forgotten by the layperson, but might be stressed in clerical sermons.

\* The italicized days are Islamic Holidays that are not limited to Shi'is.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Celebration/Mourning</b>	<b>Details</b>
<b>Muharram 10<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Mourning</b>	<b>Marks the martyrdom of Imam Al-Hussein in the Karbala Massacre</b>
Muharram 25 <sup>th</sup>	Mourning	Marks the death of Imam Zain Al-Abideen
Safar 7 <sup>th</sup>	Celebration	Marks the birth of Imam Al-Kadhem
Safar 17 <sup>th</sup>	Mourning	Marks the death of Imam Al-Ridha
<b>Safar 20<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Mourning</b>	<b>Marks 40 days after the Karbala Massacre</b>
Safar 24 <sup>th</sup>	Mourning	Marks the death of the Prophet's grand-daughter, Sayeda Zaynab
Safar 28 <sup>th</sup>	Mourning	Marks the death of the Prophet Marks the death of Imam Al-Hasan
<i>Rabi Al-Awal 17<sup>th</sup></i>	<i>Celebration</i>	<i>Marks the birth of the Prophet<sup>254</sup></i>
Rabi Al-Awal 20 <sup>th</sup>	Mourning	Marks the death of Imam Al-Askari
Rabi Al-Awal 21 <sup>st</sup>	Celebration	Marks the birth of the Prophet's daughter, Sayeda Fatima Al-Zahra
Rabi Al-Thani 10 <sup>th</sup>	Celebration	Marks the birth of Imam Al-Askari

<sup>254</sup> Sunnis and Shi'is differ on which day the Prophet's birthday is.

Jamad Al-Awal 13 <sup>th</sup>	Mourning	Marks the death of Sayeda Fatima
Rajab 1 <sup>st</sup>	Celebration	Marks the birth of Imam Al-Baqir
Rajab 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Mourning	Marks the death of Imam Al-Hadi
Rajab 5 <sup>th</sup>	Celebration	Marks the birth of Imam Al-Hadi
Rajab 10 <sup>th</sup>	Celebration	Marks the birth of Imam Al-Jawad
Rajab 13 <sup>th</sup>	Celebration	Marks the birth of Imam Ali
Rajab 25 <sup>th</sup>	Mourning	Marks the death of Imam Al-Kadhem
Shaban 1 <sup>st</sup>	Celebration	Marks the birth of Sayeda Zainab
Shaban 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Celebration	Marks the birth of Imam Al-Hussein
Shaban 5 <sup>th</sup>	Celebration	Marks the birth of Imam Zain Al-Abideen
<b>Shaban 15<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Marks the birth of Imam Al-Mahdi</b>
<b>Ramadan</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>Holy Month of Fasting</b>
Ramadan 15 <sup>th</sup>	Celebration	Marks the birth of Imam Al-Hassan
Ramadan 21 <sup>st</sup>	Mourning	Marks the death of Imam Ali
Ramadan ?	n/a	The date of “Laylat Al-Qadr” is unknown, it is the night of the Quran’s revelation and is considered to be “better than a thousand nights”. <sup>255</sup>
<b>Shawwal 1st-3rd</b>	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Eid Al-Fitr marks the end of Ramadan</b>

<sup>255</sup> The dates that are celebrated for Laylat Al-Qadr are: Ramadan 21, 23, 25 and 27.

Shawwal 10 <sup>th</sup>	n/a	Marks Ghaibat Al-Kubra (When Imam Al-Mahdi went into hiding)
Shawwal 11 <sup>th</sup>	Celebration	Marks the birth of Imam Al-Ridha
Shawwal 25 <sup>th</sup>	Mourning	Marks the death of Imam Al-Sadeq
Thu Al-Hijja 1 <sup>st</sup>	Celebration	Marks the wedding of Imam Ali to Sayeda Fatima The Beginning of the Hajj, the holy pilgrimage
<b><i>Thu Al-Hijja 9<sup>th</sup></i></b>	<b><i>Celebration</i></b>	<b><i>The Day of Arafah</i></b>
<b><i>Thu Al-Hijja 10<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup></i></b>	<b><i>Celebration</i></b>	<b><i>Eid Al-Adha</i></b>
<b>Thu Al-Hijja 18<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Eid Al-Ghadeer</b>

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