The United States and Iraq:
Limited Influence in an Asymmetrical Relationship, 2005-2014

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of
The Australian National University.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is the original research of the author and, to the best of my knowledge, does not contain material previously written or published by any other person except where due acknowledgment is made in the text or footnotes. The total word count for this thesis, excluding footnotes, bibliography and appendices is 92,300 words.

Jon Norling

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Abstract

The 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq and its corresponding nation-building project are commonly perceived as colossal failures for the United States. Between 2003 and 2014, the United States attempted to establish a democratic and stable Iraq that would be aligned to the United States and support its interests in the Middle East. Although there are multiple explanations for the failure of these goals, this thesis addresses one component that is widely absent in scholarly literature: the relationship between the United States and Iraq's former prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki. Throughout his tenure, Maliki weakened Iraq's democratic institutions and fuelled sectarianism, which destabilised Iraq, frustrated U.S. objectives, and laid the foundations for the successful invasion of the so-called Islamic State in 2014.

This thesis seeks to answer two questions. First, why did Prime Minister Maliki undermine U.S. goals in Iraq? Second, why were the Bush and Obama administrations unable to influence Maliki to change his behaviour to suit their preferences? The latter question is important to explore, given the preponderance of American power in the relationship and Iraq's dependence on U.S. economic and military aid. However, the United States struggled to transform this power and dependency into influence over Maliki to achieve its desired objectives. The thesis examines the first question by employing the domestic level of analysis to demonstrate how Iraq's political groups, especially a coalition of Shia entities, conditioned Maliki's preferences such that they contradicted U.S. objectives. To answer the second question, the thesis employs Richard Emerson's theory of Power-Dependence Relations to explain why U.S. power did not translate into influence.

The thesis draws extensively on recently available primary material. Although the existing literature is extensive, this primary material generates new insight into the Bush and Obama administrations' perceptions on Maliki, his political landscape, and their mitigating strategies. The thesis is structured, in addition to the opening Introduction and closing Conclusion, into seven substantive chapters: Chapter I elaborates the conceptual framework, and Chapters II-VII chronologically follow and analytically interrogate the American Iraqi intervention from pre-war planning to the end of the Maliki premiership.

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List of Abbreviations

AHH	Asa'ib Ahl al-Haqq
AQI	al-Qaeda in Iraq
CENTCOM	United States Central Command
CJOSTF	U.S. Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
GMCIR	General Military Council for Iraqi Revolutionaries
GOI	Government of Iraq
INA	Iraqi National Accord
INA	Iraqi National Alliance
INIS	Iraqi National Intelligence Service
IS	Islamic State
ISCI	Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
ITG	Iraqi Transitional Government
JAM	Jaysh al-Mahdi
JIC	Joint Intelligence Committee
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KH	Kataib Hezbollah
MNC-I	Multi-National Corps–Iraq
MNF-I	Multi-National Forces–Iraq
MOI	Ministry of Interior
MOD	Ministry of Defence

OCINC	Office of Commander in Chief
OMS	Office of the Martyr Sadr
ORHA	Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance
OSC-I	Office of Security Cooperation–Iraq
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
SCIRI	Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq
SOFA	Status of Forces Agreement
SOI	Sons of Iraq
STU	Special Tactics Unit
TAL	Transitional Administrative Law
USF-I	United States Forces–Iraq

Introduction

The United States and Iraq: Limited Influence in an Asymmetrical Relationship, 2005-2014

The 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq and its corresponding nation-building project is commonly perceived as a colossal failure for the United States. Between 2003 and 2014, the United States unsuccessfully attempted to establish a democratic and stable Iraq that would be aligned to the United States and support its interests in the Middle East. The failure was epitomised by the remarkable success of the so-called Islamic-State's (IS) invasion of Iraq in 2014.[1] To determine how these objectives became unattainable and account for the failure of the U.S. mission in its entirety is an ambitious project with few attempts taken.[2] Hence, rather than providing a broad, holistic explanation of the primary causes of this failure, this thesis provides a detailed analysis of one component that is widely absent in scholarly literature.

The central focus of this thesis is the United States' relationship with Nouri al-Maliki. Maliki was the Prime Minister of Iraq from 2006 to 2014 and is often attributed to the failure of U.S. goals. He is commonly accused of fomenting the instability that led to IS's successful invasion of Iraq.[3] Moreover, it is alleged that he exhibited sectarian policies and facilitated Iranian goals at the expense of U.S. priorities. Furthermore, the U.S.-Maliki relationship is labelled as a "strategic defeat" by virtue of the limitation of influence the United States had over Maliki.[4] Under Maliki's premiership, U.S. policymakers and personnel expressed their frustration and contempt for him. They perceived Maliki as an obstacle to building a stable and democratic Iraq. These consisted of allegations that Maliki was undermining Iraq's democratic institutions and fuelling sectarianism, which brought "Iraq to the edge of failure".[5] Efforts to overcome

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[1] Shahram Akbarzadeh, 'Obama in the Middle East: Failure to Bring Change', in Shahram Akbarzadeh (ed), *America's challenges in the greater Middle East: the Obama Administration's policies*, (United States: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.1 and Terry Gross, 'Islamic State was Fueled by "Epic American Failure in Iraq"', *NPR*, 10 Sep. 2014, https://www.npr.org/2014/09/10/347391620/islamic-state-was-fueled-by-epic-american-failure-in-iraq-reporter-says, accessed 2 Nov. 2017.

[2] For example Erika G. King and Robert A. Wells, *Framing the Iraq War Endgame: War's Denouement in an Age of Terror*, (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2009); Michael Schwartz, *War Without End: The Iraq War in Context*, (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2008); Bernard E. Trainor and Michael R. Gordon, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama*, (London: Atlantic Books, 2012); Joel D. Rayburn and Frank K. Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 1: Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War, 2003-2006*, (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S Army War College Press); Joel D. Rayburn and Frank K. Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011,* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S Army War College Press, 2019); and Daniel Bolger, *Why We Lost: A General's Inside Account of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars*, (U.S.A: HMH, 2015).

[3] Martin Smith and Linda Hirsch, *THE RISE OF ISIS* [video], (PBS, 28 Oct. 2014), https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/rise-of-isis/, accessed 20 Sep. 2017.

[4] Ali Khedery, 'Why we stuck with Maliki – and lost Iraq', *Washington Post*, 3 July 2014, para. 3, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/why-we-stuck-with-maliki--and-lost-iraq/2014/07/03/0dd6a8a4-f7ec-11e3-a606-946fd632f9f1_story.html?utm_term=.f50c13f796a1, accessed 2 June 2017.

[5] Peter Beinart, 'Obama's Disastrous Iraq Policy: An Autopsy, *The Atlantic* [website], (23 July 2014), https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/06/obamas-disastrous-iraq-policy-an-autopsy/373225/, para. 2, accessed 1 June 2017 and Dexter Filkins, 'What We Left Behind: An increasingly authoritarian leader, a return of sectarian

Maliki's hindrance to U.S. objectives failed. This was apparent in his reluctance when pressed by U.S. officials to act against militias,[6] form an inclusive government and permit a significant military presence after 2011.[7] Hence, throughout Maliki's tenure, the United States had limited influence in the relationship, which saw the collapse of its goals in Iraq.

Purpose & Significance

This thesis examines this relationship to address two questions. Why did Maliki undermine U.S. objectives, and how was the United States unable to influence him to comply with its preferences? To determine why Maliki frustrated U.S. objectives requires analysing Maliki's preferences. Maliki is often simply labelled as a U.S. lacky, an Iranian stooge, an Iraqi-Shia strongman, or a dictator.[8] These definitions, except for the U.S. lacky, are often used to explain why Maliki undermined U.S. priorities in Iraq.[9] This thesis proposes to go beyond these simple characterisations and examine the political environment Maliki was in. It aims to analyse Maliki's preferences at Waltz's second image, the domestic level.[10] Although there are other approaches and lenses to consider, such as regional geopolitics and sectarian dimensions in Iraq, there are two reasons to assess Maliki at the domestic level. First, since the beginning of Maliki's tenure, there has been a familiar observable pattern in Iraqi politics. Each prime minister since Maliki was appointed as a result of a compromise between mainstream Iraqi political parties. Often these political parties have rivalries with each other but agree to form a governing coalition after elections.[11] Given the rivalries between the parties, no candidate from these parties is accepted as the nominee for prime minister. Instead, most prime ministers have either been an independent candidate not affiliated with a party,[12] or from the small Shia Dawa party.[13] This is to ensure that the dominant parties' interests will not be contested by a

violence and nation worried for its future, *New Yorker*, 28 Apr. 2014, http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/04/28/what-we-left-behind, para. 34, accessed 5 June 2017.

[6] Filkins, 'What we left Behind', para. 38.

[7] Political Analysis Unit-ACRPS, 'Al-Maliki's Government: A Trusted Proxy for Washington or Tehran?' *Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies* [website], (29 May 2014), http://english.dohainstitute.org/release/91793250-094b-4969-a95e-8b3122943518, para. 8, accessed 10 June 2017.

[8] Angus McDowall and William Maclean, 'Iraq and Syria pose Saudi dilemma - failed states or Iran proxies', *Reuters,* 28 Aug. 2014, https://www.reuters.com/article/iraq-security-saudi-idAFL5N0QX32J20140828, para. 9, accessed 28 July 2017; Jason M. Breslow and Evan Wexler, 'Who is Nouri al-Maliki?', *Frontline* [website], (29 July 2014), https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/who-is-nouri-al-maliki/, accessed 18 Sep. 2021; and Ned Parker and Raheem Salman, Parker, Ned and Salman, Raheem, ''The Rise Of Nouri Al-Maliki', *World Policy* [website], (13 Apr. 2015), http://worldpolicy.org/2015/04/13/the-rise-of-nouri-al-maliki/, para. 32, accessed 27 Mar. 2017.

[9] See Parker and Salman, 'The Rise Of Nouri Al-Maliki', Emma Sky, *The Unravelling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, (London: Atlantic Books, 2015); Christopher R. Hill, *Outpost: Life on the Frontlines of American Diplomacy: A Memoir*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), pp.374-375; and Khedery, 'Why we stuck with Maliki – and lost Iraq'.

[10] Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).

[11] For example, SCIRI and the Sadrists after December 2005 election; Maliki's State of Law and the Sadrists after the 2010 election; Badr, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq and Sadrists after the 2014; as well as Sadrists and Fatah after the 2018 election.

[12] For example Adel Abdul-Mahdi and Mustafa al-Kadhimi. However, it should be noted that previously Abdul-Mahdi was a member of the former Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq which no longer exists as a party.

[13] For example Nouri al-Maliki and Haider al-Abadi.

rival through the prime ministerial post. This arrangement, however, constrains and influences each prime minister's activities to support the interests of these larger parties. Their position as prime minister is conditional on the support of the dominant political parties.

The starkest example of this configuration transpiring was the resignation of former prime minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi in 2019. As a result of the parties in his coalition, Abdul-Mahdi could not implement the necessary reform to address Iraq's devastating corruption without undermining the material interests of the parties of his coalition who profited from the corruption.[14] This spurred mass protests against his government and the political elite.[15] Throughout his tenure, Abdul-Mahdi placated the interests of the two competing dominant parties in his governing coalition, the Sadrists and the Fatah alliance.[16] For example, Abdul-Mahdi was only allowed to appoint 5 out of the 22 cabinet positions, while the remainder were divided between the Sadrists and Fatah.[17] Moreover, 25% of the Defence budget was allocated to Popular Mobilisation Front's militias whose senior leadership was also the leaders of the Fatah party.[18] The current prime minister, Mustafa al-Kadhimi, who is also an independent, has struggled to navigate the interests of the Sadrists and Fatah.[19] He remarked in his 2020 visit to Britain, "I am on a rope between two tall buildings. I am not required to walk on the rope, but to ride a bike on the rope. I dance on a daily basis with the snakes but I am looking for a flute to control the snakes".[20] Moreover, in 2021, al-Kadhimi survived an assassination attempt that was allegedly orchestrated by militias belonging to the Fatah alliance.[21] This captures the precarious nature of the political environment in which Iraq's prime ministers operate. Therefore, it is equally plausible that the political environment that Nouri al-Maliki was in between 2006 and 2014 impacted his preferences and behaviour, which contradicted U.S. goals.

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[14] Jon Norling, 'Iraq protests: The cost of corruption and failed reforms', *Lowy Interpreter* [website], (17 Oct. 2019), https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/iraq-protests-cost-corruption-and-failed-reforms, accessed 23 Aug. 2021.
[15] Falih Hassan and Alissa J. Rubin, ''Just Give Us a Country': Thousands in Iraq Protest Corruption', *New York Times,* 2 Oct. 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/02/world/middleeast/iraq-corruption-protests.html, accessed 21 Sep. 2021.
[16] It should be noted that these two parties formed coalitions for the 2019 election campaign. These were Islah and Binaa. However, the main parties driving these two coalitions were the Sadrists and Fatah.
[17] Norling, 'Iraq protests: The cost of corruption and failed reforms'.
[18] Ibid.
[19]Michael Knights, 'Iraqi Militias Try, and Fail, to Intimidate the Government', *Washington Institute for Near East Policy* [website]*,* (27 May 2021), https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/iraqi-militias-try-and-fail-intimidate-government, accessed 18 Sep. 2021 and David Ignatius, 'Mustafa al-Kadhimi's government in Iraq has a long way to go. But at least it's a start', *Washington Post*, 17 July 2021, in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 19 Sep. 2021. It should be noted that towards the completion of this thesis, Mustafa al-Kadhimi survived an assassination attempt which has been attributed to militias belonging to the Fatah alliance. See 'Iraq PM says his would-be assassins have been identified', *BBC News*, 8 Nov. 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-59205758, accessed 9 Nov. 2021.
[20] Patrick Wintour, 'Iraq's prime minister says country on tightrope between US and Iran', *Guardian*, 23 Oct. 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/22/iraqs-prime-minister-says-country-on-tightrope-between-us-and-iran, para. 6, accessed 22 July 2021.
[21] Iraq PM says his would-be assassins have been identified', *BBC News*, 8 Nov. 2021,https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-59205758, accessed 9 Nov. 2021.

The second reason to examine Maliki at the domestic level is the recent availability of new primary material. A substantial amount of declassified British intelligence assessments, cables, and memoranda are available in the British National Archives. Additionally, there is an extensive amount of U.S. diplomatic correspondence on Iraq available as a result of the 2010 Wikileaks saga. These produce significant insight into the U.S. led coalition's perception of Maliki and his relationship with the dominant political parties in his governing coalition. This primary material is underutilised in scholarly works. Also, more declassified material is increasingly becoming available through Freedom of Information requests by George Washington University's National Security Archives. Thus, this material can be juxtaposed with secondary accounts of this period to provide further insight into Maliki and the political landscape in which he was situated. Therefore, this thesis proposes to examine domestic interest groups throughout Nouri al-Maliki's tenure as prime minister to ascertain if there were similar patterns to the aforementioned prime ministers. It will determine if these interest groups compelled Maliki into non-compliance with U.S. objectives. The thesis will do this by predominantly using Putnam's two-level game model.

The second core thesis question on the U.S. inability to influence Maliki is pertinent given that throughout Maliki's tenure, Iraq was dependent on U.S. military and economic aid. Also, the United States maintained a substantial troop presence in Iraq from 2003 until the U.S. troop withdrawal in 2011. Dependency is often associated with power and influence between states. One state's dependency is often a source of power for the state that it is dependent on. This is more pronounced when there is an asymmetrical dependency between large and small states. Thus, it is reasonable to expect that the United States would exercise a high degree of influence over Maliki given Iraq's dependency on the United States. Moreover, at times, Maliki himself appeared dependent on the United States due to his political rivals. Yet, this influence did not transpire. This paradox is not uncommon in some asymmetrical-dyadic relationships, where one state possesses a substantial dependency on another state. Multiple case studies illustrate how the smaller dependent state has defied the power and influence of a larger and more powerful state. This phenomenon, defined as the "big influence of small powers",[22] has been examined through multiple theories and constructs.

This thesis proposes to use a theory that is not common in the International Relations and Political Science field to analyse influence within the U.S.-Iraq relationship. This is Richard

[22] Jacob Bercovitch, 'Superpowers and Client States: Analysing Relations and Patterns of Influence',
M. Efrat and J. Bercovitch (eds.), *Superpowers and Client States in the Middle East: The Imbalance of Influence*, (London: Routledge, 1991), p.4.

Emerson's theory of Power-Dependence Relations, particularly the concept of Mutual Dependence. Emerson's theory falls under Social Exchange Theory which belongs in the Sociological field. However, David Baldwin – who is well known for his study of statecraft influence and power in International Relations[23]– has identified the benefits of borrowing from Social Exchange Theory to study influence between states. He states that Social Exchange Theory can make "valuable contributions to understanding efficiency, power, reciprocity, foreign aid, dependency, institutions, and bargaining in international relations; but the potential contribution of the exchange perspective to each of these topics has yet to be realized".[24] The central concept from Emerson's theory relevant to the U.S-Maliki relationship is mutual dependence. This occurs when both actors are dependent on each other. According to Emerson, this mutual dependence can limit or invalidate the stronger state's structural "power advantage" from translating into successful influence.[25]

After the 2003 invasion, the U.S-Iraq relationship resembled an asymmetrical-dependent relationship. Iraq was dependent on U.S. economic and military aid to function, given the aftermath of the invasion witnessed the collapse of Iraq's state institutions, looting and dispersion of Iraq's police and military. Additionally, Iraq was governed by the U.S led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). Throughout this period, the United States was able to exercise a high degree of influence in Iraq to achieve its goals. This period of asymmetrical dependence ended with the January 2005 election in Iraq. The election saw the emergence of a sovereign government led by Ibrahim al-Jaafari that would govern Iraq at the end of the CPA. More importantly, however, this government consisted of a coalition of Shia political parties. These parties, dubbed the Shia bloc, shared a degree of antipathy towards the United States and various levels of allegiance to the Iranian regime.[26] Given this unfriendly environment, the United States became dependent on Iraq's prime minister to navigate the political landscape to support U.S objectives in Iraq. This dependence transformed the relationship into one of mutual dependence. As a consequence, U.S influence in Iraq would no longer be guaranteed. Although Jaafari's tenure was only one year, this political configuration and mutual dependence continued in the Maliki period.

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[23] David A. Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft*, (U.S.A: Princeton University Press, 1985) and David A. Baldwin, *Power and International Relations: A Conceptual Approach*, (U.S.A: Princeton University Press, 2016).

[24] David A. Baldwin, 'Exchange Theory and International Relations', *International Negotiation*, 3/2 (1998), in BRILL [online database], p.147.

[25] Richard M. Emerson, 'Power-Dependence Relations', *American Sociological Review,* 27/1 (1962), pp.33-34 and Linda D. Molm, 'Power and Social Exchange', in Dean Tjosvold and Barbara Wisse (eds), *Power and Interdependence in Organisations,* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.154-155.

[26] Benjamin Isakhan and Peter E. Muherin, 'Shi'i division over the Iraqi state: decentralization and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq', *British Journal of Middle East Studies*, 47/3 (2020), pp.361-380 and Christopher M. Blanchard, 'Iraq: Issues in the 116th Congress', *Congressional Research Service*, 17 July 2020, https://sgp.fas.org/crs/mideast/R45633.pdf, p.3, accessed 19 Sep. 2021.

Research Gap

Although the literature is abundant on the U.S. experience and history in Iraq and Iraq's domestic politics, this thesis attempts to plug a gap in this literature. A significant portion of the accounts on the U.S-Iraq relationship do not narrow their focus to Nouri al-Maliki. Instead, these accounts address an array of factors that include military planning and operations, the civilian leadership of the Pentagon, the insurgency, and the political dynamics between the Kurdish Regional Government and Iraq's central government. Hence, by necessity, this literature cannot exclusively focus on Nouri al-Maliki. Additionally, these accounts can be highly politicised and biased, given the emotion and sensitivity surrounding the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq and its ongoing consequences for the population. Furthermore, the political dynamics of the Shia bloc are well documented. For example, Reidar Visser, a renowned scholar on Iraq, has extensively documented the political developments in Iraq after the 2003 invasion.[27] Also, Joel Wing, a U.S. blogger on Iraq, has tracked Iraqi politics since 2006.[28] Moreover, there is significant recent research on Iraqi politics since the emergence of the Popular Mobilisation Unit militia entity in 2014 and its entry into politics in 2018.[29] However, these well-researched accounts of Iraqi politics, which this thesis has heavily drawn on, do not extensively detail the Shia bloc's influence on Maliki's behaviour towards U.S. goals. Moreover, they do not reveal how the United States perceived Maliki within this political landscape and how it developed strategies to counter his positions. Therefore, by drawing on the recently available primary material, this thesis hopes to help fill this literature gap by

[27] See Visser's two blogs, Reidar Visser, *Historiae.org* [website], https://www.historiae.org/, accessed 19 Sep. 2021. and Reidar Visser, *Iraq and Gulf Analysis*, https://gulfanalysis.wordpress.com/, accessed 20 Sep. 2021.
[28] Joel Wing, *Musings on Iraq* [website], http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.com/, accessed 20 Sep. 2021
[29] Nussaibah Younis and Renad Mansour, 'Will militia leaders shape Iraq's future?', *The Defence Post* [website], (May 2018), https://www.thedefensepost.com/2018/01/29/iraq-shia-militia-leaders-election/, accessed 14 Oct. 2021; See Marsin Alshamary, 'Iraq's Elections', *Middle East Focus* [podcast], (Middle East Institute, 9 Oct. 2021), https://www.mei.edu/multimedia/podcast/iraqs-elections, accessed 1 Nov. 2021; Renad Mansour, 'Networks of power: The Popular Mobilization Forces and the state in Iraq', *Chatham House*, (Feb. 2021), https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/2021-02-25-networks-of-power-mansour.pdf, accessed 5 Aug. 2021; Renad Mansour, 'Iraq After the Fall of ISIS: The Struggle for the State', *Chatham House,* (4 July 2017), https://www.chathamhouse.org/2017/07/iraq-after-fall-isis-struggle-state-0/3-state-building-iraq-after-isisthe-myth-monolithic, accessed 20 Aug. 2021; Fanar Haddad, 'Understanding Iraq's Hashd al-Sha'bi: State and Power in Post-2014 Iraq ', *The Century Foundation*, (5 Mar. 2018), https://tcf.org/content/report/understanding-iraqs-hashd-al-shabi/, accessed 13 Sep. 2021; Fanar Haddad, 'Shi'a-Centric State-Building and Sunni Rejection in Post-2003 Iraq', in Frederic Wehrey (ed.), *Beyond Sunni and Shia: Sectarianism in a Changing Middle East*, (London: Hurst, 2017); and Hassan Hassan, 'The Rise of Iraq's Shi'ite Militias' [transcript], (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2020), https://www.csis.org/analysis/rise-iraqs-shiite-militias, accessed, 22 Jan. 2021.

examining the U.S. relationship with Maliki and showcasing the U.S. perception and response to the political environment he was in.

Research Questions & Hypotheses

This thesis seeks to answer two research questions:

1) Why did Nouri al-Maliki undermine U.S. objectives?

2) Why was the United States unable to influence Maliki to dissuade him from contradicting its objectives?

The thesis' hypotheses are as follows:

1) Nouri al-Maliki undermined U.S. objectives as a result of Iraq's domestic interest groups that conditioned his preferences and behaviour towards the United States. This, in turn, led to Maliki's preferences contradicting those of the United States.

2) The United States' influence was limited as a result of entering a mutual-dependent relationship. This mutual dependence restricted the United States' asymmetrical-power capabilities from translating into influence.

The first question will be accounted for by analysing Maliki and Iraq's domestic political groups and will predominantly employ Putnam's two-level game model. The second question will be accounted for by using Emerson's theory of Power-Dependence Relations.

Research Design

To examine Maliki's actions towards U.S. goals as well as U.S. influence, this thesis has established three research themes. These speak to U.S. objectives that supported its broad goals of democracy and stability in Iraq and required Maliki's cooperation and support. Moreover, these themes remained consistent throughout Maliki's eight years of power. Hence, they are ideal for examining Maliki's behaviour and U.S. influence. The first research theme is Iraq's Shia militias that emerged after the invasion. These militias infiltrated Iraqi Security Forces and became one of the main contributing factors that led to the sectarian civil war between 2006 and 2008. Hence, they threatened U.S. stability goals. The Bush administration wanted to degrade and disband these militias; however, some of these militias belonged to

political parties. For example, two of the most prominent militias, Badr and the Mahdi Army, were under the leadership of two of the largest political parties in Maliki's governing coalition. Despite U.S. pressure, Maliki consistently avoided confronting these Shia militias and frustrated U.S. efforts to pursue them.

The second research theme is political reconciliation vis-à-vis Sunni political inclusion. After the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, an insurgency against the occupation transpired, which was led by al-Qaeda and former regime elements.[30] The insurgency also included some Sunni tribes who did not accept the invasion and occupation and boycotted Iraq's 2005 election. Both the Bush and Obama administrations believed that the only way to deflate the insurgency, which would stabilise Iraq and permit U.S. troop withdrawal, was to have political reconciliation through an inclusive government. A significant initiative of this goal was the Sons of Iraq project. This project included recruiting Sunni tribal members, who previously fought the coalition and Iraqi government, into a security force under the government's control.[31] The Bush administration needed Maliki's support for this project to be successful. It required Maliki's government to integrate the Sons of Iraq into Iraq's military structure. Yet, Maliki and his government were reluctant to do this and hindered U.S. attempts at integration. Moreover, Maliki's government began to target the group through military operations, which inevitably led to the renewal of the insurgency.

The third research theme is the ratification of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) to allow U.S. troops to remain in Iraq. The Bush and Obama administrations sought to achieve a SOFA with Iraq as they needed legal authority to keep U.S. troops in Iraq. For Bush, the agreement was designed to lock in the security gains from the U.S. Surge initiative.[32] It would signal U.S. long-term commitment to Iraq while laying the groundwork to keep U.S. troops in Iraq for the incoming Obama administration.[33] For Obama, the agreement would permit a small number of troops in Iraq to continue the strategic relationship between the United States and Iraq and limit Iranian influence in Iraq.[34] The Bush and Obama administrations required Iraq's parliament to approve the Status of Forces Agreement. Although Maliki appeared to desire a

[30] Amatzia Baram, 'Who Are the Insurgents? Sunni Arab Rebels in Iraq', *United States Institute for Peace,* (Apr. 2005), https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/sr134.pdf, accessed 17 June 2017.
[31] Baghdad Government Takes Charge of Sons of Iraq', *Wired* [website], (2 Sep. 2008), https://www.wired.com/2008/09/over-the-past-e/, para.2, accessed 12 Nov. 2020.
[32] Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* 523 and Peter R. Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, (U.S.A: Yale University Press, 2013), p.218.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Joel D. Rayburn and Frank K. Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.541 and Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.657.

long-term strategic relationship with the United States, he was in a vulnerable position as the Shia bloc publicly opposed the agreement. Moreover, Iran stated its opposition to U.S. troops remaining in Iraq. Hence, to spend the necessary political capital on securing an agreement, Maliki extracted an array of concessions from the Bush administration. However, he appeared unwilling to undertake the political effort needed to get the agreement approved for the Obama administration. Thus, without a renewed SOFA agreement between Iraq and the Obama administration, U.S. troops withdrew from Iraq in December 2011 at a time of heightened instability in Iraq. This instability worsened after 2011 and set the grounds for the invasion of the so-called Islamic State.

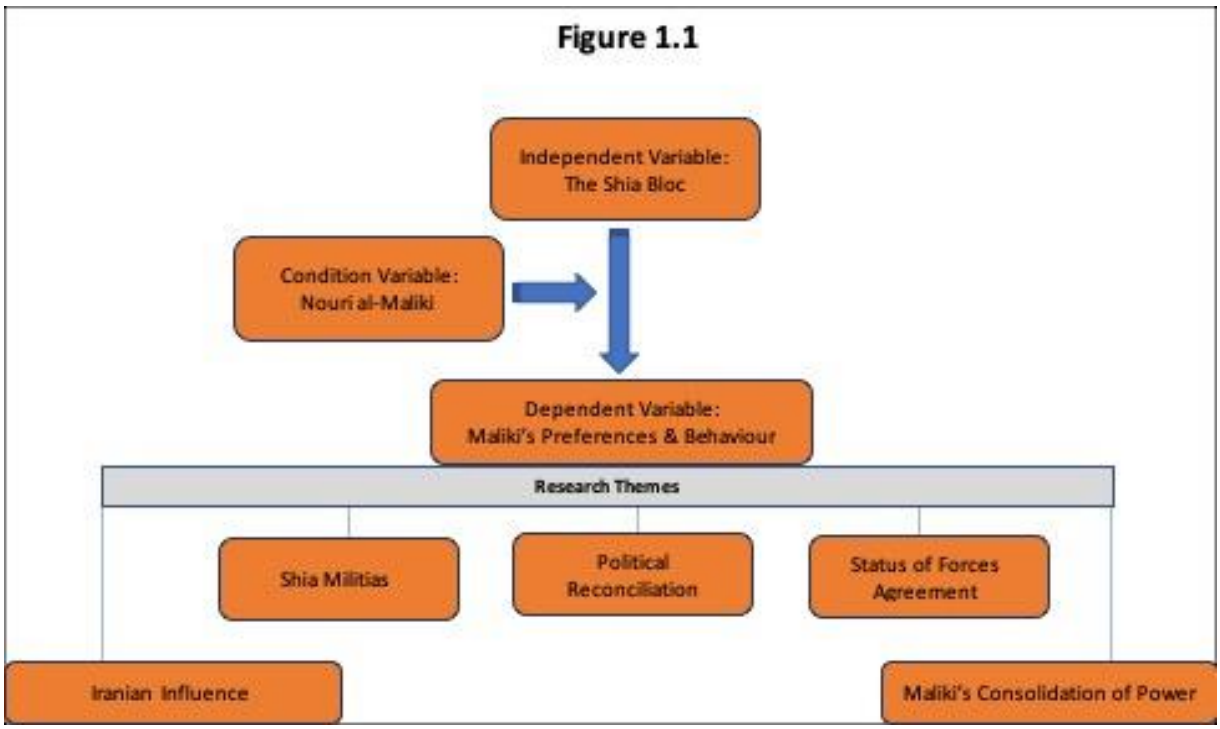
In addition to these research themes, the thesis recognises two key contextual factors that were less consistent yet spoke to U.S. goals. These are Maliki's consolidation of power and Iranian influence in Iraq. After 2007, Maliki began to exhibit authoritarian tendencies by consolidating his control over the military. He was able to do this through his temporary Office of Commander in Chief.[35] The office undermined the stability objectives as Maliki used the office to issue arrests against political opponents and the Sons of Iraq.[36] Moreover, he authorised military raids in Sunni provinces as well. Maliki's actions prompted Bush to state: "a year ago we complained Maliki was too weak…now he's too strong".[37] The other important factor speaks to the strategic rivalry between the United States and Iran. The Iranian regime detested the presence of U.S. troops in Iraq as it was perceived as a potential threat. Thus, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps established proxy militia groups in Iraq and supported other Shia militias as its strategy to counter U.S. forces in Iraq.[38] Moreover, they cultivated an array of patronage networks with politicians and parties, especially within the Shia bloc.[39] The Iranian regime saw Iraq under a Shia-led government as an opportunity to further its regional ambitions. However, while there was a significant U.S. troop presence in Iraq, Iran's ability to influence Maliki was somewhat limited. Nevertheless, as it became evident that U.S. troops were leaving, this changed. When U.S. troops departed Iraq, the Iranian regime significantly increased its influence in Iraq to pursue its ambitions in Syria at the protest of the Obama administration. Yet, the administration struggled to dissuade Maliki from allowing Iran to use Iraq to pursue its goals.

[35] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* pp.614-615.
[36] Rayburn and Sobchak(eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011,* p.283.
[37] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.514.
[38] United States. Central Command, 'Qayis al-Khazali Papers: Tactical Interrogation Report Number 47', 4 Apr. 2007, *Homeland Security Department Library,* https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=815597, p.5, accessed 17 May 2020.
[39] Sharon Otterman, 'IRAQ: Iran's Involvement', *Council on Foreign Relations* [website], (7 Feb. 2005), https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/iraq-irans-involvement, para. 11, accessed 19 July 2017.

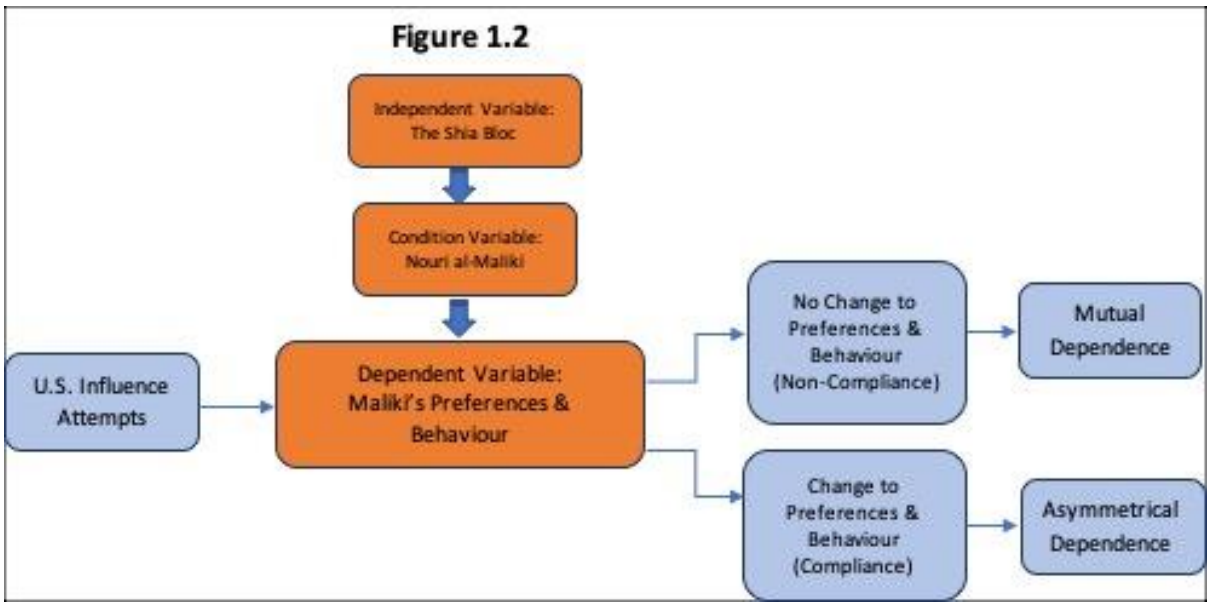
Theoretical Framework

To determine why Maliki did not comply with U.S. objectives vis-à-vis these three research areas, the thesis employs the domestic level of analysis. In particular, it heavily draws on Putnam's two-level game model. Putnam's model argues that "domestic groups pursue their interests by pressuring the government to adopt favourable policies, and politicians seek power by constructing coalitions among those groups".[40] These groups can condition a national leader's preferences in interactions with other states.[41] Additionally, Moravcsik's Liberal theory of international politics echoes this by stating that "the policy of governments depends on which domestic groups are represented. The simplest resulting prediction is that policy is biased in favor of the governing coalition or powerful domestic groups".[42] Hence, following these theories, this thesis situates the Shia bloc as an Independent Variable that causes Maliki's actions towards the three research themes. Thus, Maliki's preferences and behaviour are classified as the Dependent Variable. Also, Maliki himself is positioned as a Condition Variable, which impacts how much the Independent Variable, domestic interest groups, influences the Dependent Variable, Maliki's preferences, and behaviour.[43] Situating Maliki as the Condition Variable rests on Putnam's and Moravcsik's argument that domestic groups hold greater explanatory weight for a national leader's preferences towards another state than the individual leader themself.[44] Nevertheless, Maliki's history, personality, emotions, and other endogenous factors would have affected Maliki's preferences and hence his behaviour, the Dependent Variable. Indeed, there are some instances where Maliki's defiance of U.S. goals appears to emerge from Maliki's attitudes and perceived self-interests and not the Shia bloc per se. However, while there was no viable pathway for this research to interrogate Maliki's character and personal motivations, positioning him as a Condition Variable acknowledges Maliki's agency and the strong likelihood that it affected his preferences. The configuration of the Independent, Condition and Dependent variables is shown in Figure 1.1

[40] Robert D. Putnam, 'Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of two-level games', *International Organization,* 42/3 (1998), in JSTOR [online database], pp.434-436 accessed 6 June 2017.
[41] Ibid. p.434.
[42] Andrew Moravcsik, 'Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics', *International Organization*, 51/4 (1997), pp.513-553.
[43] Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science,* (U.S.A: Cornell University Press, 1997), p.11.
[44] Moravcsik, 'Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics', and Putnam, 'Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of two-level games'.



To determine if U.S. influence was limited, the thesis analyses any influence attempts the United States made towards Maliki on the three main research themes. If Maliki changed his behaviour and complied with U.S. objectives and preferences, then this represented successful influence. If this occurred consistently, then Emerson's theory of Power-Dependence Relations would postulate that the United States was not in a mutual-dependent relationship. In fact, Emerson would claim that the relationship remained one of asymmetrical dependence, which allowed U.S. influence to successfully alter Maliki's preferences. However, if U.S. influence attempts did not consistently produce any change to Maliki's behaviour and resulted in non-compliance, then according to Emerson, the relationship would be one of mutual dependence. This mutual dependence can restrict an actor's asymmetrical-power capabilities from translating into influence. Simply, a powerful state's material capabilities do not automatically translate into influence over a weaker state. This configuration is represented in Figure 1.2



Approaches & Sources

As this thesis is predominantly a qualitative study, it will employ the case study method and place the U.S.-Iraq relationship as the unit of analysis. This approach is appropriate as case studies are the preferred method in addressing "how" or "why" related questions.[45] It is an empirical inquiry "that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real-life context".[46] The applicability of the case study method in this thesis can be subjected to scrutiny due to the perceived limitations of a single case study. It is frequently criticised for providing "little basis for scientific generalizations" and fails to deduce external validity.[47] Case study research often involves sampling multiple cases to establish casual links or deduce probabilistic laws that can be applied to broader samples of a similar kind.[48] While this thesis does not make any claim to universal applicability, the singular focus on the U.S.-Iraq relationship is beneficial. It reveals new insight into the relationship by detailing the U.S. perception and thinking on Maliki, his mixed compliance to its objectives, and its attempts to develop strategies to mitigate this. Moreover, it identifies the U.S. reading of the political landscape vis-à-vis the Shia bloc that Maliki was situated in and its effects on Malik.

This idea is validated by Yin's claim that the rationale "for a single case is where the case represents an *extreme* case or a *unique* case".[49] Moreover, Moon reinforces this perspective

[45] Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods,* (Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications, 1984), p.2.
[46] Ibid. p.18.
[47] Ibid. p.15.
[48] Howard S. Becker, *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think about Your Research while You're Doing it,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p.67.
[49] Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods,* p.47.

by arguing that due to "the highly specific and relatively unique characteristics", that defines any dyadic situation, idiosyncratic explanations are likely to be more "satisfactory than nomothetic efforts to generalize across heterogeneous cases".[50] Further, weakness of the case study can surface from a "lack of rigour" in the research and the researcher's potential negligence in not following "systematic procedures".[51] To avoid this negligence, the research follows a blueprint derived from the theoretical thread of Putnam, Moravcsik and Emerson to determine "what variables should be observed, as well as how data should be collected [and] analyzed".[52] Furthermore, the risk of lack of rigour is mitigated by the research's utilisation of an array of various data collection techniques. This triangulates the data and "provide[s] a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility".[53]

This research consists of interviews and document analysis of archival material, supplemented by secondary literature. Given the sensitivity of the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq, this researcher had to navigate the complexity arising from the array of emotions and interpretations towards U.S. actions in Iraq. It is understandable that interviewees and readers of this thesis, not to mention its author, have their own defined positions. The entire story of the American intervention in Iraq is rarely, if ever, read neutrally. Nevertheless, care has been taken to include divergent viewpoints and utilise a wide variety of sources. The interviews were conducted with former American, British, and Australian diplomats and military officials, as well as academics and relevant specialists. Some of these interviewees engaged with Maliki and his staff. These interviews centred on determining the U.S. objectives in Iraq, its strategy towards Maliki, and how the administration attempted to influence him to be more supportive of its initiatives. Moreover, the thesis used interview transcripts of the Bush administration conducted by the University of Virginia and Southern Methodist Universities for their respective Presidential history projects. Furthermore, the thesis drew on interviews conducted in Iraq by The International Crisis Group, The Institute for the Study of War and the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Although interviews can provide exceptional detail and insight on these specific topics, they have weaknesses. These include the bias of both the interviewer and interviewee, potential

[50] Bruce E. Moon, 'The Foreign Policy of the Dependent State', *International Studies Quarterly*, 27/3 (1983), pp.315-318.
[51] Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods,* p.14.
[52] John Kuada, *Research Methodology: A Project Guide for University Students*, (Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur, 2012), p.64.
[53] E W. Eisner, *The Enlightened Eye: Qualitative Inquiry and the Enhancement of Educational Practice*, (Toronto: Collier Macmillan Canada, 1991), p.110.

inconsistencies, and poor memory recall.[54] These did arise in the interviews conducted with some interviewees who struggled to recall the details of their experiences in Iraq. Additionally, other interviewees continually condemned the invasion and nation-building project as a fallacy which appeared to influence how they responded to interview questions. To overcome this, the thesis avoided "becoming overly dependent" on these interviews. It corroborated their evidence by using additional sources such as other interviewees and documents that provide contrasting perspectives or contradicting evidence.[55] Furthermore, ethical concerns of the nature of the interview, such as privacy protection and consent to publish, arose. In this regard, the research adhered to The Australian National University guidelines and implemented protocols of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). The majority of interviewees requested that their details not be disclosed, their names not be attributed to their content and did not permit the recording of their interviews given the sensitivities of the topic and potential reputational and legal ramifications. As a result, the research limited the reliance on these specific interviews but used them to contextualise and triangulate other research material.

These interviews were accompanied by a document analysis of intelligence assessments, communique, minutes of meetings, transcripts of congressional hearings, testimonials, as well as speeches and memoirs of key individuals. Documents were procured from archives such as the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, the U.K's National Archives, the National Security Archive at George Washington University, the CIA reading room and presidential libraries and their corresponding online databases. Some of these archives have compiled declassified documents on Iraq from Freedom of Information requests. These documents provided broad coverage of data and background information and assisted in contextualising the research.[56] Moreover, they revealed details that informants and interviewees had forgotten. It is possible that the validity of document analysis, however, can be restricted due to bias of the document's author and the researcher, as well as incompleteness or forgery of documents.[57] This was to be expected when analysing the U.S.-Iraq relationship because of the continuous controversy that has dogged the purpose and justification of the invasion of Iraq. The most notorious example is the falsified documents obliviously used by Colin Powell in his United Nations' report on Iraq's weapons program.[58] To confront these challenges, this researcher needed to consider the author's subjectivity and

[54] Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods,* p.102.
[55] Ibid. p.107.
[56] Glenn, A. Bowen, 'Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method', *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9/2 (2009), p.31.
[57] Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods,* p.105.
[58] David Ensor, 'Fake Iraq documents "embarrassing" for U.S.', *CNN*, 15 Mar. 2003, http://edition.cnn.com/2003/US/03/14/sprj.irq.documents, accessed 6 Aug. 2017.

acknowledge that documents are "written for a specific purpose and some specific audience… [and]…not unmitigated truth".[59] They "should not simply lift words and passages from available documents… [but] establish the meaning of the document and its contribution to the issues being explored".[60] Furthermore, this researcher had to acknowledge his own personal bias on the topic of inquiry and his selection of documents to analyse. This scrutiny also needed to be applied to those who collected and catalogued the primary data.

There was a severe restriction of access to an array of documents as a consequence of their classification as well as censorship. This was expected as many official documents have been edited to potentially disguise or censor any damming information. This allegedly occurred when the National Security Archive at George Washington University requested the 2002 CIA intelligence estimates on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. The CIA's response consisted of a copy of the estimates with the majority "whited-out".[61] Furthermore, in contrast to documents from the Bush administration, the documentation surrounding Iraq from the Obama period is minimal. This is a result of the standard time protocol that governs the release of U.S. administrations documents. According to Bowen, one has to accept this limitation, utilise the most available resources, and be rigorous in analysing the quality of all available documents.[62] In facing this limitation, this researcher was critical of any "potential overreliance on documents" in the case study.[63] Nevertheless, these interviews and document analysis were complemented with secondary literature, including publications from think tanks and journals as well as books, policy reports and newspaper articles. Therefore, utilising this variety of methods and sources provided an indispensable triangulation of the relevant evidence.

Finally, this thesis heavily drew on the availability of the 250,000 leaked diplomatic cables from Wikileaks.[64] There is a substantial number of cables from the U.S. Baghdad embassy to Washington DC that provide deep insight into the political landscape of Iraq as well as Nouri al-Maliki. For example, there were 3,800 cables produced between 2005 and 2007 when sectarian violence increased.[65] There is understandable hesitation when using these documents, especially around data quality and selection bias. However, as Gabriel states,

[59] Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods,* p.105.
[60] Bowen, 'Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method', p.33.
[61] 'Cia Whites Out Controversial Estimate on Iraq Weapons', *The National Security Archive* [website], (9 July 2004), http://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB129, accessed 5 Aug. 2017.
[62] Bowen, Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method, pp.37-38.
[63] Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods,* p 105.
[64] Daniel W. Drezner, 'Why WikiLeaks Is Bad for Scholars', *The Chronicle of Higher Education* [website], (5 Dec. 2010), https://www-chronicle-com.virtual.anu.edu.au/article/why-wikileaks-is-bad-for-scholars/, para. 3, accessed 14 Apr. 2018.
[65] Edward Hunt, Dispatches from Baghdad: sectarian war in Iraq, 2006–2007, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 56/1 (2020), para. 3.

"interview and archival research are fraught with potential data quality pitfalls, but these challenges are not a reason to avoid using such research methods".[66] Furthermore, Hecht argues that these Wikileaks documents are no different to archival material and interviews, "which are products of their times and circumstances. Both make certain events visible while leaving others invisible".[67] Nevertheless, this researcher has endeavoured to apply utmost scrutiny to these documents and triangulate these sources with others when possible. Additionally, the researcher has followed National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) and ensured that the leaked material used in the thesis does not harm individuals or organisations.

Structure

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter I further details the conceptual framework and how it addresses the gap in academic literature on the U.S.-Iraq relationship. It explores popular modes of analysing influence within asymmetric relationships and demonstrates why Emerson's theory of Power-Dependence Relations is appropriate for the U.S.-Iraq case study. Also, it details the approach to examining preferences. This thesis does not provide a separate literature review section given that it extensively uses and relies on this literature to support its research findings. As such, the literature gaps and limitations are identified throughout the thesis. Chapter II briefly details the pre-war planning and U.S. objectives to showcase how the Bush administration planned to exercise influence in Iraq after the invasion. Accordingly, it details the invasion aftermath and CPA period until the election of Ibrahim al-Jaafari in 2005. From this period of March 2003 until January 2005, the U.S.-Iraq relationship resembled one of asymmetrical dependence that permitted U.S. influence. Chapter III details the emergence of the Shia bloc and how the U.S.-Iraq relationship became one of mutual dependence after the election of Jaafari. The Bush administration was dependent on Iraq's prime minister to navigate the competing interests of the Shia bloc to support U.S. objectives. Moreover, it details how Jaafari defied U.S. objectives. Chapter IV examines how this pattern continued under Nouri al-Maliki. Also, it demonstrates how the Bush administration struggled to influence Maliki to comply with its preferences. Chapter V explores how the U.S. Surge attempted to pry Maliki away from the constraints of the Shia bloc in order for him to support U.S. objectives. Chapter VI details the transition to the Obama administration and its perception that Maliki's preferences were still informed by the bloc. However, the chapter also examines Maliki's attempt to run independently of it in local and national elections. Although this was welcomed

[66] Michael J. Gabriel, 'Who's Afraid of WikiLeaks? Missed Opportunities in Political Science Research', *Review of Policy Research,* 32/2 (2015), pp.178.
[67] Gabrielle Hecht, *Being nuclear: Africans and the global uranium trade*, (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2012), pp.341-342.

in Washington, the outcome of national elections witnessed Maliki entering into an alliance with the Shia bloc. This created a quandary for the Obama administration as it anticipated Maliki would undermine its objectives. Finally, Chapter VII details how U.S. influence, already limited, declined after the 2011 troop withdrawal and U.S. objectives unravelled. Finally, the thesis's conclusion discusses the thesis's findings and implications.

Chapter I – Conceptual Framework: Preferences and Influence

Given that this thesis focuses on two different research questions, it employs two different theoretical approaches. The first approach uses Andrew Moravcsik and Robert Putnam's theoretical work to examine Nouri al-Maliki's preferences at the domestic level. There are continuing debates within International Relations and Political Science on where preferences come from. This thesis does not seek to engage with this debate as various theories and models that examine preferences at the individual, domestic, or international level are often relative and valid to its intended research topic. Yet, the domestic level of analysis is more appropriate to examine Maliki's preferences. The second approach draws on Richard Emerson's theory of Power-Dependence Relations to explain why U.S. influence attempts on Maliki did not produce compliance. An array of models and theories can be invoked to analyse influence and compliance in asymmetrical relationships between states. These primarily include Bargaining models, Dependency theory, the Patron-Client model, and idiosyncratic accounts,[68] which offer a blueprint for approaching asymmetrical relationships. These constructs are useful for the analysis of influence within the U.S.-Iraq relationship. However, Emerson's theory of Power-Dependence Relations is the most applicable to the relationship.

There are three primary considerations using Emerson's theory. First, the U.S.-Iraq relationship is challenging to situate into the Patron-Client construct given the distinct circumstances that formed the relationship vis-à-vis the invasion of Iraq and removal of Saddam Hussein's regime. Second, the theoretical propositions of Bargaining and Dependency theory are contradicted by this thesis' research hypothesis. Bargaining and Dependency theory postulate that the stronger actor, who possesses the asymmetrical advantage in material power capabilities, will successfully influence the weaker state. Hence, they do not account for how mutual dependence can limit a state's ability to transform this asymmetrical advantage into influence. In contrast, Emerson's theory captures this mutual dependence. Third, Emerson's theory has strong predictive power of what one should expect to see in a mutual or asymmetrical dependent relationship. Nonetheless, the theories mentioned above and models are important to address as they discuss the importance of dependency and influence within asymmetrical relationships. Therefore, this chapter outlines the conceptual framework used in this thesis to examine Maliki's preferences and influence within the U.S.-Iraq relationship.

[68] Alvin Z. Rubinstein, *Red Star on The Nile: The Soviet-Egyptian Influence Relationship since the June War*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977); Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1987); and Robert Jervis, 'Relations, Alternatives, and Bargaining' in Robert Jervis, *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

Examining Preferences at the Domestic Level

To examine Nouri al-Maliki's preferences, this thesis employs the domestic level of analysis. In particular, it heavily draws on Moravcsik's Liberal Theory of International Politics and Putnam's two-level game model. Debates on where preferences come from still permeate the International Relations and Political Science world. Although arguments between individual, domestic, and systematic level theories are not as pronounced as in the 1990s,[69] debates among the Realist, Liberalist and Constructivist approaches still exist. This thesis does not seek to engage with this debate as, according to Putnam, "it is fruitless to debate whether domestic politics really determine international relations, or the reverse. The answer to that question is clearly both, sometimes".[70] All levels of analysis play a crucial role in examining preferences and their outcomes in international relations. Hence, this thesis' concern is determining the most appropriate level to examine domestic actors and accordingly use the most relevant theory.[71] As stated in the introduction, there has been an observable pattern in Iraq's politics since Nouri al-Maliki came to power. This entails the preferences of each prime minister of Iraq being constrained and influenced by domestic political interest groups. Thus, given the existence of this observable pattern since 2006, it is evident that the domestic level of analysis is applicable to examine the preferences of Nouri al-Maliki.

There are various frameworks and approaches to studying the effects of the domestic level in International Relations. One of the first scholars who focused on this area was James Rosenau. Yet, his characterisation of "linkage politics"[72] did not generate much research except for correlating domestic and international conflict behaviour.[73] Accordingly, Karl Deutsch and Ernst Haas began exploring domestic interests groups and their role in the process of European Integration in the 1950s.[74] Yet, their work was surpassed by Keohane and Nye's interdependence and transnationalism, laying the pathway to Keohane's Neo-Liberalism approach.[75] Consequently, the "neo-neo debate" between Neo-Liberalism and

[69] Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics,* (U.S.A: Addison-Wesley, 1979); Robert O. Keohane, 'The Demand for International Regimes', *International Organisations*, 36/2 (1982), pp.325-355; Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics', International Organization, 46/2 (1992), pp.391-425; and Jeffrey W. Legro and Andrew Moravcsik, 'Is Anybody Still a Realist?', *International Security*, 24/2 (1999), pp.8 and 11-12.
[70] Robert D. Putnam, 'Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of two-level games', *International Organization,* 42/3 (1998), p.427.
[71] Peter B. Evans, Harold Karan Jacobson, and Robert D. Putnam, *Double-Edged Diplomacy: International Bargaining and Domestic Politics*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p.7.
[72] James Rosenau, 'Toward the Study of National-International Linkages', in James Rosenau, *Linkage Politics: Essays on the Convergence of National and International Systems*, (New York: Free Press, 1969).
[73] Putnam, 'Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of two-level games', p.430.
[74] Karl W. Deutsch et al., *Political Community in the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957); and Ernst B. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social, and Economic Forces, 1950-1957*, (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1958).
[75] Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence,* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977); and Keohane, 'The Demand for International Regimes', *International Organisations*, 36/2 (1982), pp.325-355.

Neo-Realism temporarily sidelined the importance of the domestic level of analysis for studying preferences.[76] States were treated as unitary rational actors whose preferences were exogenously determined by the international system itself, instead of emerging from the individual and domestic levels.[77] Notwithstanding the prominence of this debate, other seminal works such as Graham Allison's Bureaucratic model of analysis as well as approaches from International Political Economy and Foreign Policy Analysis encompassed the domestic level of analysis to understand states' preferences and behaviour.[78] Allison's research illustrated how the competition and bargaining of different governmental staff, as well as their department's goals and preferences, can significantly influence a national government's foreign policy.[79] Thus, according to Allison, states are not unitary actors and their preferences are not unconditionally determined by the international system.[80] Furthermore, Jeffry Frieden examined how competition amongst domestic groups who had an "uneven distribution of international economic interests" within society shaped states' preferences and policies at the international level.[81] Nevertheless, after the Constructivist turn in International Relations scholarship, marked by Wendt's *Anarchy is what States Make of It*, the "neo-neo debate" lost its prominence.[82] The notion that the international system determines a state's preferences was not invalidated, yet, its monopoly over state's preferences receded.[83] For example, Andrew Moravcsik wrestled with Keohane's Neo-Liberalism and the classical liberal approach that is often, contentiously, associated with the brief-utopian period after World War One.[84] He argued for a new positivist theory of Liberalism that centred on examining influences within the domestic level of analysis that affects state preferences.[85] Hence, he presented a new

[76] Legro and Moravcsik, 'Is Anybody Still a Realist?', pp.8 and 11-12; and André Hedlund and Aline Regina Alves Martins, 'Germany and Greece in the Eurozone Crisis from the Viewpoint of the Neo-Neo Debate', *Brazilian Political Science Review,* 11/1 (2017), p.2.

[77] Waltz, *Theory of International Politics,* and Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

[78] Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971); Peter J. Katzenstein (ed.), *Between Power and Plenty: Foreign Economic Policies of Advanced Industrial States,* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978); Stephen Krasner, *Defending the National Interest: Raw Materials Investments and U.S. Foreign Policy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); and Juliet Kaarbo, 'A Foreign Policy Analysis Perspective on the Domestic Politics Turn in IR Theory', *International Studies Review*, 17/2 (2015), p.193.

[79] Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, pp.147-148 and Chris Alden and Aran Amnon, *Foreign Policy Analysis: New Approaches*, (London: Routledge, 2016), pp.33-34.

[80] Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, pp.2-3.

[81] Jeff Frieden, 'Sectoral Conflict and Foreign Economic Policy, 1914-1940', *International Organization*, 42/1 (1988), pp.59-90.

[82] Jeffrey T. Checkel, 'The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory', *World Politics*, 50/2 (1998), pp.324-348.

[83] This was largely represented by the explosion of Constructivism as well as Critical Theory scholarship.

[84] Andrew Moravcsik, 'Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics', *International Organization*, 51/4 (1997), p.514 and Brian C. Schmidt (ed), *International Relations and the First Great Debate*, (London: Routledge, 2012).

[85] Moravcsik, 'Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics', pp.513-514.

liberal paradigm[86] to offer hypotheses to test the influence of "state-society relations to world politics".[87]

Moravcsik's Liberal Theory of International Politics

Moravcsik's Liberal theory is a "bottom-up" view on politics where demands of individuals and domestic groups are situated as "analytically prior to politics".[88] For Moravcsik, these individuals and groups define their interests "independently of politics" and pursue them through "political exchanges and collective action".[89] Furthermore, Moravcsik's theory views states not as unitary actors. Instead, a state is a "representative institution" that is frequently subject to "capture and recapture, construction and reconstruction" by different coalitions of domestic actors.[90] Domestic "representative institutions and practices" are a "transmission belt" for "preferences and social power of individuals and groups" to be reflected in a state's policy.[91] Hence, individuals and groups use the state to achieve their interests that they cannot achieve efficiently through private behaviour.[92] Therefore, government policy is affected by these competing "identities, interests, and power of individuals and groups (inside and outside the state apparatus)" that frequently pressure central decision-makers to "pursue policies consistent with their preferences".[93] Moravcsik's paradigm offers "three major variants of Liberal theory—each grounded in a distinctive causal mechanism linking social preferences and state behavior".[94] These are Ideational Liberalism, Commercial Liberalism and Republican Liberalism.[95] Republican Liberalism speaks to the core of this thesis by its focus on domestic interest groups and their political representation. The critical focus of Republican Liberalism is "the mode of domestic political representation" that determines which preferences of individual and interest groups are "institutionally privileged".[96] According to Moravcsik, when "political representation" is biased towards particular groups, they often "capture" government institutions and use them for their own ends.[97] Hence, the policy of governments is dependent on which groups are represented. Thus, the "simplest resulting prediction" is government's policy is biased towards the "governing coalition or powerful domestic groups".[98]

[86] Ibid. p.514.
[87] Ibid. p.515.
[88] Ibid. p.517.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid. p.518.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid. p.515.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid. p.530.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid.

Moravcsik's Republican Liberalism and the Shia bloc

Moravcsik's theory speaks to the focus of this thesis. After the 2003 invasion of Iraq, many exiled political groups returned to Iraq to participate in the country's political developments.[99] Moreover, indigenous parties formed after the invasion. Most notably, however, some of these parties culminated into the Shia bloc.[100] This political coalition was not harmonious and consisted of many rivalries amongst the bloc's members.[101] This led to internal competition between the parties, which at times resulted in violent encounters.[102] However, speaking to Moravcsik, some of these groups held self-interests that they sought to pursue through government institutions. Broadly, these entailed material economic benefits that could be realised through fraud, bribery, unofficial taxation, securing and gifting commercial contracts, as well as siphoning funds from ministry budgets.[103] Also, there were additional interests such as establishing and maintaining a Shia led government of Iraq to prevent any return of a Sunni dominant regime given the legacy of Saddam Hussein.[104] Moreover, some interest groups wanted to pursue a decentralised Iraq to have regional autonomy in provincial areas.[105] Nevertheless, these groups sought to reach their goals through Iraq's state institutions.

In addition to the Shia bloc, the interests of Iran, an actor "outside the state apparatus",[106] cannot be ignored. Iran is located next to Iraq and suffered an eight-year disastrous war with Iraq. The war's legacy conditioned the Iranian leadership's strategic thinking towards Iraq.[107] Thus, after the U.S. invasion, the Iranian regime wanted to avoid a pro-U.S. and strong Iraq

[99] Harith Hasan, 'From Radical to Rentier Islamism: The Case of Iraq's Dawa Party', *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* [website], (16 Apr. 2019), https://carnegie-mec.org/2019/04/16/from-radical-to-rentier-islamism-case-of-iraq-s-dawa-party-pub-78887, para. 1, accessed 5 Aug. 2020.
[100] Mariam Karouny and Mussab Al-Khairalla, Karouny, Mariam and Al-Khairalla, Mussab, 'Small party breaks away from Iraq Shi'ite bloc', *Reuters*, 7 Mar. 2007, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-shiites-idUSKHA72977820070307, accessed 19 Aug. 2017 and 'Fact Sheet on Iraq's Major Shi'a Political Parties and Militia Groups', *Institute for the Study of War,* (Apr. 2008),https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Fact%20Sheet%20on%20Iraq's%20Major%20Shia%20Political%20Parties%20and%20Militia%20Groups.pdf, accessed 24 Sep. 2017.
[101] Sudarsan Raghavan, 'Shiite Clerics' Rivalry Deepens In Fragile Iraq', *Washington Post*, 21 Dec. 2006, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2006/12/21/shiite-clerics-rivalry-deepens-in-fragile-iraq/8e41b07c-2880-4380-8b39-6fac7fc63569/, accessed 1 May 2017.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Maxime Agator, 'Iraq: overview of corruption and anti-corruption', Apr. 2013, *Transparency International*, https://www.transparency.org/files/content/corruptionqas/374_Iraq_overview_of_corruption_and_anticorruption.pdf, pp.3-4, accessed 18 July 2017.
[104] Yasir Kuoti, Exclusion and Violence in Post-2003 Iraq', *Journal of International Affairs*, 73/2 (2016), pp.19-28, accessed 2 Aug. 2017 and Harith Hasan, 'Iraq's Sectarian Crisis: A Legacy of Exclusion', *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* [website], (23 Apr. 2014), https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/55372, para. 1-9 and 32, accessed 5 Aug. 2017.
[105] Benjamin Isakhan and Peter E. Mulherin, 'Basra's Bid for Autonomy: Peaceful Progress toward a Decentralized Iraq', *The Middle East Journal*, 72/2 (2018), pp.267-285.
[106] Moravcsik, 'Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics', p.518.
[107] Suzanne Maloney, 'How the Iraq War Has Empowered Iran', *Brookings Institution* [website], (21 Mar. 2008), https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/how-the-iraq-war-has-empowered-iran/, para. 5, accessed 18 Aug. 2021.

from emerging that could threaten its country as it did in the Iran-Iraq war.[108] This potential risk was further pronounced with Bush's axis of evil speech, which identified Iran as one of the states supporting U.S. designated terrorist groups and pursuing a nuclear program.[109] Iran cultivated relationships with groups that had opposed Saddam's rule in exile and now returned to Iraq after the invasion. They formed the Shia bloc, which became integral to the governing coalitions of Ibrahim al-Jaafari and Nouri al-Maliki. Although these groups cannot be classified as "wholly-owned clients of the Islamic Republic", they did maintain varying degrees of affinity and loyalty to Iran.[110] Hence, the establishment of Iraq's first elected government, which Shia parties dominated, gave Iran an unprecedented avenue to pursue its interests in Iraq's state institutions.

These identified interest groups have remained prevalent in Iraq since 2005. As mentioned, since the emergence of Nouri al-Maliki, there has been a familiar observable pattern in Iraqi politics. Each prime minister has been appointed as a result of a compromise between mainstream Iraqi political parties, predominantly within the Shia bloc. Although these political parties had rivalries with each other, they agreed to form a governing coalition after elections.[111] Given the rivalries between these entities, no candidate from these parties is accepted as the nominee for prime minister. Instead, most prime ministers have either been independent candidates not affiliated with a party,[112] or from the small Shia Dawa party.[113] This is to ensure the dominant parties' interests will not be contested by a rival through the prime ministerial post. Following Moravcsik's logic, these political parties sought to realise their interests through Iraq's state institutions. Therefore, this thesis will draw on Moravcsik's theory to examine if these political parties influenced Nouri al-Maliki's non-compliance towards U.S. preferences and objectives. In particular, whether it informed his non-compliance to U.S. objectives towards Shia militias, political reconciliation, and the Status of Forces Agreement.

[108] Kenneth Pollack, 'Prospects for Increased Iranian Influence in Iraq', *Brookings Institution* [website], (15 Nov. 2011), https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/prospects-for-increased-iranian-influence-in-iraq/, 9, accessed 17 Aug. 2021 and 'Interview with Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage', *The Charlie Rose Show*, 10 Dec. 2004, para. 39, in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 1 July 2019.
[109] 'Bush's 2002 State of Union Address', 29 Jan. 2002, https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/onpolitics/transcripts/sou012902.htm, para. 36-40, accessed 3 Mar. 2020.
[110] Maloney, 'How the Iraq War Has Empowered Iran', *Brookings Institution,* para. 3.
[111] For example, SCIRI and the Sadrists after December 2005 election; Maliki's State of Law and the Sadrists after the 2010 election; Badr, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq and Sadrists after the 2014; as well as Sadrists and Fatah after the 2018 election.
[112] For example Adel Abdul-Mahdi and Mustafa al-Kadhimi. However, it should be noted that previously Abdul-Mahdi was a member of the former Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq which no longer exists as a party.
[113] For example Nouri al-Maliki and Haider al-Abadi.

Putnam's two-level game

To further strengthen the domestic level approach, this thesis draws on Putnam's two-level game to account for the influence of domestic interest groups on the interaction between Maliki's and the United States' preferences. Putnam's central conception, the two-level game, predominantly focuses on international negotiations. At the national level, domestic interest groups follow Moravcsik's argument by pursuing their interests through "pressuring government to implement favourable policies".[114] At the international level, governments have to satisfy these domestic pressures while minimising their consequences on foreign interactions.[115] Putnam argues that this configuration of these two levels brings "unusual complexity" to interactions between two governments.[116] For instance, moves "that are rational" for one actor may not be pursued by that actor as its unfavourable to the interests of domestic groups within their state.[117] Building on this configuration, Putnam develops the concept of win-sets. Putnam defines the win-set "as the set of all possible" agreements at the international level, Level I, that would gain the support of the majority of interest groups amongst the domestic constituency at Level II.[118] For Putnam, this win-set has to exist at both actors' national level and overlap on each other for a successful agreement to occur.[119] Putnam's construct predicts that the "larger each win-set" is for both actors, "the more likely they are to overlap". Conversely, "the smaller the win-sets" of each actor, "the greater the risk that the negotiations will break down".[120]

Although Putnam's model predominantly examines international agreements, the concept of win-sets and domestic interest groups is relevant to the U.S.-Iraq case study. As identified at the domestic level, Level II, Maliki's governing coalition consisted of groups seeking to achieve their material and political interests. These interests may have contradicted the preferences of the United States at the international level, Level I. For instance, given the varying connection of these political groups to Iran, there could be conflicting preferences between these political entities and the United States. Hence, if the United States sought Maliki's agreement and support for its objectives that undermined these domestic groups' interests, Putnam's model would assume this desired support would most likely not transpire. Maliki's win-set would be too small to overlap with the United States due to the need to balance and satisfy the interests of the domestic groups in his governing coalition. Therefore, this thesis

[114] Putnam, 'Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of two-level games', *International Organization,* 42/3 (1998), p.434.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid. p.437.
[119] Ibid. p.438.
[120] Ibid.

uses Putnam's model and Moravcsik's theory by examining the three research themes that speak to its goals of stability and required Maliki's support and cooperation. Accordingly, this thesis seeks to illuminate whether these U.S. objectives interfered with the interests of domestic groups in Iraq as well as the preferences of Iran. Moreover, it will investigate whether Maliki's win-set was thereby limited, leading to his non-compliance with U.S. goals.

Endogenous Factors

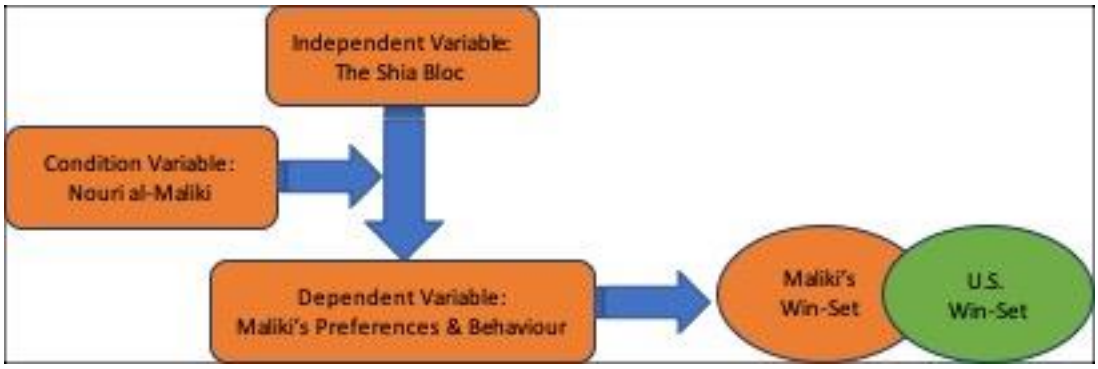
By thus situating the Shia bloc as the Independent Variable and Maliki's preferences and behaviour as the Dependent Variable, the role of agency in determining preferences may seem to be understated. But, as demonstrated, Putnam's and Moravcsik's theoretical arguments posit that domestic groups hold greater explanatory weight for a national leader's preferences towards another state than the individual leaders themselves.[121] They, like other mainstream theorists of International Relations, run the risk of treating the state as a rational unitary actor despite the many components a state consists of.[122] Such an abstraction is evident in Putnam's model through its positioning of the individual leader. Putnam states that, for his model, one "shall presume that each side is represented by a single leader or chief negotiator, and that this individual has no independent policy preferences, but seeks simply to achieve an agreement that will be attractive to his constituents".[123] Hence, Putnam's application is at risk of detaching the subjectivity and agency of the individual.[124] Yet, this abstraction is intended to give Putnam's theory considerable explanatory power by virtue of its applicability to more than one case study and phenomenon.[125] It avoids the idiosyncratic elements at the individual level, given the inability to generate a coherent theory that can encompass this diversity that one would expect to see when studying a broad range of states and their preferences. Van Evera justifies this approach by stating, "good theories elucidate by simplifying. Hence, a good theory is parsimonious. It uses few variables simply arranged to explain its effects".[126]

This simplification, however, can minimise the role of agency within individual actors by treating their preferences as simply or mainly exogenously given.[127] For instance, the notion

[121] Ibid. and Putnam, 'Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of two-level games'.
[122] Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, p.4; Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics,* (U.S.A: Addison-Wesley, 1979); and Robert O. Keohane, 'The Demand for International Regimes', *International Organisations*, 36/2 (1982).
[123] Putnam, 'Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of two-level games', pp.435-436.
[124] Ibid. p.436.
[125] Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science,* (U.S.A: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp.17-18.
[126] Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science,* p.19.
[127] Serdar S. Guner, 'Religion and Preferences: A Decision theoretic Explanation of Turkey's New Foreign Policy', *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 8/3 (2012), p.220.

that only the Shia bloc determined Maliki's preferences. This abstraction risks discarding the endogenous factors which can manifest from Maliki's subjectivity.[128] These can include memory, feelings, historical experiences, and intersubjectivity understandings that can shape an individual's preferences.[129] Dyson's work on U.S. foreign policy towards Iraq has continually emphasised the importance of the individual and their characteristics, psychology and use of historical analogies that can influence their preferences and behaviour.[130] For this reason, this thesis acknowledges the importance of this approach and highlights instances where Maliki's defiance of U.S. goals appears to emerge from Maliki himself and not the Shia bloc. Thus, this thesis situates Maliki as a Condition Variable which impacts the Independent Variable's, domestic interest groups' causality on the Dependent Variable, Maliki's preferences and behaviour.[131] The configuration of these Independent, Dependent and Condition variables for this theoretical approach is outlined in Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3



[128] Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, 'Beyond Identity', *Theory and Society,* 29/1 (2000), pp.17-18.
[129] Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, 'Taking Stock: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 4/1 (2001), p.393; and John G. Ruggie, 'What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge', *International Organization*, 52/4 (1998), p.856. Intersubjectivity understandings refers to the notion that an actor, individual or state, defines their identity and interests into their perception and understanding of another actor see Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics', *International Organization*, 46/2 (1992), pp.394 and 396-397.
[130] Steven Benedict Dyson, *Leaders in conflict: Bush and Rumsfeld in Iraq*, (UK: Manchester University Press, 2014), pp.8-56; Steven Benedict Dyson and Thomas Preston, 'Individual Characteristics of Political Leaders and the Use of Analogy in Foreign Policy Decision Making', *Political Psychology*, 27/2 (2006), pp.270-273; and Steven Benedict Dyson, *The Blair Identity: Leadership and Foreign Policy*, (UK: Manchester University Press, 2009).
[131] Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science,* p.11.

Power and Influence in Asymmetrical Relationships

Given that the theoretical approach to analysing Maliki's preferences is outlined, the approach to studying U.S. influence in the relationship must be detailed. Several models can be invoked to analyse power and influence in asymmetrical relationships between states. These primarily include Bargaining models, Dependency theory, and the Patron-Client construct. These constructs examine the role of dependency in how influence and compliance transpire within these relationships. Nonetheless, these theories and models have several shortcomings when considering the U.S.-Iraq relationship. Both Dependency and Bargaining's theoretical propositions assume that a state's dependency frequently produces influence for the state it is dependent on. For example, State B's dependence on State A allows State A to influence State B. As mentioned, this did not transpire or produce the intended effects in the U.S-Iraq relationship. While the Patron-Client construct does consider the paradox of State B's dependence on State A not allowing State A to influence State B, it does not offer a consistent model to determine when this can occur. Emerson's theory of Power-Dependence Relations provides an avenue to address these shortcomings by explicitly addressing the paradox around dependency and limited influence. It proposes the concept of mutual dependence, which can limit the influence of State A.

When analysing influence and power within international asymmetrical-dyadic relationships, studies have examined the interaction and behaviour of two states that possess a structural imbalance of power and capabilities. Moreover, they examined the competition between both states' preferences and goals as well as the outcome of this interaction. These studies identify characteristics that are integral to analysing influence in asymmetrical relationships. These are disparity, dependency, reciprocity, and compliance. Disparity refers to an imbalance of materialistic power and capabilities between two states. This imbalance is vital when examining the interaction of two states where one state seeks to alter the behaviour and preference of the other. The significance of disparity is that it can permit a dependency to emerge within a dyadic relationship. Caporaso outlines the basis of this dependency as simply entailing a "net reliance" on an "external other", which can be political, economic, or security.[132] This dependency is often one way and usually takes the form of the state with lesser power and capability becoming reliant on the materially stronger state.[133] Echoing the Realist thought in Walt's *Origins of Alliances*, in exchange for the dominant power fulfilling the needs of the

[132] James A. Caporaso, 'Dependence, Dependency, and Power in the Global System: A Structural and Behavioral Analysis', *International Organization,* 32/ 1 (1978), pp.18-21.
[133] Ibid. pp.17-18.

dependent state, there is often an expectation or demand by the dominant power for reciprocity.[134]

The importance of reciprocity in addressing influence within these asymmetric relationships is what the dominant power seeks and how the subordinate state responds. It is usually an imbalanced exchange of goods and services because the lesser state cannot reciprocate with goods or services of equal value to those that the dominant state provides.[135] The stronger actor may seek goods and services that possess an intangible value rather than a pure materialistic worth. For example, instead of a monetary gain, they may seek behavioural adjustments of the smaller state to support the dominant state's regional or global interests. This correlates to Keohane's definition of "diffuse reciprocity", which entails conforming to generally expected standards of behaviour and meeting obligations rather than a fixed exchange of items of equal measurable value.[136] This may involve the subordinate state undertaking structural changes and altering domestic and foreign policies to align with the dominant state's preferences. However, this desired behaviour may be a significant departure from the typical "expected behaviour" of the dependent state.[137] Simply, the behaviour that would have occurred if the imbalanced exchange had not transpired. Thus, the subordinate state may comply with the demands of the dominant actor or resist them, as this sought behaviour is a significant divergence from its usual expected behavioural patterns. It is often expected, however, that the dependency of the smaller state will compel it into compliance.[138] Yet, if non-compliance arises, the stronger power may pursue specific strategies to induce submission. Observing these interactions to determine if compliance arises is essential to comprehending the influence within a dyadic relationship, a critical component in this thesis.

The U.S.-Iraq relationship possessed these characteristics, making it an ideal case study to examine influence in an asymmetrical relationship. It is clearly evident that there was a disparity in power and capability between the United States and Iraq. This is indicated by the rapid demise of the Iraqi army due to the superiority of the U.S. military.[139] This disparity in capabilities continued after the invasion. Moreover, Iraq became dependent on U.S. economic, political, and military support throughout the U.S. nation-building project, and a

[134] Stephen M., *The Origins of Alliances*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), pp.41-45.
[135] Caporaso, 'Dependence, Dependency, and Power in the Global System: A Structural and Behavioral Analysis', pp.17-26.
[136] Robert O. Keohane, 'Reciprocity in International Relations', *International Organization,* 40/1 (1986), p.4.
[137] Expected behaviour being the actions of the state without the deliberate external interference of a foreign actor.
[138] Bercovitch, Jacob, 'Superpowers and Client States: Analysing Relations and Patterns of Influence',
M. Efrat and J. Bercovitch (eds.), *Superpowers and Client States in the Middle East: The Imbalance of Influence*, (London: Routledge, 1991), p.7.
[139] David Hancock, 'Iraqis Surrendering in Hordes', *CBS News*, 21 Mar. 2003, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/iraqis-surrendering-in-hordes/, accessed 3 Dec. 2017.

degree of reciprocity was required in return. It was expected that Maliki would facilitate U.S. objectives surrounding its stability goals. Furthermore, issues of compliance, an essential theme to this study of the U.S.-Iraq relationship, were present. U.S. goals required Maliki's support and cooperation. Hence, when Maliki's actions contradicted the preferences of the United States, it sought to bring Maliki into compliance. However, this desired compliance did not materialise.

Bargaining Model

When analysing the "strategic interaction" of asymmetrical dyads, Tacit Bargaining is frequently invoked.[140] This model explicitly examines how the stronger actor "attempts to influence the policy choices of another state".[141] Studies using the Tacit Bargaining concept examined dyadic relationships cultivated by dependency.[142] According to the tacit construct, the interaction within asymmetrical dyads arises from "mixed motives" resulting from individual interests of the two actors that partially overlap.[143] Thus, this partial incompatibility often results in a conflict of goals between both states.[144] As a consequence, parties attempt to outmanoeuvre each other to attain an unstated and implicit bargain that favours its own interests.[145] Nevertheless, voluntary cooperation of both parties to achieve each of its interests is required; otherwise, it would become coercion.[146] Thus, despite the stronger capabilities of the dominant state, it still needs to secure the cooperation of the lesser state. However, the outcome of the interaction is frequently determined by the disparity of capabilities, as there is an unequal base of resources between the actors, which shapes its influence abilities.[147] An imbalanced possession of resources can dictate each actor's position and capability in the bargaining process. For example, if the dominant state possesses a superior amount of resources that the smaller actor requires, it has the ability to engage in "reward-punishment" strategies to induce compliance.[148] For instance, the dominant state can threaten to restrict aid and trade ties. Hence, the stronger actor's material power capabilities enable it to influence the smaller actor.

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[140] Ibid. p.5.
[141] George Downs and David Rocke, *Tacit Bargaining, Arms Races and Arms Control*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), p.3.
[142] Andrew F. Westwood, *Foreign Aid in a Foreign Policy Framework*, (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1966); and Neil Richardson, *Foreign Policy and Economic Dependence*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), p.70.
[143] P. Terrence Hopmann, 'Asymmetrical Bargaining in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe', *International Organisation*, 32/1 (1978), p.144.
[144] Thomas C. Schelling, 'Bargaining, Communication and Limited War', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 1/1 (1957), p.19.
[145] Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960) and Anselm Strauss, *Negotiations: Varieties, Contexts, Processes, and Social Order*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1978).
[146] Downs and Rocke, *Tacit Bargaining, Arms Races and Arms Control*, p.3.
[147] Hopmann, 'Asymmetrical Bargaining in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe', p.141.
[148] Moon, 'The Foreign Policy of the Dependent State', p.317.

Although the Tacit Bargaining model identifies the importance of dependency for influence, its theoretical propositions and aspects of its methodology are of limited utility for the U.S.-Iraq case study. The tacit concept proposes that "heavily rewarded nations are the most compliant" and are conditioned for long term compliance.[149] However, "if reward behaviour is not responsive to compliance behaviour, then the incentive for the latter disappears".[150] Furthermore, "if reward behaviour did not elicit the response in the form of compliance behaviour, then the incentive for the former disappears".[151] These propositions are invalid in the U.S.-Iraq relationship as it is evident that despite the U.S. continual provision of economic and security aid, compliance did not materialise with Maliki. Moreover, despite this absence of compliance, the United States continued to provide this aid. Hence the "incentive" did not disappear.[152] An additional limitation of using the Tacit Bargaining construct relates to its methodology. It predominantly utilises quantitative methods and game theory. For example, a common methodological approach to measuring influence and compliant behaviour is a statistical analysis of United Nations (UN) voting patterns of the subordinate state vis-a-vis economic and security aid levels received. Compliant behaviour is evident by a voting pattern representing a "general foreign policy stance" that had been altered to the aid-giving state's preference.[153] Despite the benefits of these objective indicators, however, there are limitations when using quantitative approaches to explain influence and compliance as independent and dependent variables. The problem arises from rigid hypotheses and repeated mix motive games such as 'stag hunt' and 'prisoner's dilemma'.[154] These simulations and "representation[s] of reality"[155] specify limited fixed outcomes such as cooperation, non-compliance, or defection.[156] Yet, they struggle to sufficiently explain the subjectivity and complexity of "political behaviour" that can deviate away from these fixed outcomes.

Moon argues that this limitation reduces the Bargaining construct's ability to consider other potential outcomes. He doubts the model's ability to assess potential scenarios that depart from these specified outcomes – in other words, different ways the subordinate state could respond to influence attempts. Moon offers two paradigms that the tacit model might not identify: appeasement and mutual dependence. Moon's appeasement, defined as "greater

[149] Ibid. p.320.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Catherine C. Langlois and Jean-Pierre P. Langlois, 'Tacit Bargaining in International Relations: A Game Model and a Case Study', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution,* 40/4 (1996), p.571.
[155] Joseph Frankel, *Contemporary International Theory and the Behaviour of States*, (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 1973), p.27.
[156] James D. Fearon, 'Bargaining, Enforcement, and International Cooperation', *International Organization,* 52/2 (1998), p.264.

rewards when compliance is lower", occurs when the dominant state continues to provide aid and increase the number of goods for the dependent state despite non-compliance to the dominant state's preferences.[157] This can also represent leveraging of the dominant state's interests by virtue that the dependent state can continue to receive these goods by manipulating the dominant state's preferences.[158] Mutual dependence is evident when, despite continual non-compliance, the dominant state is locked into long term aid-giving due to the necessity of maintaining a regime for its calculated interests.[159] The relevance of this line of argument to the U.S.-Iraq relationship will be borne out in the succeeding chapters.

Dependency Theory

Dependency theory departs from the Bargaining model by emphasising the prominence of dependency in the relationship. It postulates that dependency critically configures the structure and development of the weaker state as well as its relationship with the dominant power. The theory considers the economic and political underdevelopment of the dependent state to be stimulated by the consequences of external reliance.[160] The economic underdevelopment results from the imbalanced exchange of reciprocity between the two actors. This usually includes trade and economic agreements that favour a one-way flow of capital towards the dominant state.[161] In return for this one-directional flow of benefits, foreign aid is commonly given. Yet, aid, in this case, is not viewed as a reward-punishment tactic but a dependency producing transaction; it is not perceived as an influence tool.[162] The political underdevelopment results from the dependency's re-configuration of the subordinate state's political system by undermining the autonomy of its decision-making unit. It "distorts" the political system because the "asymmetrical contact" between the two nations produces an "emergence of a co-opted elite" whose interests mostly align with that of the dominant state.[163] Therefore, influence already exists before governmental and political decisions are made as lawmakers' interests are aligned with those of the stronger state.[164]

Dependency theory postulates that bargaining, reward-punishment tactics, and direct influence intervention are generally not required as the political decision-making process will

[157] Moon, 'The Foreign Policy of the Dependent State', p.321.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Vincent A. Mahler, *Dependency Approaches to International Political Economy: A Cross-National Study*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1980), p.1.
[161] James C. Scott, 'Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia', *The American Political Science Review,* 66/1 (1972), pp.16-18.
[162] Teresa Hayter, *Aid as Imperialism,* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p.33.
[163] Mahler, *'Dependency Approaches to International Political Economy: A Cross-National Study',* pp.1-3.
[164] Ibid.

frequently consider the dominant power's interests. This represents a deep penetration of influence in the political structure of the dependent state. Studies using this theory have focused on relationships of the Soviet Union and the United States with Third World nations. For example, Armstrong uses statistical analysis of military and economic aid to measure the dependence of such bilateral interactions.[165] She utilises this aid as an independent variable to measure its effects on a dependent variable such as UN voting behaviour.[166] Armstrong attempts to establish a correlation between levels of aid and influence by analysing small states' voting on issues that were salient to both the United States and the Soviet Union.[167] Yet Armstrong claims that this methodology is restrictive and that efforts need to be made to find "more indicators of compliance".[168]

Although there can be some connection between elements of Dependency theory and the U.S-Iraq relationship, they are not compelling. For example, a form of this distortion of the political system that the model identifies appears evident in the U.S-Iraq relationship, given the instrumental role the United States had in forming Iraq's new political system. Furthermore, the U.S. lobbying for Maliki to become prime minister and the appointment of other policymakers to facilitate its interests may represent this co-opted elite. However, Maliki's defiance of U.S. preferences undermines this idea of a co-opted elite and influence. The notion that distortion of a political system permits successful influence penetration and reduces the need of the dominant state to undertake direct influence attempts does not apply in the U.S.-Iraq relationship. Responding to Maliki's defiance, the United States had to consistently employ influence attempts towards him. Additionally, the model is restricted in accounting for Maliki's defiance. According to Carney, the theory's "attempt to explain weak states response is limited".[169] This weakness of explanation may arise from Dependency theory's predominant focus on economic and trade variables. The theory's initial purpose was to analyse relations between advanced industrial states and less developed and homogenous states – relations between the global North and South – to highlight the inequality of economic development due to its dependence.[170] Thus, most Dependency theorists have focused on "economic

[165] Adrienne Armstrong, 'The Political Consequences of Economic Dependence', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution,* 25/3 (1981), pp.414.
[166] Ibid. p.415.
[167] Ibid. pp.413-415.
[168] Ibid. p.424
[169] Christopher P. Carney, 'International Patron-Client Relationships: A Conceptual Framework', *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 24/2 (1989), p.42.
[170] Caporaso makes a distinction between dependency and dependence and provides a critical discussion of the constructs, see James A. Caporaso, 'Dependence, Dependency, and Power in the Global System: A Structural and Behavioral Analysis', *International Organization,* 32/ 1 (1978), pp.16-17.

transactions" and other "economic indicators".[171] As a consequence, there is often a neglect of variables that transcend the economic realm.

Patron-Client Model

In contrast to the previous theories, the Patron-Client construct addresses the paradox of dependency and limited influence. The Patron-Client is a relatively recent concept that surfaced in International Relations around the 1980s. The anthropological and sociological concepts[172] – patron and client – were expanded to International Relations and Political Science.[173] The timing and purpose of the concept were to provide a more pragmatic critique of the interaction and behaviour within asymmetrical-dyadic relationships in the structural context of the Cold War bipolarity.[174] Moreover, a substantial amount of this Cold War literature centred on explicating how smaller states defied the larger powers' interests, notwithstanding its dependency. Bercovitch summarised this as the "big influence of small powers",[175] which correlates to this thesis' central focus. Consistent with the realist tradition, Bercovitch advocates that the anarchical nature of "the current international system" fosters the emergence of Patron-Client relations as a mechanism for small states and great powers "to cope with anarchy and avoid chaos and disorder".[176] Additionally, by entering relationships with weaker states, dominant powers seek strategic advantages and objectives to enhance its position in regional and global arenas.[177] These weaker states possess some intangible value that the greater power, or patron, deems a benefit or a necessity in its strategic objectives vis-à-vis other rivals. Client states are motivated to enter these relationships primarily for two reasons. The first, is its own perceived vulnerability and weakness within the anarchical international system. Second, the need to seek protection from a regional or global power.[178]

International Patron-Client relations depart from common dependency relations and other bilateral interactions due to the prominence of the smaller state in the stronger actor's strategic calculations.[179] Also, there is a greater emphasis on the importance of compliance and

[171] Moon, *'The Foreign Policy of the Dependent State'*, p.322.
[172] See for example, John D. Powell, 'Peasant Society and Clientelist Politics', *The American Political Science Review,* 62/2 (1970), pp.411-425; and Scott, 'Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia', pp.91-113.
[173] For example, Comparative Politics borrowed the term in addressing competing factions in political systems of states, villages, and regions. See Carney, 'International Patron-Client Relationships: A Conceptual Framework', pp.43-44.
[174] Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Superpowers and the Middle East: Regional and International Politics, 1955-1967*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), p.3.
[175] Bercovitch, 'Superpowers and Client States: Analysing Relations and Patterns of Influence', p.4.
[176] Ibid. p.16.
[177] Ibid.pp.15-16.
[178] Charles Hanly, 'The Ethics of Independence', in Stephen Clarkson (ed.), *An Independent Foreign Policy for Canada?*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968), p.22.
[179] Shoemaker and Spanier, *Patron-Client State Relationships: Multilateral Crises in the Nuclear Age,* p.13.

influence. Compliance and influence are essential motifs to a Patron-Client relationship as the patron requires compliance from the client to achieve the objectives that motivated its entrance into the relationship. If the client engages in non-compliant behaviour, the patron's goals can become unattainable. Thus, if there is a risk that its demands may not be accommodated, the patron may employ influence attempts to obtain compliance. Both Bargaining and Dependency models assume that this compliance frequently transpires given that the dominant actor has the power capabilities to enhance its bargaining position to be successful in its demands. Additionally, it is also argued that the dependency usually obliges the lesser state into compliance. However, these are not automatically present in Patron-Client relationships.

Cold War Patron-Client literature highlights that often the client engages in non-compliance, which is detrimental to the goals and interests of the patron.[180] A common explanation for this behaviour was that the strategic and geopolitical variables that motivated the patron into the relationship created the opportunity for the client to enhance its bargaining position. This arose from the patron's compelling reliance on the client to further its strategic interests. Thus, this essentiality enhanced the client's leverage in the relationship.[181] Moreover, it allowed the client to demand more benefits from the patron or obtain more autonomy in pursuing policies of its choice even if they clashed with the patron's interests.[182] According to the realist perspective, this defiance can occur as states resent the loss of autonomy in their decision-making process within formal and informal alliances such as a Patron-Client relationship.[183] Alternatively, the perceived calculated consequences of non-compliance are worth the expected gain of the client foregoing contradictory policies.[184] Hence, utility maximiser clients do not readily reciprocate the benefits that its patron provides. Instead they "generally seek maximum support in exchange for minimal concessions".[185] Consequently, the patron may require more coercive tools to shape a client's behaviour to bring them into compliance. To counteract this defiance, the patron is presented with an array of strategies and tools to induce compliance. Rubinstein defines these as materials to build influence and includes withholding crucial economic and security aid as well as threatening direct intervention, regime change and trade

[180] For example, Shoemaker and Spanier, *Patron-Client State Relationships: Multilateral Crises in the Nuclear Age*; Rubinstein, *Red Star on The Nile: The Soviet-Egyptian Influence Relationship since the June War*; Mark J, Gasiorowski*, U.S. Foreign Policy and the Shah: Building a Client State in Iran*, (London: Cornell University press, 1991); and John D. Ciorciari, 'A Chinese model for patron-client relations? The Sino-Cambodian partnership', *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 15/1 (2015), pp.245-278.

[181] Stephen M. Walt*, The Origins of Alliances*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), p.43.

[182] Shoemaker and Spanier, *Patron-Client State Relationships: Multilateral Crises in the Nuclear Age,* p.13.

[183] Glenn H. Snyder*, Alliance Politics,* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1997), p.22.

[184] Ibid. p.74

[185] Ciorciari, 'A Chinese model for patron-client relations? The Sino-Cambodian partnership', p.248.

restrictions.[186] Nevertheless, most Patron-Client literature has examined this interaction and tension of compliance and non-compliance between the patron and client. Additionally, it analysed the outcome of the conflict between a client's leverage – from its strategic importance to its patron – and the patron's influence attempts. Furthermore, many applications of the Patron-Client construct focused on influence in asymmetrical relationships of the United States and the Soviet Union with Middle Eastern states.[187] Hence, the model initially appealed to this research. However, several issues prevent its feasibility for the U.S.-Iraq case study.

There are conceptual and methodological challenges of the Patron-Client model that make it less appealing to use in contrast to Emerson's theory of Power-Dependence Relations. The Patron-Client model suffers from an absence of a coherent methodological framework of analysis. Early proponents of the Patron-Client concept all diverge in these areas. Hence, applications of the model were mostly idiosyncratic.[188] Also, these individualistic approaches generate the impression that there is a degree of elasticity when implementing the model, given that they only apply selected core components of the construct. This impression is further supported by the array of recent applications of the model towards contemporary asymmetrical dyads that depart from the Cold-War relationships previously examined.[189] These studies have developed their own methodologies from their individual interpretations of previous scholarship. Consequently, there is a lack of theoretical rigour to guide research on what variables and data should be collected.[190] Moreover, the construct lacks predictive power. Many accounts do not hypothesise when a dominant power can and cannot influence the weaker actor. Only Shoemaker and Spanier attempted to rectify this by developing a framework for international Patron-Client relationships.[191] They provide six different contexts that can determine the patron's ability to influence the smaller state.[192] However, their framework centres on the smaller state's threat environment vis-à-vis external states. It does not consider mutual dependence and its effect on influence which are critical elements for the U.S.-Iraq case study.

[186] Rubinstein, *Red Star on The Nile: The Soviet-Egyptian Influence Relationship since the June War*, p.XIV.
[187] For example, the United States and Iran, the Soviet Union and Egypt as well as the Soviet Union and Syria.
[188] Christopher P. Carney, Jacob Bercovitch, Mark J Gasiorowski, Christopher Shoemaker and John Spanier.
[189] See for example, Woulter Veenendaal, 'Analysing the Foreign Policy of Microstates: The Relevance of the International Patron-Client Model', *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 13/3 (2014), pp.561-577; Ciorciari, 'A Chinese Model for Patron-Client Relations? the Sino-Cambodian Partnership'; and Aly Zaman, 'Compliance and Defiance in Patron-Client State Relationships: A Case Study of Pakistan's Relationship with the United States, 1947-2013', Ph.D. Thesis (Australian National University, 2015).
[190] John Kuada, *Research Methodology: A Project Guide for University Students*, (Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur, 2012), p.64.
[191] Shoemaker and Spanier, *Patron-Client State Relationships: Multilateral Crises in the Nuclear Age,* p.23
[192] Ibid.

Power-Dependence Relations

Although the Patron-Client construct addresses the paradox of dependency and limited influence, Richard Emerson's theory of Power-Dependency Relations offers a more compelling theoretical explanation. Moreover, it explicitly addresses Moon's idea of mutual dependency, which Moon argues is not captured in Dependency and Bargaining models.[193] Hence, it is an ideal theory to consider when approaching the U.S.-Iraq relationship. Emerson's theory emerged from Social Exchange theory. Social Exchange theory examines dyadic interactions of mutual dependence that involves the reciprocity and exchange of "tangible goods and services" and "socially valued outcomes such as status or support".[194] This dyadic relationship entails two actors who "are dependent on each other for valued outcomes".[195] However, the theory's concept of power departs from the common characterisation of power. Instead of defining power in relation to the physical attributes of an actor, for instance, monetary and other material resources, Social Exchange theory views power as a property of the social relationship between both actors.[196] Power "is not an attribute of the actor[s]".[197] This does not mean material factors associated with power, such as money and other resources, are irrelevant. They can become aspects of power if A possesses them and B, who does not, depends on these resources. It is this form of dependence, what A possesses that B requires, which "provides the basis for power" in the relationship.[198] Furthermore, power is the crucial ingredient for influence as power is often defined as realising goals by modifying and transforming the preferences of the actions of others.[199] Therefore, dependency determines power in the dyadic relationship, which in turn determines how influence transpires within the relationship.

Emerson's theory continues to explore this dependence and establishes two distinct relationships. The first relationship is asymmetrical dependence. This is when "A's power over B derives from, and is equal to, B's dependence on A".[200] Thus, this asymmetrical dependence

[193] Moon, 'The Foreign Policy of the Dependent State', p.321.
[194] Linda D. Molm, 'Power and Social Exchange', in Dean Tjosvold and Barbara Wisse (eds), *Power and Interdependence in Organisations*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.153-154.
[195] Ibid. p.154.
[196] Richard M. Emerson, 'Power-Dependence Relations', *American Sociological Review,* 27/1 (1962), p.32.
[197] Ibid.
[198] Molm, 'Power and Social Exchange', p.154.
[199] This definition of power speaks to one of Hindess' conception of power, 'power as simple capacity'. See Barry Hindess, *Discourses of Power: From Hobbes to Foucault*, (UK, Blackwell Publishers, 1996). For an excellent discussion on power see, Hindess, *Discourses of Power: From Hobbes to Foucault* and Chapter II in Christian Reus-Smit, *American Power and World Order*, (UK, Polity Press, 2004).
[200] Molm, 'Power and Social Exchange', p.154; and Richard M. Emerson, 'Exchange Theory, Part I: A Psychological Basis for Social Exchange' in J. Berger, M. Zelditch and B. Anderson (eds.), *Sociological Theories in Progress, vol. 2*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

is the source of power for an actor to influence the preferences of the dependent actor. According to Emerson, "a pattern of Dominance" can emerge in interactions which entails B complying with A's demands.[201] The second relationship is mutual dependence. Emerson states that this transpires when A, in addition to B's dependence on A, is also dependent on B.[202] This implies "that each party is in a position, to some degree, to grant or deny, facilitate or hinder, the other's gratification".[203] For Emerson, this balances an asymmetrical power-dependence relationship "which tend[s] to reduce power advantage[s]" of the stronger actor.[204] Thus, any asymmetrical "power advantage" of an actor from tangible qualities of power, such as monetary and material resources, may become less effective or invalidated if the relationship is one of mutual dependence.[205] Yet, Emerson states that mutual dependence "does not" automatically "neutralised power" of the stronger actor.[206] However, it can severely "reduce the power advantage" of that actor.[207] Therefore, one can infer from Emerson's theory that mutual dependence can reduce the ability of a stronger actor with material capabilities from exercising power over a weaker actor to influence its behaviour.

Although Emerson's theory is mainly applied in the sociological field to exchanges within human social interactions and networks, his theory is broadly applicable outside of these disciplines. Emerson deliberately made concepts, such as actors and dependency, "as broadly applicable as possible" to "facilitate broader application" of his theory.[208] Baldwin – who is well known for studying statecraft influence and power in International Relations[209] – echoes Emerson's claim. He identifies the benefits of borrowing from Social Exchange theory to study power relations as well as "the power of weak actors [which] tends to be underestimated".[210] He states that Social Exchange theory can make "valuable contributions to understanding efficiency, power, reciprocity, foreign aid, dependency, institutions, and bargaining in international relations; but the potential contribution of the exchange perspective to each of these topics has yet to be realized".[211] Therefore, Emerson's theory can be extrapolated and drawn on for examining the U.S.-Iraq relationship given Iraq's dependency on the United States. However, Emerson's theory is not commonly used in studies of dyadic relationships amongst states in the International Relations and Political Science discipline.

[201] Emerson, 'Power-Dependence Relations', p.34.
[202] Ibid. p.32.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Emerson, 'Power-Dependence Relations', p.34; and Molm, 'Power and Social Exchange', p.154.
[205] Emerson, 'Power-Dependence Relations', pp.33-34.
[206] Ibid. p.34
[207] Ibid.
[208] Emerson, 'Power-Dependence Relations', pp.32-33
[209] David A. Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft*, (U.S.A: Princeton University Press, 1985); and David A. Baldwin, *Power and International Relations: A Conceptual Approach*, (U.S.A: Princeton University Press, 2016).
[210] David A. Baldwin, 'Exchange Theory and International Relations', *International Negotiation*, 3/2 (1998), p.142.
[211] Ibid. 147

There are sporadic uses of his work that centre on his concepts of power,[212] yet there is a lack of engagement with his asymmetrical and mutual dependence constructs.[213] Hence, there is limited guidance on using this theory when approaching the U.S.-Iraq case study.

Emerson's theory, however, has multiple advantages that overcome this weakness. First, it directly addresses the paradox of how a stronger actor that enjoys asymmetrical material capabilities cannot translate these capabilities into influence over a dependent actor. This phenomenon speaks to this thesis' second research question; how the United States, which possessed an asymmetrical-power advantage, could not exercise influence over Iraq, which was dependent on the United States. Furthermore, Emerson's theory offers firm theoretical predictions surrounding influence. If "a pattern of "Dominance" emerges in an asymmetrical-dyadic relationship which consists of B, the dependent actor, complying with A's demands, then one can infer this relationship is one of asymmetrical dependence.[214] This entails a one-way dependency where A can influence B. However, if the dependent actor, B, does not frequently comply with A's demands, then Emerson's theory would predict that this relationship is one of mutual dependence. With these two propositions, hypotheses can be formulated and tested. Hence, this thesis hypothesises that the United States could not use its asymmetrical-power capabilities to influence Nouri al-Maliki as the U.S.-Iraq relationship was one of mutual dependence. To test this hypothesis, the thesis observes the interactions of the U.S.-Maliki relationship. Emerson states empirical observations of power and influence can occur "if A makes some demand…[which]…, runs counter to B's desires (resistance to be over-come)" and produces "change in the conduct of B attributable to demands made by A".[215] Thus, this thesis has identified the U.S. objectives towards Shia militias, political reconciliation, and establishing a Status of Forces agreement which required Maliki's cooperation. Accordingly, if Maliki exhibits non-compliance, the thesis examines any influence attempts to compel Maliki into cooperation. If this compliance did not transpire, it can be stated that the thesis' second hypothesis is proven and that the relationship was mutual dependence. Yet, if

[212] See Richard Emerson, 'Charismatic Kingship: A Study of State-Formation and Authority in Baltistan', *Politics & Society*, 12/4 1983, pp.413-444; Fernando Mourón and Francisco Urdinez, 'A Comparative Analysis of Brazil's Foreign Policy Drivers Towards the USA: Comment on Amorim Neto (2011)', *Brazilian Political Science Review*, 8/2 (2014), pp.92-113; Helen Milner, 'American debt and world power', *International Journal*, 48/3 (1993), pp.527-560; and Margit Tavits, 'Power within Parties: The Strength of the Local Party and MP Independence in Postcommunist Europe', *American Journal of Political Science*, 55/4 (2011), pp.923-936.

[213] Notable exceptions are Johannes Han-Yin Chang, 'China-US Relations: The Past as Looking Glass', *American Studies International*, 38/2 (2000), pp.67-70; Yasuhiro Izumikawa, 'United We Stand, Divided They Fall: Use of Coercion and Rewards as Alliance Balancing Strategy', Ph.D. Thesis (Georgetown University, 2001), pp.1-60; and Stephen L. Schechter, 'International Dependence Relations: A Study of the Transactional Ties of the Former British and French Dependencies', Ph.D. Thesis (University of Pittsburgh, 1972). Izumikawa draws on Emerson to examine security dependence and coercive influence within Alliances. Furthermore, both PhD Theses highlight the absence of Emerson in International Relations theory and cite Baldwin's claim on Social Exchange theory's potential contribution to the International Relations field.

[214] Emerson, 'Power-Dependence Relations', p.34.

[215] Ibid.

this compliance frequently arises, the hypothesis is false, and the relationship was not one of mutual dependence.

Conclusion

Therefore, this conceptual framework that has been established will now be applied to the U.S.-Iraq relationship. By using Moravcsik and Putnam's theoretical models, the thesis will examine if the domestic interest groups, the Shia bloc, affected Nouri al-Maliki's preferences and behaviour towards the goals of the United States. It will investigate if the bloc led to Maliki's non-compliance towards U.S. objectives surrounding Shia militias, political reconciliation, and the Status of Forces Agreement. Although there are alternative approaches and additional factors to consider when examining Maliki's preferences, the domestic lens of analysis offers a compelling avenue to investigate what informed Maliki's preferences towards the United States. The prominence of the domestic interest groups in Iraq, the Shia bloc, and its impact on Iraq's prime ministers, suggest that the bloc may have influenced Maliki's response to U.S. objectives. To examine influence in the relationship, this thesis will draw on Emerson's theory of Power-Dependence relations. If Maliki's preferences contradicted those of the United States, the thesis will examine any influence attempts by the United States to bring Maliki into compliance. If these influence attempts were successful, then according to Emerson, the U.S-Iraq relationship was one of asymmetrical dependence. However, if these attempts were unsuccessful and did not produce compliance from Maliki, then the relationship is mutual dependence. If the relationship is one of mutual dependence, then it can be inferred that mutual dependence prevented the U.S. asymmetrical-power advantage, vis-à-vis its material resource capabilities, from translating into influence over Maliki. Although there are alternative theories in International Relations to study influence, they do not capture this construct of mutual dependence. Moreover, they struggle to address the paradox of dependency and limited influence. Yet, Emerson's theory provides insight and a compelling theoretical explanation to this paradox. Hence, it is an ideal theory to consider when approaching the U.S-Iraq case study. Nonetheless, the next chapter will examine how the U.S.-Iraq relationship transformed from asymmetrical dependency to mutual dependency.

Chapter II – Pre-war Planning and the Occupation

The planning for the invasion of Iraq and the corresponding occupation are ideal starting points to map the evolution of dependency and influence in the U.S.-Iraq relationship. The pre-war planning is essential to discuss for two primary reasons. First, it highlights how the Bush administration planned to exercise influence in Iraq after the invasion. Additionally, there was significant divergence within the Bush administration on the pre-war planning as well as its vision for Iraq after the invasion. Although there is substantial literature on this divergence within the administration,[216] its effects on the U.S. policy towards Iraq continued into 2006. Hence, it is important to review the origin of this divisiveness to comprehend how it affected U.S. engagement with Iraq's first prime minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, and Nouri al-Maliki. Furthermore, detailing the occupation period is essential as it represents how the U.S.-Iraq relationship transformed from asymmetrical dependence to mutual dependence. At the start of the occupation, the United States enjoyed a strong position of influence in Iraq to pursue its goals. It established a domestic interim authority that was heavily dependent on the United States, given that it was the sole source of economic aid and security in Iraq. Additionally, the interim authority's future status was conditional on U.S. preferences. Thus, given these dependencies, the U.S.-Iraq relationship resembled one of asymmetrical dependence. Hence, the United States was able to exercise influence to pursue its objectives.

This period of asymmetrical dependence predominantly transpired during the Coalition Provincial Authority (CPA) period under L. Paul Bremer III. However, this asymmetrical dependence was temporary and would change. Bremer attempted to fulfil President Bush's grand vision of democratising Iraq through a long-term occupation and nation-building project. Yet, after the Bush administration saw dismal progress, they believed Bremer's CPA project would take many years to complete. Therefore, in November 2003, Bremer was instructed by the administration to conclude the project and promptly hand over sovereignty to Iraq in order to begin a slow withdrawal of U.S. troops. As a result of this quick transition, the Bush administration was forced to scramble a strategy to maintain influence in Iraq. It attempted to promote its desired Iraqi candidates to top senior leadership positions. However, this produced limited success. It successfully appointed the desired leader for Iraq's Interim Government in 2004. Yet, this interim government only functioned for six months and was replaced by Iraq's first elected government in January 2005. The January election produced a leadership and

[216] For example, see Stephen B. Dyson, 'What Really Happened in Planning for Postwar Iraq?', *Political Science Quarterly,* 128/3 (2013), pp.455-488, Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq's Green Zone*, (United Kingdom: Knopf, 2006), pp.49-71 and Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, (New York, Simon & Schuster, 2004).

governing coalition that the Bush administration wanted to avoid since 2003. This governing coalition was the newly formed Shia bloc. This election appeared to lay the foundation of transitioning the U.S.-Iraq relationship from asymmetrical dependence to mutual dependence.

Pre-war Planning

The pre-war planning for the invasion of Iraq was characterised by severe division within the Bush administration. The invasion itself was controversial in the administration as some opposed invading Iraq.[217] This is largely attributed to Bush's Secretary of State, Colin Powell, and his confidant, Richard Haass.[218] The administration was also divided on the goals and desired outcome for the invasion of Iraq. For example, there were conflicting views on the Iraqi policy between President Bush and his Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld. This division expanded to the Department of Defence under Rumsfeld and the Department of State under Powell. This disagreement was detrimental for two reasons. First, it consumed the limited time available for planning the invasion, not to mention the post-war governance of Iraq. Second, there was no consensus on the objectives of the invasion. Hence, the goals for the invasion that were incorporated into the pre-war planning significantly altered after the U.S. led coalition secured Baghdad.

The divergence amongst the Bush administration was a by-product of the September 11 terror attacks. The September 11 attacks influenced the Bush administration's policy towards Iraq by situating it in the new Global War on Terror.[219] After the attacks, Bush established his war council for the global war on terror, which consisted of the principal members of Bush's National Security Council.[220] For some, the existing containment strategy of sanctions that had dominated U.S. policy towards Iraq after the 1991 Gulf war was no longer viable given the current ability of terrorism and mass destruction to be mobilised against the United

[217] An additional controversy is the role of Neo-Conservative ideology in the Bush administration that motivated the invasion of Iraq. For an excellent analysis on Neo-Conservativism and International Relations see Brian C. Schmidt and Michael C. Williams, 'The Bush Doctrine and the Iraq War: Neoconservatives Versus Realists', *Security Studies*, 17/2 (2008), pp.191-220. Also, there is an abundance of literature that posits that the invasion of Iraq was part of a larger ideological ploy within elements of the Bush administration that favoured unilateralism with pre-emptive military force. James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet*, (United States: Penguin Random House, 2004) and Max Boot, 'Neocons', *Foreign Policy,* no.140 (2004), pp.20-28. This thesis does not seek to engage with this neo-conservative narrative, given that the motivation to invade Iraq is not the central focus of this thesis.

[218] Although Haass's formal position was the Director of Policy Planning in the Bush administration, he acted as a confidant and advisor for Colin Powell.

[219] Condoleezza Rice, 'Rethinking the National Interest: American Realism for a New World', *Foreign Affairs* [website], (July/Aug. 2008), https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2008-06-01/rethinking-national-interest, accessed 18 Nov. 2017

[220] Dan Balz and Bob Woodward, 'America's Chaotic Road to War', *Washington Post*, 27 Jan. 2002, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/18/AR2006071801175.html, p.1, accessed 20 April 2018. And Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (2004), https://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/911Report.pdf, p.330, accessed 17 Apr. 2019.

States.[221] Moreover, it was evident for others that long-standing U.S. policies towards the Middle East needed to change. For them, tacit U.S. support of brutal dictatorships led to the fermentation of the so-called Islamic terrorism towards the collective West.[222] Bush's National Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice, outlined this position in her piece, "Rethinking the National Interest". She wrote,

> …for six decades under both Democratic and Republican administrations, a basic bargain defined the United States' engagement in the broader Middle East: we supported authoritarian regimes, and they supported our shared interest in regional stability. After September 11, it became increasingly clear that this old bargain had produced false stability.[223]

Additionally, Bush wrote that this "stability we had been promoting was a mirage".[224] Hence the United States had to address "the decades of oppression and denied opportunity that spawned hopelessness, fed hatreds, and lead to the sort of radicalization that brought about the ideology behind the September 11 attacks".[225]

This thinking underpinned the emergence of the Bush doctrine and his desire for a global war on terrorism. He stated that the war's aim should be eliminating terrorism that is a threat "to our way of life, U.S. interests… and to all nations who love freedom".[226] Furthermore, he stated that "we have made the decision to punish whoever harbors terrorists, not just the perpetrators".[227] However, for Bush, a cure to this terrorism was promoting democracy in the authoritarian countries from which so-called Islamic terrorism emerged. Therefore, Bush defined the fourth prong of the Bush doctrine as the "freedom agenda" in which the security of the United States "increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands".[228] Thus, it would be "the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world".[229] Moreover, Iraq was to become a cornerstone for Bush's freedom agenda. For Bush, democratising Iraq would replicate the Japanese post-World War II

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[221] Donald Rumsfeld, 'meeting to discuss Iraq' [memorandum], 27 July 2001, Digital *National Security Archive, George Washington University*, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 1 Dec. 2018 and 'President George Bush Discusses Iraq in National Press Conference', 6 Mar. 2003, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030306-8.html, para. 43, accessed 19 Jan. 2019.
[222] Rice, 'Rethinking the National Interest: American Realism for a New World'.
[223] Ibid. para. 33.
[224] George W. Bush, *Decision Points*, (New York: Crown Books, 2011), p.398.
[225] Rice, 'Rethinking the National Interest: American Realism for a New World', para. 33.
[226] Dan Balz and Bob Woodward, 'We Will Rally the World', *Washington Post,* 28 Jan. 2002, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/18/AR2006071800686.html, accessed, 22. Apr. 2018, p.5.
[227] Balz and Woodward, 'America's Chaotic Road to War' and Balz and Woodward, 'We Will Rally the World', p.5.
[228] Bush, *Decision Points*, pp.396-397.
[229] 'President Bush's Second Inaugural Address', *NPR*, 20 Jan. 2005, https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4460172, para. 8, accessed 15 Nov. 2018.

experience, in which "by adopting a Japanese-style democracy, an enemy had become an ally".[230] Furthermore, Iraq would be the foundation of Bush's freedom agenda to lead a wave of democratisation in the Middle East, given its historical and symbolic prestige in the Arab world.[231] Bush, drawing from the domino theory, outlined this in February 2003, stating that "a new regime in Iraq would serve as a dramatic and inspiring example of freedom for other nations in the region".[232]

The entire administration did not share Bush and Rice's democratic aspirations. Most notably, this included Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld, Vice President Richard Cheney, and Secretary of State Colin Powell. According to Woodward, most of Bush's war council disagreed on Bush's desire for a global war on terrorism given its breath and the apparent infeasibility of prosecuting such a war.[233] Nevertheless, Rumsfeld and Powell supported some strategic goals for this global war on terrorism. However, these objectives were not harmonious and would be detrimental to the planning and execution of the invasion of Iraq. Their strategic goals included combating terrorist entities connected to al-Qaeda, which operated in the Middle East. Pertaining to Iraq, this included the removal of Saddam's perceived WMD capability that became a priority given the September 11 attacks.[234] Prior to the September attacks, there was constant anxiety that Saddam would use weapons of mass destruction against U.S. allies and interests in the Middle East. Additionally, there was speculation that he might distribute such weapons to terrorist entities.[235] Hence, after the September attacks, this speculation gained more currency in the Bush administration. Nonetheless, there was disagreement on how to disable Saddam's WMD capability. Rumsfeld and Vice President Cheney favoured dismantling Saddam's regime, unilaterally if necessary.[236] Yet, the State Department preferred international sanctions and inspections. Nevertheless, in 2002, it became evident that those favouring the removal of Saddam's regime

[230] Bush, *Decision Points*, p.397.
[231] Greg Miller, 'Democracy Domino Theory Not Credible', *Los Angeles Times*, 14 Mar. 2003, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2003-mar-14-fg-domino14-story.html, para.22., accessed 21 Nov. 2018.
[232] 'President Discusses the Future of Iraq', 6 Feb. 2003, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030226-11.html, para.18, accessed 25 Nov. 2018.
[233] Balz and Woodward,'We Will Rally the World', p.5.
[234] James Dobbins et al., *After the War: Nation-Building from FDR to George W. Bush*, (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2008), pp.57-59 and United States Senate Committee on Armed Services, *U.S. Policy on Iraq* (2002), https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-107shrg84837/html/CHRG-107shrg84837.htm, p.17, accessed 19 Jan. 2019
[235] Rumsfeld, 'meeting to discuss Iraq' [memorandum].
[236] United States Senate Committee on Armed Services, *Lessons Learned During Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Ongoing Operations in the United States Central Command Region* (2003), https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-108shrg96501/html/CHRG-108shrg96501.htm, pp.1-99, accessed 15 Jan. 2019; *Testimony of U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld before the House Armed Services Committee regarding Iraq*, 18 Sep. 2002, http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/polisci/faculty/trachtenberg/useur/rumsfeld180902.html, para. 13 and 30, accessed 19 Jan. 2019; and 'Transcript of Interview with Vice-President Dick Cheney on Meet the Press', 8 Sep. 2002, https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/bush/meet.htm, 12 Jan. 2019.

through military means won the president's support.[237] However, the division of undertaking Bush's democratic project in Iraq remained unresolved.

Planning for War: Avoid Dependency

Under Rumsfeld, the Department of Defence was the lead government agency for planning the invasion of Iraq. However, Rumsfeld did not share Bush's nation-building ambitions. For example, regarding the invasion of Afghanistan, Rumsfeld declared in 2003,

> Afghanistan belongs to the Afghans. The objective is not to engage in what some call nation building. Rather it's to try to help the Afghans so that they can build their own nation. This is an important distinction. In some nation building exercises well-intentioned foreigners arrive on the scene, look at the problems and say let's fix it. This is well motivated to be sure, but it can really be a disservice in some instances because when foreigners come in with international solutions to local problems, if not very careful they can create a dependency.[238]

Rumsfeld echoed this approach of avoiding nation-building and dependency towards Iraq. Although dependency is viewed as a potential avenue for influence, Rumsfeld viewed dependency as a material burden to the United States. In his memoir, he constantly cites how Lebanon and South Vietnam's dependence on the United States for military and economic aid led to disastrous outcomes for U.S. objectives.[239] For Rumsfeld, "despite our country's good intentions", U.S. fulfilment of these dependencies prevented the countries from becoming self-sufficient.[240] Hence, according to Rumsfeld, once U.S. forces left Lebanon and Vietnam, the respective countries could not manage the vacuum left by the U.S. exit.[241] Rumsfeld frequently reinforced this idea of dependency in 2002 by stating, "if the dad never lets go of his kid's bicycle…the kid will become a forty year old man who can't ride a bicycle".[242]

The central theme of Rumsfeld's strategy towards Iraq was to avoid the country becoming dependent on the United States by forcing "local populations to more rapidly rely on their own leaders to resolve their own problems".[243] Rumsfeld outlined his vision by stating that the

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[237] Richard N. Haass, War of Necessity – War of Choice: A Memoir of Two Iraq Wars, (New York, U.S.A: Simon & Schuster, 2009), p.233 and Michael Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*, (New York, U.S.A: Pantheon Books, 2006), p.134.
[238] *Beyond Nation Building*, 14 Feb. 2003, https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=1871, p.3, accessed 12 Feb. 2019.
[239] Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir*, (U.S.A.: Penguin Group, 2011), pp.21, 98-99 and 482-483.
[240] Ibid.
[241] Ibid. pp.21 and 482-483.
[242] Douglas J. Feith, *War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism*, (HarperCollins e-books, 2008), p.149.
[243] Special Inspector General For Iraq Reconstruction, *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience* (2017), https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/projects/documents/hard-lessons-the-iraq-reconstruction-experience, p.6, accessed 10 Oct. 2019.

invasion "would be guided by two commitments. Stay as long as necessary, and to leave as soon as possible…as Iraq belongs to the Iraqis and we do not aspire to own it or run it".[244] However, this approach spoke to a broad desire of Rumsfeld as well as the civilian Pentagon leadership. Rumsfeld, Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz, and Under-Secretary for Defence Douglas Feith did not want the United States to be trapped into a long-term nation-building project. Instead, they preferred a quick extraction from Iraq while handing governance responsibilities to a provisional government.[245] Henceforth, the underlying principle that emerged from the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) that informed Defense's planning was "liberation not occupation".[246]

Rumsfeld's approach not only contradicted Bush's vision, but it was also at odds with the Secretary of State Colin Powell's vision for post-invasion Iraq. Powell is depicted as comprehending that any invasion and nation-building of Iraq would require a long-term commitment. Powell states that he frequently warned Bush of the commitment needed by using his Pottery Barn analogy, "you break it, you own it".[247] Moreover, Woodward states that Powell told Bush he would be "the proud owner of 25 million people" and "you will own all their hopes, aspirations and peoples. You will own it all".[248] Furthermore, he did not support the timing of the invasion believing it was too soon after the invasion of Afghanistan. He thought that the United States should not attempt to undertake both projects in Afghanistan and Iraq concurrently. The Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, highlighted this in an interview by stating, "Powell and I did not object to the prospect of taking out Saddam Hussein, but we had real questions about timing… a good place meant we would consolidate Afghanistan, work vigorously with the allies to get as many on board, and then go".[249] There appeared to be a consensus in the State Department that "it was the wrong time to shift from Afghanistan" and that the United States should not "just move onto the next Muslim state".[250] Nonetheless, Powell and the State Department frequently proposed that internationalising the Iraq project with a UN mandate would be the ideal approach for any success in Iraq.[251] This would bring

[244] Ibid.
[245] United States *Department of Defense*, 'A Provisional Government for Iraq?', report, 14 Feb. 2003, *Digital National Security Archive*, p.4, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 3 Dec. 2018.
[246] *Iraq Policy Derailed by U.S. Infighting over Chalabi,* 9 Apr. 2008, https://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=89483189, para. 8, accessed 15 Dec. 2019 and David E. Sanger, 'Bush's Next Role: Mediator in Disputes Over Running Postwar Iraq', *New York Times*, 8 Apr. 2003, https://www.nytimes.com/2003/04/08/international/worldspecial/bushs-next-role-mediator-in-disputes-over-running.html, accessed 24 Jan. 2019.
[247] Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, p.150.
[248] Ibid.
[249] Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq,* p.134.
[250] William Burns 'Deputies Committee Meeting on Iraq' [memorandum], 22 July 2002, https://www.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/Nov2001PC-Armitage.pdf?mod=article_inline, accessed 12 Aug. 2019.
[251] Stephen B. Dyson, 'What Really Happened in Planning for Postwar Iraq?', *Political Science Quarterly,* 128/3 (2013), pp.460-461.

the international community's resources, expertise, and legitimacy required for a lengthy nation-building project.[252] Yet, this approach was rejected by the OSD, which was fixated on the idea that the United States should be the sole actor determining the fate of Iraq, not the UN or international community.[253]

The division within the administration on nation-building and its required U.S.-commitment remained unresolved by mid-2002. Witnessing that there was disagreement between the departments, on 29 August 2002, Bush authorised a memo "Iraq: Goals, Objectives, Strategy" to all agencies. This was designed to clarify and define the intended U.S. mission for Iraq. It reinforced his democratic aspirations of "building a pluralistic and democratic Iraq … and that the United States is prepared to play a sustained role in the reconstruction of post-Saddam Iraq".[254] Despite clearly outlining these objectives, Rumsfeld still did not embody Bush's vision. In his book, Under-Secretary Douglas Feith highlights this stark contradiction between Rumsfeld, Bush, and the State Department. Feith narrates the moment when he and Rumsfeld received the "Liberation Strategy for Iraq" paper from Rice on 6 August 2002. According to Feith, Rumsfeld strongly objected to the paper's emphasis on U.S. occupation, which would help build democracy in Iraq and stated, "this was the wrong way".[255] Additionally, Feith writes that "the statement that the United States aimed to create democracy in Iraq struck Rumsfeld and me as off base".[256] Thus, despite explicit guidance from Bush for Iraq, Rumsfeld remained opposed to Bush's democratic vision.

The Afghan Model

Rumsfeld's position is important to highlight, as in December 2002, Bush issued the National Security Presidential Directive 24 that authorised the Department of Defense to "establish a Post-war Planning Office".[257] This brought all the pre-war planning and responsibilities under the Department of Defense under the guidance of the OSD. Moreover, the Department of Defense would be the sole department in charge of planning the post-war governance. Consequently, Rumsfeld began to implement his preferences of "liberation not occupation" and avoid nation building. The OSD would implement what they defined as the Afghan model

[252] Ibid. p.462.
[253] 'Comments on State Papers: "The Future of Iraq"' and "Diplomatic Plan for the Day After"' [talking points], Office of the Secretary of Defense, 28 July 2002, *Digital National Security Archive*, p.1, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 1 Dec. 2018.
[254] Condoleezza Rice, 'Iraq: Goals, Objectives, Strategy', paper, 29 Oct. 2002 available in Feith, *War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism*, p.563.
[255] Feith, *War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism*, p.284.
[256] Ibid.
[257] George W. Bush, 'National Security Presidential Directive/NSDP-24', https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nspd/nspd-24.pdf, p.1, accessed 5 Dec. 2019.

to achieve this outcome. This entailed using a minimal amount of U.S. troops, promptly transitioning authority to an indigenous interim authority while undertaking a quick withdrawal.[258] For the OSD, the coinciding U.S. campaign in Afghanistan was the model to execute for Iraq that would fulfil the preferences of the OSD. The Afghan model demonstrated how the United States could avoid the responsibility and resources needed for nation-building and would only require a small U.S. military presence. This was illustrated by the rapid transfer of political power and authority to the Afghan President, Hamid Karzai, and other indigenous factions in 2001.[259] Moreover, this allowed for the United States to establish a pro-U.S. leaning regime under Karzai, which would likely implement policies that suited the preferences of the Bush administration.

To implement the Afghan model, the OSD intended to immediately transfer political power and authority to a domestic interim authority. The interim authority would predominantly consist of Iraqi exiles from the Iraqi National Congress (INC).[260] The INC was a broad organisation that the United States Congress recognised as the coordinating body of Iraqi opposition groups.[261] The entity consistently received financial aid from the United States after Operation Desert Storm as well as from the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998.[262] The INC, under the leadership of Ahmad Chalabi, was largely active after Desert Storm in calling for U.S. support to overthrow Saddam.[263] Rumsfeld, Cheney, Wolfowitz and Feith frequently championed the organisation's activities for bringing defections and intelligence as well as formalising a coalition of Iraqi opposition groups.[264] For Rumsfeld, his deputy Wolfowitz and Under-Secretary Feith, the INC would form the bulk of a new government in post-Saddam Iraq.[265] In theory, this would allow the United States to have some influence in the development of Iraq, given that the intended

[258] Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir*, pp.428-429 and 436-438.
[259] Peter W. Rodman, 'Who Will Govern Iraq?' [paper], 15 Aug. 2002, *Digital National Security Archive*, https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB328/II-Doc18.pdf, accessed 10 December 2018.
[260] Iraq Planning Unit, 'Post-Conflict Iraq: Iraqi Interim Authority' [minute], 2 Apr. 2003, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20171123123237/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk//media/214075/2003-04-02-minute-fco-junior-official-to-ps-post-conflict-iraq-iraqi-interim-authority.pdf, p.2, accessed 5 Mar. 2019.
[261] Feith, *War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism*, p.240.
[262] Seymour M. Hersh, 'The Iraq Hawks: Can their war plan work?', *New Yorker,* 17 Dec. 2001 https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2001/12/24/the-iraq-hawks, para.9, accessed 10 October 2019.
[263] Ibid. Ahmad Chalabi attempted to start a resurrection in Iraq in 1996 but was quickly quashed by Saddam's forces. See Sewell Chance, 'Ahmad Chalabi, Iraqi Politician Who Pushed for U.S. Invasion, Dies at 71', *New York Times,* https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/04/world/middleeast/ahmad-chalabi-iraq-dead.html, para. 25, accessed 16 September 2019.
[264] Meyer, Christopher and Manning, David, 'Iraq and Afghanistan, Conversation with Wolfowitz' [memorandum], 18 Mar. 2002, https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB328/II-Doc06.pdf, para. 6, accessed 17 Dec. 2018.
[265] 'A political road map to a new Iraqi government' [report], Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2 Oct. 2002, *Digital National Security Archive*, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 1 Dec. 2018. Although, Rumsfeld did have reservations of entirely relying on the INC and 'placing enormous amount of power in the hands of these people, and they may not prove themselves competent'. See Dyson, 'What Really Happened in Planning for Postwar Iraq?', p.466.

Iraqi leadership previously enjoyed considerable patronage from the United States.[266] It was envisioned that this leadership would likely implement policies that accommodated U.S. preferences. Furthermore, if the nucleus for a post-Saddam government already existed, it would present the United States with a quick exit strategy out of Iraq, an outcome that Rumsfeld strongly desired.[267] However, Rumsfeld's desired approach remained in conflict with Bush's democratic vision.

The responsibility to establish the interim authority was given to a specific body in January 2003, the Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA). ORHA, which fell under the Department of Defense, was established two months before the invasion and led by Lt. General Jay Garner. It was tasked to implement all interagency plans for post-war Iraq and lead its transition to a stable democracy.[268] ORHA would assist with immediate governance while authority would be increasingly transferred to an interim authority presided by two U.S. presidential envoys.[269] One envoy would be a civil administrator and the other a liaison with the IIA.[270] Notably, Zalmay Khalilzad was appointed as the liaison to the interim authority.[271] The interim authority would have immediate control over certain jurisdictions, including agriculture, foreign affairs and justice while working with the U.S. led coalition in other ministries.[272] As the entity became more competent and Iraq increasingly stabilised, it would undertake more duties and eventually emerge as a government.[273] Additionally, there would be a U.S. appointed interim president for two years who would convene a constitutional convention to write a new constitution.[274] Also, the convention would design a new presidential system with half of the representatives consisting of liberated delegates from Iraq's 18 provinces and the other half from exiled oppositional leaders based on provincial affiliation defined by ancestral town.[275] The exiles, predominantly from the INC, were intended to sway

[266] Although multiple groups in the INC had enjoyed western patronage, there were some groups sponsored by Iran, such as the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq. See 'Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq', *Stanford University* [website], (5 Aug. 2012), https://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/405?highlight=Mahdi+Army, accessed 10 Nov. 2019.
[267] Joel D. Rayburn and Frank K. Sobchak (eds), T*he U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 1: Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War 2003 – 2006*, (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S Army War College Press, 2019), pp.39-40.
[268] Gordon Rudd, *Reconstructing Iraq: Regime Change, Jay Garner, and the ORHA Story***,** (United States of America: University Press of Kansas, 2011), p.4 and Catherine Dale, 'Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress', *Congressional Research Service*, (28 Mar. 2008), https://sgp.fas.org/crs/mideast/RL34387.pdf, p.18, accessed 5 Dec. 2018.
[269] 'Interview Gen. Jay Garner', *Frontline* [website], (17 July 2003), https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/truth/interviews/garner.html, accessed 11 Nov. 2019.
[270] Dyson, 'What Really Happened in Planning for Postwar Iraq?', p.471
[271] Ibid.
[272] 'A political road map to a new Iraqi government' [report], Office of the Secretary of Defense, p.3 and Dyson, 'What Really Happened in Planning for Postwar Iraq?', p.468.
[273] James Dobbins, et al. *Occupying Iraq: A History of the Coalition Provisional Authority,* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2009), p.38.
[274] 'A political road map to a new Iraqi government' [report], Office of the Secretary of Defense, pp.1-2 and 7.
[275] Ibid.

liberated delegates as well as any other oppositional elements to be receptive to U.S. preferences.[276] Therefore, this process would ensure the strong likelihood that a pro-U.S. leadership would emerge in Iraq. Moreover, the OSD expected these exiled elites from the INC to remain in power longer than the two-year period, which would prolong this favourable leadership. Hence, it would be a supportive environment to achieve U.S. objectives in Iraq.

The division within the administration and Bush's eleventh-hour presidential directive to establish a post-war planning office four months before the invasion had several consequences. The administration and the Department of Defense had limited time to plan for post-invasion Iraq. This was exemplified with the establishment of ORHA two months before the invasion. Garner conveyed the gravity of this timing to Rumsfeld in his first meeting, stating: "[General] Marshall had two years [to plan the occupation of Japan]… you are giving me two months".[277] Furthermore, essential planning would continue until the commencement of the invasion. Nonetheless, the invasion was to proceed in March 2003. The OSD had successfully gained control of the entire planning for the invasion of Iraq and was in charge of post-war governance. It would execute the Afghan strategy by establishing a government of exiles within the INC while using limited U.S. military resources. This was intended to permit an avenue of influence by virtue of the future Iraqi government aligning its policies to the preferences of the United States. Additionally, it was designed to reduce the burden of resources on the United States while allowing the Bush administration a quick withdrawal from Iraq.

The Invasion and the CPA Period: Asymmetrical Dependence

The invasion of Iraq and corresponding occupation marked the start of the asymmetrical dependence of the U.S.-Iraq relationship. Despite Rumsfeld's intentions, Iraq became dependent on the United States for economic and security aid. Furthermore, Rumsfeld's plans for a quick extraction from Iraq was replaced with Bush's democratic vision. Bush's vision was to be implemented under the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). Throughout the occupation period, the Bush administration sought two objectives. The first was implementing Bush's democratic nation-building project in Iraq that would encourage Iraq to remain in the U.S. sphere of influence. The second goal was to limit the expansion of Iranian influence in Iraq. However, the Bush administration received degrees of non-compliance towards its nation-building goals from the emerging Iraqi leadership. Although the U.S.-Iraq relationship was one of asymmetrical dependence, the Bush administration struggled to exercise influence over this

[276] Ibid. p.5.
[277] Ibid. p.ix.

leadership to achieve its aims. This resulted from the competing preferences within the Bush administration from the pre-war planning. Throughout the CPA period, the United States was able to exercise influence over Iraq's interim leaders, given its dependence on the United States. Strikingly, the Bush administration decided to prematurely end the CPA period and return to Rumsfeld's extraction strategy. Consequently, this shift in priorities reduced the effectiveness of the asymmetrical dependence translating into influence over Iraq's leadership.

"Freedom is Untidy"-Donald Rumsfeld, April 2003[278]

The initial success of U.S. forces defeating Saddam's army and capturing Baghdad projected a wave of optimism for the administration. Yet, this began to dissipate rapidly. ORHA, led by Garner, was to follow closely behind U.S. forces to conduct immediate stability and humanitarian operations in liberated areas and start the implementation of the Iraqi Interim Authority (IIA).[279] However, due to bureaucratic infighting and logistical limitations, ORHA was delayed in entering captured Iraqi territories. A few days before the invasion, ORHA was still modifying its planning and preparations while recruiting new personnel at a rapid rate.[280] Thus, ORHA only entered south of Iraq on 11 April – three weeks after the start of the invasion – and did not reach Bagdad for another ten days.[281] Accordingly, the rest of ORHA only began entering Iraq on 20 April.[282] Given that this was the main humanitarian relief and governance entity, this was an incredible delay. In addition to ORHA's delay, U.S. forces were overwhelmed in Iraq. After the initial take-down of the statue of Saddam by U.S. forces, widespread looting began in the capital as well as all over Iraq.[283] U.S. forces did not have enough manpower to prevent this looting and rioting in Iraq. Moreover, they had no clear guidance on what to do and watched the chaos transpire.[284] Iraq's police and military had melted away with a handful of personnel remaining, which, combined with the low U.S. troop presence, could not stop the looting.

Exacerbating the looting and ORHA's delay was the collapse of the state institutions located in Baghdad. This had severe repercussions for the United States. The looting spread to

[278] Sean Loughlin, 'Rumsfeld on looting in Iraq: "Stuff happens"', *CNN*, 12 Apr. 2003, https://edition.cnn.com/2003/US/04/11/sprj.irq.pentagon/, accessed 10 May 2019.
[279] Rudd, *Reconstructing Iraq: Regime Change, Jay Garner, and the ORHA Story*, p.160.
[280] Ibid. 152
[281] Nora Bensahel (ed.), *After Saddam: Prewar Planning and the Occupation of Iraq*, (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2008), p.68.
[282] Ibid.
[283] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), T*he U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 1: Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War 2003 – 2006*, p.112.
[284]Ibid. p.111.

government buildings, including most of the ministries in Iraq, museums, and police stations.[285] These buildings were stripped of their copper wires and plumbing.[286] Moreover, the majority of the ministerial staff had fled. This was critical for several factors. These ministries were essential to Rumsfeld's liberation and extraction plan.[287] It was envisioned that these ministries would continue to function in the immediate aftermath while Saddam loyalists and high-level Baathists would slowly be removed.[288] Hence, without these ministries, Rumsfeld's strategy began to rapidly fracture. With no existing bureaucracy and the collapse of the state institutions, the coalition would need to rebuild them and other essential services.[289] Garner highlighted this dilemma by stating that "the problem was that there were 22 or 23 ministries. We were going to use 20 of them, and of the 20 that we're going to use, 17 of those buildings had been destroyed".[290] Also, the dispersion of the army and police was not widely anticipated by coalition forces. These entities were a critical component of Rumsfeld's strategy. It was planned that the army would be quickly demobilised while maintaining their salary and be directed to reconstruction projects while others would be reintegrated into paramilitary forces for the interim authority.

Implementing the Interim Authority

Despite the initial chaos and impediments to the Afghan strategy, the OSD continued its plan to implement the Iraq Interim Authority (IIA).[291] Consisting of exiled Iraqi groups that enjoyed considerable patronage in the United States and Britain, the IIA was intended to be the body tasked with the responsibility of governance and reconstruction to facilitate a quick exit for the United States. It was envisioned that the leadership would develop pro-U.S. leanings due to U.S. patronage and ensure the development of post-Saddam Iraq would complement U.S. goals. Hence, for the OSD, it was the vehicle of U.S. influence in Iraq. However, setting up an interim authority became increasingly impossible. The levels of disorder and collapse of the state's institutions, as well as the beginnings of an insurgency undermined the idea that the Afghan strategy could be implemented. Consequently, rather than a rapid transition to this executive body a longer process was needed. This would materialise with the CPA under L.

[285] Ibid.
[286] Ibid.
[287] Department of State, 'The Future of Iraq: the Iraqi Component' [paper], *Digital National Security Archive*, pp.1-2, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 3 Dec. 2018.
[288] Ibid. and Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), T*he U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 1: Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War 2003 – 2006*, p.64.
[289] Special Inspector General For Iraq Reconstruction, *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience* (2017), p.88.
[290] 'Interview Lt. Gen. Jay Garner (Ret.)', *Frontline* [website], (11 Aug. 2006), https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/yeariniraq/interviews/garner.html, para. 32, accessed 13 Sep. 2019.
[291] 'OSD Notional Interim Authority Action Plan' [paper], Office of the Secretary of Defense, 12 May 2003, *Digital National Security Archive*, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 2 Dec. 2018.

Paul Bremer III.

After the fall of Baghdad, Garner and Khalilzad organised a conference in Nasiriyah on 15 April and in Baghdad on 30 April.[292] Garner continued implementing the Afghan model's quick transition and intended to hold elections for a transitional government within 90 days.[293] Garner declared to the exiled and internal Iraqi elites that, "next week, or by the second weekend in May, you'll see the beginning of a nucleus of a temporary Iraqi government, a government with an Iraqi face on it that is totally dealing with [the] coalition".[294] However, with the disorder and chaos in Iraq and the collapse of state institutions, including the army and police – fundamental components of the Afghan model – the idea of a quick transition started to disappear. This was further exacerbated by the emergence of an insurgency against the United States. Strikingly, Rumsfeld began to concede that this would take more time than anticipated. He outlined in a memorandum on 13 May, that the coalition would now engage in "hands-on political reconstruction…consistently steer[ing] the process to achieve the stated [U.S.] objectives".[295] Nonetheless, Garner and Khalilzad continued to attempt to establish some form of interim authority which began with the conference at Nasiriyah.[296]

After the Nasiriyah meeting, Bush outlined his vision and plan for Iraq. He stated that an interim authority would be established by May 2004, which would have power over non-sensitive government ministries.[297] A provisional government would then follow between six months and two years. After this, a transitional government would be created. This government would have broader powers and the authority to write a constitution.[298] The political transition would end with national elections for a permanent government.[299] Bush's map exemplified his grand plan for democracy-building in Iraq. However, aspects of his plan spoke to components of Rumsfeld's rapid transition goal. At a National Security Council meeting in April, the issue of immediately delegating authority to an IIA was questioned given the emerging challenges towards Rumsfeld's Afghan strategy.[300] Yet, the OSD countered by highlighting that a power

[292] Dobbins, James, et al. *Occupying Iraq: A History of the Coalition Provisional Authority,* p.38.
[293] Ibid.
[294] Ibid. p.39.
[295] Rumsfeld, Donald, 'Principles for Iraq –Policy Guidelines', 13 May 2003, http://library.rumsfeld.com/doclib/sp/331/2003-05-13%20re%20Principles%20for%20Iraq-Policy%20Guidelines.pdf#search=%22principles%20for%20iraq%22, p.2, accessed 10 April 2020.
[296] Bensahel (ed.), *After Saddam: Prewar Planning and the Occupation of Iraq*, p.162.
[297] Ibid. p.164.
[298] Ibid.
[299] Ibid.
[300] Douglas Jehl and Eric Schmitt, 'U.S. Reported to Push for Iraqi Government, with Pentagon Prevailing', *New York Times*, 30 Apr. 2003, https://www.nytimes.com/2003/04/30/world/aftereffects-policy-us-reported-push-for-iraqi-government-with-pentagon.html, para. 5-8, accessed 20 April 2020.

vacuum was emerging and there was an increase of Iranian influence in southern Iraq.[301] Fearing that the United States would lose its ability to influence the political developments of post-Saddam Iraq; it was imperative to establish an interim authority immediately. The authority would be hand-picked by the United States to ensure that it would not lose control over the developments of the new Iraq.[302] However, Bush instructed the OSD "to avoid being seen as to impose external Iraqi oppositionists on Iraq".[303] Nonetheless, Bush's outlined vision still entailed a substantial commitment to a long term democratic and nation-building goal for Iraq. The foundation of Bush's vision would be built in the CPA period.

Garner's ORHA was replaced with a newly created entity, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). L. Paul Bremer III arrived in Iraq on 10 May to replace Garner and steer the newly established organisation. The CPA was to fulfil Bush's aspiration of building a democratic Iraq. Representing the new realities in Iraq, the CPA replaced ORHA to become a full occupation authority.[304] As the CPA's administrator, Bremer had unlimited authority to exercise executive, legislative and judiciary powers in Iraq to implement Bush's grand vision.[305] However, according to Dobbins, Bremer arrived in Baghdad with no clear guidance from Bush's National Security Council about his mission.[306] Thus, Bremer felt a degree of freedom in determining what should be done, providing it was aligned with Bush's objectives. Bremer illustrated this impression in an interview,

> …the direction that all of us followed was from the President, and his direction was quite clear: that we were going to try to set the Iraqis on a path to democratic government and help them rebuild their country. Now, none of us at that time [knew]—certainly I didn't know—what that would entail. The general guidance I had from the President and others was, Get over there and give us your recommendation.[307]

Additionally, Bremer reinforced the notion that he was there to implement Bush's vision stating that "I was neither Rumsfeld's nor Powell's man. I was the president's man".[308] Hence, Bremer would attempt to ensure that Bush's democratic vision would be fulfilled. Subsequently,

[301] Ibid.
[302] Iraq Planning Unit, 'Post-Conflict Iraq: Iraqi Interim Authority' [minute], pp.2-3.
[303] Ibid.
[304] Bensahel (ed.), *After Saddam: Prewar Planning and the Occupation of Iraq,* p.71.
[305] Dobbins, James, et al. *Occupying Iraq: A History of the Coalition Provisional Authority,* pp.14-15.
[306] Ibid. p.xx.
[307] 'The Lost Year in Iraq: Doomed From the Start?', *Frontline* [website], (17 Oct. 2006), https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/yeariniraq/analysis/prewar.html, para. 35, accessed 20 Sep. 2018.
[308] Pau L. Bremer III and Malcom McConnell, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006). p.12.

Bremer stated that he informed Bush that democracy-building in Iraq would be "a marathon, not a sprint", which, he claims, Bush acknowledged and agreed to.[309]

On his arrival, Bremer reinforced the inapplicability of the Afghan model and Rumsfeld's theme of quick extraction. Instead of establishing an immediate interim authority that Garner was tasked with and Bush outlined in April, Bremer emphasised that it would be delayed.[310] Prior to Bremer's arrival, Garner implemented Bush's April Schedule and declared on 5 May that 8-9 Iraq leaders would be selected to form an interim authority.[311] These individuals were mainly from the INC and other exiled groups and political parties. These included the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, the Dawa Party, and the Iraqi National Accord. It also included the Kurdish parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).[312] Accordingly, they would select deputies to form a 350-member national assembly from Iraq's 18 provinces. This was intended to fill the political vacuum and counter the growing Iranian influence in Iraq. The administration hoped that the national assembly would be receptive to U.S. interests and not fall under the sway of Iran. This logic was predicated on the fact that the designated 8-9 leaders of the IIA would likely choose deputies that were allies and loyal supporters. Hence, given that the leaders of the IIA were viewed as de-facto partners of the Bush administration with the overthrow of Saddam, the national assembly would not challenge this relationship or direct Iraq from the U.S. sphere of influence.[313]

Bremer quickly concluded, however, that the intended IIA was incompatible with Bush's democratic vision. Unlike the OSD, who believed that the INC could satisfy Bush's democratic goals while fulfilling his own strategic goals, Bremer saw them as an impediment to Bush's democratic vision.[314] Hence, instead of following Garner and Khalilzad's plan to permit these exiles to form an interim authority, Bremer declared that any interim authority would not be established for at least seven weeks after his arrival.[315] Moreover, Bremer stipulated that the CPA would select the leaders for the interim authority and not those whom Garner and Khalilzad selected under the auspices of the OSD. Bremer believed that the OSD's envisioned IIA was dominated by exiles and not enough by local Iraqis, thus undermining the democratic

[309] Ibid. pp.11-12.
[310] Bensahel (ed.), *After Saddam: Prewar Planning and the Occupation of Iraq,* p.165.
[311] Ibid. p.164
[312] Ibid.
[313] 'Iraq Interim Authority Implementation Plan' [memorandum], Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, 29 Apr. 2003, available in Feith, *War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism.*
and 'A political road map to a new Iraqi government' [report], Office of the Secretary of Defense, pp.1-2 and 7.
[314] Dobbins et al. *Occupying Iraq: A History of the Coalition Provisional Authority,* p.41.
[315] Bensahel (ed.), *After Saddam: Prewar Planning and the Occupation of Iraq,* pp.165-166.

prospects of Iraq.[316] Also, Bremer was uncomfortable with the exiles who had close ties to Iran, such as SCIRI and Dawa.[317]

As a result of his analysis, Bremer would implement a bottom-up approach to democracy building. He argued that more time was needed to allow a representative government to emerge. Political parties, civil societies as well as democratic habits needed to be established first.[318] He outlined this to Bush, stating that, "my message to Iraqi leaders is full sovereignty after elections and constitution, this will take time".[319] Additionally, Bremer was against early elections as previously envisioned by the OSD and ORHA. He doubted the competency of the exiles to govern effectively. This was an existing bias prior to his arrival, which he illustrates in his autobiography. When listening to his car radio, Bremer "almost drove off the George Washington Parkway" when he heard that Garner "had announced his intention to appoint an Iraqi government" by May.[320] For Bremer, the internal disagreements and boycotts at the Nasiriyah conference portrayed the image of political groups competing for power rather than a coherent governing body, which reinforced his doubts about their competency.[321] Furthermore, he was concerned that early elections might work against U.S. objectives in Iraq.

Bremer believed early elections would likely benefit Iran and undermine U.S. interests due to Iraqi political parties affiliated with Iran, such as SCIRI and Dawa.[322] Before the invasion of Iraq, there was anticipation that Iran would attempt to establish influence in Iraq that would challenge U.S. aims.[323] This became evident in the immediate aftermath of the invasion. In southern Iraq, a Shia dominated populated area, there was strong infiltration of Iranian proxy groups.[324] Garner highlighted this in an interview. In the aftermath of the invasion, he was informed in Baghdad by ORHA's southern coordinator that,

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[316] Bremer and Malcom, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, pp.78-79.
[317] Dobbins et al. *Occupying Iraq: A History of the Coalition Provisional Authority,* p.41.
[318] 'A Vision For Iraq' [paper], Coalition Provisional Authority, 4 July 2003, *Digital National Security Archive*, available in ProQuest Central [online database], p.5 and pp.9-10, accessed 11 Dec. 2018 and Dobbins et al. *Occupying Iraq: A History of the Coalition Provisional Authority,* p.42.
[319] Ibid.
[320] Bremer and Malcom, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, p.12.
[321] Ibid. pp.86-89.
[322] 'Iraq: The Initial Landscape Post-Saddam' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 16 Apr. 2003, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20171123123237/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk//media/224847/2003-04-16-jic-assessment-iraq-the-initial-landscape-post-saddam.pdf, p.5, accessed 21 June 2019.
[323] David Manning, 'Iraq: Visit to Baghdad and Basra' [minute], 22 May 2003, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20171123123237/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk//media/214243/2003-05-22-minute-manning-to-prime-minister-iraq-visit-to-baghdad-and-basra.pdf, p.4, accessed 21 Feb. 2019.
[324] Mahjoob Zweiri, 'Iran's Presence in Iraq: New Realities?', 10 May 2007, *Center for Strategic Studies*, University of Jordan, http://www.mzweiri.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/irans-presence-in-iraq-new-realties.pdf, p.4, accessed 4 Apr. 2018.

> [A]s we'll pull out, the real fundamental Shi'a are pulling right in behind us. I'm going to tell you, they're Iranians. They're not Iraqis; they're Iranians. They're filling up everything that has to do with quality of life. They're taking over the schools; they're taking over the medical facilities; they're taking over the electricity; they're taking over security; they're taking over everything.[325]

In southern Iraq, Iranian clerics began to spread anti-coalition messages in their sermons.[326] Furthermore, there was an anticipated risk that Iran could benefit from the democratisation of Iraq given that 60% of Iraq's population are Shi'ite, as is the Iranian regime. Thus, this empowering of Iraq's Shia population could substantially benefit Iran. This risk appeared prevalent given the prominence of the two exiled political parties, Dawa and SCIRI. While both SCIRI and Dawa had participated under Chalabi's INC, they had strong ties with Iran.[327] They spent a significant amount of time in Iran during the Iran-Iraq war. Moreover, SCIRI's militia, the Badr militia, was established and trained by Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps, and many of its senior commanders were Iranian.[328] SCIRI promised the Bush administration it would disband its militia after the U.S. led coalition secured Iraq.[329] Yet, this did not transpire. After the invasion started, SCIRI deployed its Badr militia from Iran into Iraq and consolidated its position in southern Iraq.[330] It seized government buildings and mobilised death squads for reprisals against Saddam loyalists and Shia collaborators.[331] These developments dissuaded Bremer from holding elections. It was argued that if early elections were held, especially at the local level, groups aligned to Iran would win.[332] Moreover, SCIRI and Dawa were the best organised and funded political parties. Hence, if local elections were held, these two parties would most likely triumph and could form a legitimate authoritative body that would undermine the CPA.[333] Given these factors, the Bush administration had to navigate Iranian attempts to establish influence in Iraq, especially from the democratic empowering of Iraq's Shia population.

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[325] *Interview Lt. Gen. Jay Garner (Ret.)*, Frontline [website], para. 36.
[326] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), T*he U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 1: Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War 2003 – 2006*, p.126.
[327] Robert G. Rabil, 'The Iraqi Opposition's Evolution: From Conflict to Unity?', *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 6/4 (2002), https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/olj/meria/rar02_02.pdf, pp.9-10, accessed 5 Feb. 2019.
[328] Benjamin Isakhan and Peter E. Muherin, 'Shi'i division over the Iraqi state: decentralization and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq', *British Journal of Middle East Studies*, 47/3 (2020), p.361.
[329]David L. Phillips, *Losing Iraq: Inside the Postwar Reconstruction Fiasco,* (UK: Basic Books, 2005), p.106.
[330] Ibid. and David Ucko, 'Militias, Tribes and Insurgents: The Challenge of Political Reintegration in Iraq: Analysis', *Conflict, Security & Development,* 8/3 (2008), p.345.
[331] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), T*he U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 1: Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War 2003 – 2006*, p.126.
[332] Dobbins et al. *Occupying Iraq: A History of the Coalition Provisional Authority,* pp.42-43.
[333] Ibid.

Asymmetrical Dependence and Influence

Bremer's delay of the interim authority greatly frustrated the exiled opposition groups who had expected power to be immediately transferred to them.[334] However, they had limited ability to resist Bremer. The United States was the main occupying power of Iraq. Moreover, Iraq was completely dependent on U.S. security and economic aid as a result of the collapse of the Iraqi state and looting. Also, the former exiled opposition groups' future was dependent on U.S. preferences. This asymmetrical dependence allowed Bremer to impose his preferences on these political groups. Nonetheless, due to their frustration, the exiled opposition groups threatened to form their own national assembly without the CPA's approval to self-govern.[335] Thus, to counter this discontent Bremer immediately proposed that the bulk of the intended IIA, with other domestic politicians, form an Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) that would be largely advisory.[336] According to Larry Diamond, a CPA advisor, Bremer initially resisted using the word governing, yet was persuaded to use it to placate the exiles.[337] The concept of the governing council was coldly received by both the Iraqi exiles and local politicians.[338] According to Bremer, their lack of enthusiasm and willingness to expand into this council meant "they had flunked the test", furthering his bias against the exiles.[339] For Bremer, an IGC could help legitimise the occupation by putting an Iraqi face on it and help counter the growing influence of Iran while temporarily satisfying the demands of the exiles.[340] Yet, power and authority still rested with the CPA.

This shift in strategy from rapid transition to a prolonged delay in handing over sovereignty contributed to the alienation of the OSD's desired leadership. Feelings of betrayal and suspicions began to arise. This was exacerbated by the UN resolution in May that recognised

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[334] Manning, 'Iraq: Visit to Baghdad and Basra', p.3 and Bensahel (ed.), *After Saddam: Prewar Planning and the Occupation of Iraq,* pp.165-166.
[335] Ibid.
[336] 'Political Council Authorities' [memorandum], Coalition Provisional Authority, 2003, *Digital National Security Archive*, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 11 Dec. 2018.
[337] Larry Jay Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, (New York: Times Books, 2005), p.56.
[338] 'Meeting with [Excised] SCIRI' [memorandum], Coalition Provisional Authority, 3 June 2003, Digital National Security Archive, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 11 Dec. 2018; 'Interim Iraqi Government' [memorandum], Coalition Provisional Authority, 3 June 2003, *Digital National Security Archive*, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 11 Dec. 2018; and Dobbins et al. *Occupying Iraq: A History of the Coalition Provisional Authority,* p.45.
[339] Bremer and Malcom, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, p.89.
[340] Chris Straub, 'Coalition Provisional Administrator's (CPA's) Plans for Iraqi Governance' [paper], 2 June 2003, *Digital National Security Archive*, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 14 Dec. 2018 and Bensahel (ed.), *After Saddam: Prewar Planning and the Occupation of Iraq,* p.162.

the United States as the occupying power of Iraq.[341] The resolution was intended as legal and political cover for the United States and Britain and to encourage more international contributions to the reconstruction of Iraq.[342] Yet, it fermented distrust within the exiled groups.[343] Nonetheless, despite the opposition to Bremer's plan, the exiled groups were compelled to concede to Bremer, given the CPA's power and influence in Iraq. According to Ali Allawi, a member of the IGC, Bremer aggressively reminded the exiled groups that it was the CPA who would execute power, not them.[344] Moreover, Bremer controlled all the strings to Iraq's finances and reconstruction funds; nothing could be done without the CPA's authority. Additionally, the exiles had limited resources to act independently and pursue their ambitions in Iraq. Hence, the exiles complied with Bremer's demands and formed the IGC as they remained dependent on the administration to secure their future position in Iraq. This was a clear example of how the asymmetrical dependency enabled the United States to exercise influence in Iraq to realise its preferences.

Bremer's Seven-Step Plan

In September 2003, in the *Washington Post*, Bremer outlined his seven-step plan to transfer sovereignty to Iraq.[345] It consisted of using the newly formed IGC to draft a constitution, which the population would vote on and pave the way for elections of a representative government. Bremer's intention for the constitution was to place Iraq on the democratic trajectory he desired and prevent Iraq from sliding into an authoritative or theocratic model such as Iran. This was viewed as a potential outcome from the prominence of the SCIRI and Dawa parties in Iraq.[346] There was consistent anxiety for the future of U.S. influence in Iraq if SCIRI and Dawa would be elected given their close ties to Iran.[347] There was a perceived risk that Iraq would fall under Iran's influence and away from the United States. Hence, long term democratic nation-building and developing a constitution would attempt to mitigate this risk. However, Bremer's plan would be stymied by the IGC, and the coalition would revert to Rumsfeld's extraction strategy.

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[341] 'Interim Iraqi Government' [memorandum], Coalition Provisional Authority; Ali A. Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace,* (London: Yale University Press, 2007), pp.108-109; and Bremer and Malcom, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, p.89 and 'Resolution 1483', 22 May 2003, *UN Security Council*, http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1483, p.2, accessed 10 July 2020.
[342] Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace,* p.205.
[343] Ibid.
[344] Ibid. pp.109-110.
[345] Paul L. Bremer III, 'Iraq's Path to Sovereignty', *Washington post*, 8 Sep. 2003, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/2003/09/08/iraqs-path-to-sovereignty/92ccd663-ab69-4a56-b85b-af5f8a5f0baf/, accessed 19 Jan. 2019.
[346] Donald Rumsfeld, 'Oil and Democracy', 21 May 2003, http://library.rumsfeld.com/doclib/sp/325/2003-05-21%20to%20Feith%20re%20Oil%20and%20Democracy.pdf, p.2, accessed 25 Mar. 2020.
[347] Bremer and Malcom, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, p.242.

Many factions in the IGC did not want the United States to influence the political developments of Iraq. This was most notable with SCIRI as well as Dawa.[348] For many of the Shia politicians of the IGC, they believed that they should naturally have a fundamental position in determining Iraq's future given that the majority of Iraq's population were Shi'ite.[349] Moreover, they had consistently been marginalised since the establishment of the Iraqi state in 1921.[350] Additionally, SCIRI and Dawa assumed they would be empowered given that they were the best organised Shia parties and if elections were held, they would be elected. Thus, until Bremer, they consistently cooperated with the Bush administration, believing that Bush's democratic goals would automatically empower them.[351] However, Bremer's delay of elections and determination to have a constitution established first appeared to be a direct challenge to SCIRI's and Dawa's ambitions. For Bremer, the seven-step plan was a hedge against this undesirable outcome.[352] A constitution would put Iraq on a path that would complement Bush's democratic goals and prevent factions such as SCIRI and Dawa from dominating Iraq's political process. Moreover, it would allow time for other competing parties to emerge.[353]

Bremer's strategy was challenged by the IGC, which was becoming increasingly adamant about not allowing U.S. influence to dictate Iraq's new future. Also, it was concerned for their future status and power after the handover of sovereignty. According to the UK Special Envoy to Iraq, Jeremy Greenstock, who was partnered with Bremer, the IGC remained uncooperative with drafting a constitution.[354] Ibrahim al-Jaafari of the Dawa party demanded elections before the constitution and was forthright about not losing their guaranteed majority.[355] Sayyed Abdul Aziz al-Hakim,[356] the leader of SCIRI, told Greenstock that the IGC would break off communications with the CPA. Even the more receptive figures to the United States within the IGC were opposing the idea of a constitution before elections. Ahmad Chalabi and Iyad Allawi wanted to maintain their status and power in the post-occupation period. They demanded that the IGC should remain as some advisory or governmental body with executive functions.[357]

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[348] 'Interim Iraqi Government' [memorandum], Coalition Provisional Authority.
[349] Jeremy Greenstock, *Iraq: The Cost of War,* (United Kingdom: Penguin Random House, 2017), p.258.
[350] Ibid.
[351] Greenstock, *Iraq: The Cost of War,* pp.258-259.
and Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace,* p.206.
[352] 'A Vision For Iraq' [paper], Coalition Provisional Authority, p.12.
[353] Ibid.
[354] Greenstock, *Iraq: The Cost of War,* pp.261-262 and 277.
[355] Ibid. p.293.
[356] All references to Hakim as leader of SCIRI are referring to Sayyed Abdul Aziz al-Hakim and not his brother Mohammad Baqir al-Hakim who was the former leader of SCIRI and was assassinated in Iraq 29 August 2003.
[357] Bensahel (ed.), *After Saddam: Prewar Planning and the Occupation of Iraq,* p.174 *and* Phillips, *Losing Iraq: Inside the Postwar Reconstruction Fiasco,* p.180.

Bremer's strategy also received pushback from another figure, Ayatollah al-Sistani. Sistani, Iraq's most senior Shia cleric, was adamant in preventing the United States from influencing the future development of Iraq. He saw the empowering of the IGC as a further extension of some form of U.S. project and called the IGC illegal and an unelected body.[358] Moreover, Sistani issued a *fatwa* that the IGC should not draft a constitution or appoint a national assembly.[359] Instead, immediate elections should happen.[360] Sistani's *fatwa* gave the IGC more bargaining power in its demands given his prominence in Iraqi society, especially amongst the Shia population. Also, the IGC heavily consisted of Shia politicians who could not openly discard Sistani's declaration.[361] This deadlock led the IGC to report to the CPA that it would take a year to draft the constitution if they continued with Bremer's plan.[362] This timeline was unacceptable to the Bush administration.[363] Responding to the IGC's defiance, Bremer's intention was to wait out the IGC. He believed that the IGC's dependence would eventually force them to acquiesce to his demands.[364] However, the strength of this dependence would be reduced by the Bush administration's change of priorities.

Asymmetrical Dependence: Limited Influence?

Bremer's ability to use the asymmetrical dependence of Iraq to exercise influence over the IGC became less effective due to a change of the Bush administration's Iraq strategy. The impasse between the CPA, IGC and Sistani indicated that it would be many months before a constitution would emerge. Amidst this deadlock, Bremer's seven-step plan was heavily scrutinised by many in the Bush administration for its long term financial, military, and political obligations to Iraq. Awareness of the deadlock with the IGC and the constitution generated the impression that the United States would be stuck in Iraq for another five years.[365] This became unacceptable for an array of reasons. First, there would be a longer troop presence and increase of casualties from the emerging insurgency against coalition forces. This would be politically unsustainable for the Bush administration.[366] Additionally, the occupation was becoming viewed as increasingly intolerable for Iraq's population.[367] Yet, the critical factor was that Bremer's timeframe vis-a-vis his seven-step plan was a far cry from the original approach

[358] Phillips, *Losing Iraq: Inside the Postwar Reconstruction Fiasco,* p.173.
[359] Jonathan Steele, 'Shia cleric challenges Bush plan for Iraq', *Guardian*, 2 July 2003, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/jul/02/iraq.jonathansteele, accessed 10 June 2020.
[360] Ibid.
[361] Phillips, *Losing Iraq: Inside the Postwar Reconstruction Fiasco,* p.180.
[362] Bensahel (ed.), *After Saddam: Prewar Planning and the Occupation of Iraq,* p.180.
[363] Ibid.
[364] Bremer and Malcom, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, pp.160-190 and pp.201-202.
[365] Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, p.136.
[366] Bob Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007), p.148.
[367] Ibid. pp 175-177 and p.188 & David E. Sanger, 'Bush Overhauls Approach to Iraq," *International Herald Tribune*, 7 Oct. 2003, para. 8, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 12 Aug. 2020.

advocated by the OSD. It appeared that Bremer had signed up the administration for an unending commitment to Iraq.[368] Thus, after Bremer published his plan, Rumsfeld called him on September 13 to convince him to re-implement Khalilzad's quick handover strategy and give sovereignty to the IGC.[369] Bremer rejected Rumsfeld's idea. He highlighted that transferring authority to the IGC would be a blunder given they still had no credible domestic support, and it would most likely empower SCIRI and Dawa.[370]

In October, Bremer returned to Washington DC, where further debates and discussions about his timetable occurred. He met with Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz, who advocated for an immediate transfer of sovereignty. They argued that Bremer should declare an interim national assembly and prime minister by April 2004 to mark the anniversary of the toppling of Saddam.[371] Bremer rejected this suggestion stating that if they hand over authority now, the United States will lose control of the political process.[372] The United States would lose its influence to direct the development of Iraq to its preferred outcome given the absence of safeguards in a constitution and the IGC antagonism towards the United States. Bremer compromised by stating he could speed up the transition to December 2004.[373] Yet, this compromise was not accepted by the OSD.[374] Nonetheless, a National Security Council meeting was arranged for 29 October, which the President chaired to settle the divergent opinion on the timetable for Iraq.[375] Bush was able to generate a compromise between Bremer and the OSD. He reiterated his commitment of "doing the right thing… and was prepared to live with the political consequences".[376] Nevertheless, he shared the hesitancy of OSD towards an open-ended commitment.[377] Thus, Bush instructed Bremer to modify his plan with Rumsfeld. As a result, Bremer returned to Iraq and told his team that they needed to develop a plan to wind up the occupation and the CPA by June 2004.[378] Bremer's updated mandate consisted of a deadline six months earlier than his most optimistic timeline of December 2004.[379]

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[368] Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, p.136 and Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* (London: Atlantic Books, 2012), pp.26-30.
[369] 'Bremer's Seven Steps to Iraqi Sovereignty' [memorandum], Office of the Secretary of Defense, 22 Sep. 2003, *Digital National Security Archive*, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 14 Dec. 2018 and Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.27.
[370] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.27 and Bremer and Malcom, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, p.242.
[371] Bremer and Malcom, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, p.205 and Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.29.
[372] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.29.
[373] Ibid.
[374] Ibid.
[375] Ibid. p.31.
[376] Ibid.
[377] Ibid.
[378] Ibid. p.33.
[379] Ibid.

Scramble for Influence

Bremer returned to Iraq to implement the updated timeline and transfer authority to an interim government by 30 June 2004.[380] However, the new dilemma that confronted the administration and the CPA was how to quickly transfer sovereignty while maintaining influence in Iraq to realise its objectives. Bremer's ability to use Iraq and the IGC's asymmetrical dependency for influence became less effective given the time constraints of ending the CPA. Nonetheless, Bremer's priority was to overcome the impasse with the IGC and Sistani while trying to establish a position of influence in Iraq after the handover of sovereignty. Thus, Bremer arrived with a new plan for the political transition. The first component was establishing the OSD's preference for an interim government and transitional legislative assembly.[381] Continuing the democratic ethos, Bremer proposed that the transitional assembly be elected. However, given that this would take more time and go beyond 30 June, this option was rejected by Bush himself.[382] Rather than electing a transitional assembly, Bush opted for a system of caucuses to pick the transitional assembly. This was an undemocratic shortcut to Iraq's democracy, reflecting the strain of Bush's democratic vision.[383] Although this was a quick method to meet the June deadline, a significant influence strategy was embedded in this process.

The caucus would consist of members from provisional and local councils in Iraq to form the transitional assembly.[384] Yet, most of these members were previously handpicked by the CPA.[385] Moreover, this transitional assembly would appoint an interim government. Thus, for the United States, it could lead to an interim government that would be receptive to U.S. preferences. David Phillips, an advisor to the State Department, exaggerated the desired effect of this strategy. He claimed that it would allow a "government controlled by the United States" to emerge, enabling the United States to maintain a position in determining Iraq's future.[386] Although it is unlikely the administration believed direct control would manifest, the caucus proposal can still be viewed as a strategy for influence. Significantly, Bremer's plan forbade the IGC from governing in the post-transition period.[387] Bremer's justification included his bias against the IGC as an incompetent and illegitimate body. However, the plan may have

[380] Bensahel (ed.), *After Saddam: Prewar Planning and the Occupation of Iraq,* p.172 and Sharon Otterman, 'Q&A: The New Iraq Plan', *New York Times,* 21 Nov. 2003, https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/cfr/international/slot1_112103.html, accessed 10 July 2020.
[381] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* pp.33-34.
[382] Ibid.
[383] Ibid. p.35.
[384] Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace,* p.215 and Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, p.80.
[385] Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, p.81.
[386] Phillips, *Losing Iraq: Inside the Postwar Reconstruction Fiasco,* p.180.
[387] Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace,* p.214.

been intended to mitigate the risk of the potential domination of SCIRI and Dawa in Iraq's politics and, by extension, the risk of Iranian influence in the government.

The second component of Bremer's plan was to overcome the stalemate on the constitution. Bremer compromised on the constitution because he could no longer wait the IGC out and rely on its dependency to compel them into compliance. Facing resistance from the IGC and Sistani, Bremer gave up on establishing a constitution and opted for a basic fundamental law that would act as an interim constitution until one was written after Iraq's first election.[388] The compromise was intended to entice the IGC and Sistani because the basic fundamental law would only cover five basic provisions, and a constitution would be written after elections.[389] However, it would be extremely difficult for these basic provisions to be changed by any future government.[390] Furthermore, the CPA instilled components to suit its preferences. For instance, one of the provisions was that no law by the government could violate Iraq's new democratic practices.[391] This was an attempt to keep Iraq on the democratic trajectory that the administration wanted. Also, the basic law had a special provision to keep the U.S. military in Iraq for security and training purposes.[392] This would ensure that the United States would maintain a significant presence in Iraq to build stability and encourage Iraq to remain in the U.S. sphere.

The response from the IGC and Sistani towards Bremer's plan was bleak and demonstrated the dynamics of influence between the administration and Iraq. The IGC and Sistani rejected Bremer's caucus proposal viewing it as a "surrogate" of the CPA and an attempt by the United States to continue determining Iraq's future.[393] Moreover, many in the IGC did not want to lose their current position and status as was outlined in the plan.[394] Furthermore, according to Allawi and Greenstock, SCIRI and Dawa viewed this as a manipulation to "rob them" of their numerical majority.[395] Despite this resistance, the IGC voted and ratified Bremer's proposal dubbed the November agreement.[396] According to Allawi, Bremer and the CPA placed

[388] Paul Bremer, 'Strategy for Iraq's Political Transition', 10 Nov. 2003, *Digital National Security Archive*, pp.1-2, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 11 Dec. 2018.
[389] Bremer and Malcom, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, p.292 and Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace,* p.214.
[390] As a result of a sunset provision see Bremer, 'Strategy for Iraq's Political Transition'.
[391] 'Iraq's Transitional Law', United *States General Accounting Office* [website], (25 May 2004), https://www.gao.gov/new.items/d04746r.pdf, pp.2-3, accessed 17 Mar. 2020.
[392] Ibid. pp.1-2 and 9.
[393] Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace,* p.215.
[394] Bremer and Malcom, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, p.230 and Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace,* pp.215-216.
[395] Greenstock, *Iraq: The Cost of War,* p.282 and Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace,* p.215.
[396] 'The November 15 Agreement: Timeline to a Sovereign, Democratic and Secure Iraq' [paper], Coalition Provisional Authority, *Digital National Security Archive,* available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 28 Nov. 2018 and

incredible pressure on the IGC. Bremer allegedly drew on the anxieties of minority leaders in the IGC by emphasising that if there were no safeguards in the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) as well as the caucus vote, there was no guarantee of preventing a Shia dominated political Iraq.[397] Moreover, Greenstock states that "the IGC knew they could not survive on their own in the short term".[398] Thus, this dependence on the United States was the factor that "grudgingly" pushed them over the line.[399] Nonetheless, the vote was not unanimous, with twenty voting for the plan and four against. Significantly, the four who voted against the agreement were SCIRI members and Sistani allies.[400] After ratifying this agreement, many in the IGC began publicly attacking the agreement, threatening Bremer's plan. Sistani and SCIRI organised public demonstrations against the November agreement.[401] Also, SCIRI demanded that the IGC continue to govern throughout the transition period.[402] During the protests, the leader of SCIRI, Sayyed Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, asked Bremer for guarantees that the "proposed transition period would not deny the Shia community their natural majority".[403] Bremer's response, according to Greenstock, was not comforting to Hakim. Although Bremer stated that a democratic process would probably produce this majority, Hakim wanted it preordained.[404] Yet, in another attempt at influence, Bremer threatened Hakim, saying that the United States would simply sideline the IGC and work around it if the IGC tried to reverse the November agreement.[405]

This influence attempt by Bremer did not work and brought another deadlock to the transition process at the start of January 2004. After the November agreement, there were attempts at drafting the TAL by factions of the IGC.[406] Yet, SCIRI boycotted this process, and no consensus emerged amongst the IGC.[407] Thus, it appeared another stalemate would occur in this tense relationship between the IGC and Bremer. However, while Bremer was away on Christmas break, the IGC, under the guidance of SCIRI's leader Hakim, sent a letter to the UN Secretary-General asking them to intervene in the political process.[408] Bremer was furious to learn of this

'Agreement on Political Process' [paper], Coalition Provisional Authority, 15 Nov. 2003, *Digital National Security Archive,* available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 28 Nov.

[397] Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace,* p.216.

[398] Greenstock, *Iraq: The Cost of War,* p.279.

[399] Ibid.

[400] Ibid.

[401] Bremer and Malcom, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, p.234 and Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace,* pp.216-217.

[402] Greenstock, *Iraq: The Cost of War,* p.281.

[403] Ibid.

[404] Ibid.

[405] Ibid. and Bremer and Malcom, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, p.212.

[406] Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace,* p.221.

[407] Ibid.

[408] Greenstock, *Iraq: The Cost of War,* p.288.

development and requested the UN to ignore this letter.[409] The motivations of the letter spoke to the goals of the SCIRI and Sistani and other Shia politicians who desired early elections before any constitution; reinforcing their desire to determine the future of Iraq and not the United States. Nevertheless, Bremer and Greenstock played on this invitation to the UN. They asked UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, to confirm to Sistani that elections were not possible for logistical and security constraints.[410] The UN did issue a statement highlighting that elections would not be possible given these challenges.[411] Sistani and SCIRI did not accept these findings and still wanted the UN to become involved in resolving the political stalemate.[412] Accordingly, the IGC officially invited the UN to assist with the impasse in March 2004.

Lakhdar Brahimi was the UN Special Envoy appointed to mediate between the involved parties. Bremer did not want the UN to get involved as he did not want to weaken the U.S. authority in determining the political development of Iraq.[413] Notably, however, the Bush administration consented to the invitation of the UN. This was primarily attributed to successful lobbying by the State Department and the National Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice.[414] Fearing that the United States was becoming trapped in an unending commitment, Rice saw the UN as a necessary component to help extract the United States from Iraq.[415] The UN helped expediate a political transition in Afghanistan, thus they might assist in facilitating one in Iraq.[416] However, this was against Rumsfeld's and the OSD's preference, who did not want the UN involved in its decision making concerning the post-war governance of Iraq.[417] Nevertheless, despite Rumsfeld's and Bremer's desire to keep the UN away from the political process, Rice succeeded in getting them involved.[418] Significantly, with the involvement of the UN, the United States would no longer have a monopoly in determining the transfer of sovereignty to an Iraqi entity. This would see the strategy of establishing a pro-U.S. leadership with the caucus effectively sidelined.

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[409] Ibid.
[410] Ibid. p.301
[411] Ibid. p.308 and Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, p.84.
[412] Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, p.133.
[413] Bremer and Malcom, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, p.279.
[414] Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, p.64; Sanger, 'Bush Overhauls Approach to Iraq'; and Greenstock, *Iraq: The Cost of War,* p.296.
[415] Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, p.64 and Greenstock, *Iraq: The Cost of War,* pp.296-297.
[416] Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, p.64.
[417] 'Comments on State Papers: "The Future of Iraq"' and "Diplomatic Plan for the Day After"' [talking points], Office of the Secretary of Defense, p.1.
[418]Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, pp.78-79; Sanger, 'Bush Overhauls Approach to Iraq'; and Greenstock, *Iraq: The Cost of War,* pp.296-299.

The UN Intervention

After months of negotiations involving the UN and its envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi, the stalemate and impasse was broken.[419] The Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) was created, which ensured the provisions Bremer had initially sought. Also, it set the conditions for how the interim government would operate. However, there were significant adjustments that diverted away from Bremer's plan. Rather than appointing a government from the caucus, which the administration favoured, the interim government would be formed from the IGC. This was a significant adjustment given that Bremer had largely alienated the IGC. Yet, the administration would now be compelled to work with them after handing sovereignty to the future interim government. Despite this tense relationship between the CPA and IGC, the Bush administration attempted to install those it deemed friendly into the top positions of the interim government. However, this would be of limited benefit given that the interim government would not hold any real power, a deliberate by-product of the Brahimi intervention.

The alteration to Bremer's plan was a consequence of the intervention of the UN Special Envoy. Although Brahimi convinced Sistani of Bremer's argument that elections were impossible from a logistical and security standpoint, Brahimi made recommendations that undermined Bremer's original plan for influence.[420] Brahimi recommended that the interim government should not be a law-making body and have limited powers.[421] Moreover, there would be no legislative assembly from U.S. handpicked caucuses. Instead, a large supervisory national council of 100 members would be formed.[422] This was proposed for two reasons. First, Brahimi believed that if the interim authority had law-making powers, it would lead to frequent deadlocks between the different members and factions of the assembly.[423] This would not facilitate a smooth transition to the first transitional government elections scheduled for 2005.[424] More importantly, however, it would satisfy Sistani's desire that there would not be an unelected legislature that would draft Iraq's constitution. An additional modification was that members from the interim government could not run for elections in the transitional assembly. Although this did not stop them from running in 2005, it did reiterate how Sistani was able to gain compromises that suited his preferences. These modifications became incorporated into the TAL, in which an interim government would emerge to be a caretaker government.[425]

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[419] Bremer's account highlights the lengthy and strenuous process of negotiations between the CPA, Brahimi and the IGC to reach consensus on the TAL. see Bremer and Malcom, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, pp.268-378.
[420] Larry Diamond, 'What Went Wrong in Iraq', *Foreign Affairs,* 83/5 (2004), p.49.
[421] Marc Grossman, 'Iraq's Transition to Sovereignty', 21 Apr. 2004, https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/us/rm/31719.htm, para. 59, accessed 2 May 2020.
[422] Ibid. p.63.
[423] Ibid. p.59.
[424] Ibid.
[425] 'Factbox: Powers of interim Iraqi Government', *ABC News*, 28 June 2004, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2004-06-

Accordingly, there would be a transitional legislative assembly to be elected in January 2005 to draft Iraq's first constitution. These changes became cemented in UNSCR 1546.[426]

Sistani publicly endorsed the interim government.[427] Notably, however, given that the government would only be a caretaker, Sistani conceded to allow the United States to handpick some members of the interim authority.[428] Nonetheless, the body through which the United States planned to exercise influence would be hamstrung. The caucus's appointment of a legislative assembly, an important component of the administration's plan for influence, was discarded. Despite this undermining of the administration's goals for influence, it consented to the plan given it would lead to a prompt transfer of sovereignty and avoid further entrapment. The process of establishing an interim constitution vis-a-vis the TAL was not smooth and was nearly derailed on many occasions.[429] Hence despite its shortcomings for the Bush administration, it agreed to Brahimi's plan, given it did not want to risk prolonging the ongoing deadlock with Sistani and the IGC. Brahimi's plan enabled the process for democratic elections to be guaranteed in the TAL.[430] Furthermore, the TAL and the UNSCR 1546 gave U.S. forces the authority to take all measures for the security of Iraq. It would essentially have control over Iraq's newly trained armed forces.[431] Yet, this would be based on a security agreement between the new government of Iraq and the United States, with the former possessing the right to terminate the agreement.[432] Therefore, despite modifications to Bremer's plan for influence, the United States would still be in a position to exert some influence over the interim government vis-à-vis the security agreement and its ability to handpick some members in the interim government.

This fundamental shift in the U.S. planned transition, however, raised concerns about the future of its influence in Iraq, given that the U.S. envisioned interim government would not have the executive powers or be appointed by the caucus system. Moreover, there was anxiety over how the United States could continue its military presence in Iraq if the new government – whose allegiance was not guaranteed – asked U.S. forces to leave. Maintaining U.S. forces was essential to the survival of Iraq's central government and stability, given that

28/factbox-powers-of-interim-iraqi-government/2000618, accessed 16 May 2020.
[426] 'Resolution 1546', *UN Security Council* [website], (8 June 2004), http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1546, p.2, accessed 10 July 2020.
[427] Diamond, 'What Went Wrong in Iraq', p.49.
[428] Steven R. Weisman, 'U.S. Weighs U.N. Proposal for an Interim Iraqi Leader', *New York Times*, 2004, A13, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 12 June 2020.
[429] See Bremer and Malcom, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, pp.300-325.
[430] Ibid. p.292 and Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, p.147.
[431] 'Resolution 1546', *UN Security Council*, p.4.
[432] Ibid. p.12

it was facing an insurgency and growing interference from Iran. There was apprehension that without the U.S. military power in Iraq, it would be likely that Iraq would be further destabilised from the emerging insurgency and fall into Iran's sphere of influence. Hence, maintaining a military presence was one avenue that the United States could exert influence in Iraq to prevent this outcome. At his Senate testimony in April 2004, Secretary of State Colin Powell had to address these concerns.

Powell was questioned about the risk if the new interim government and the future transitional government would "take a position that we [U.S.] strongly disagree with", especially in dictating the U.S. troop presence in Iraq and implementing a theocratic governance model.[433] He answered that despite the risk of the new Iraqi leadership pursuing policies that undermined U.S. preferences, the United States still had "considerable influence over such a thing".[434] Powell reinforced Iraq's dependencies on the United States and emphasised that Iraq's economic and security dependencies were the fundamental levers of influence; the central government would need the United States to survive.[435] Thus, the Bush administration could rely on these dependencies to exert influence in Iraq to ensure it developed according to U.S. preferences and remained in the U.S. sphere of influence. Nonetheless, the Brahimi and Sistani compromise and Powell's testimony on dependency indicated the environment the United States would be confronted with in the post-handover period. The desired political leadership for Iraq that the OSD wanted and planned for never materialised. Additionally, the caucus system was abandoned. Therefore, the emergence of a pro-U.S. political leadership was not guaranteed. As a consequence, the United States found itself in a position where it would be vulnerable to the future governments of Iraq. They would be far more dependent on the future governments of Iraq to achieve its strategic objectives. They would need the government's cooperation to keep U.S. military forces in Iraq to stabilise the country and prevent it from falling into Iran's influence.

Skewing a favourable democracy

As the 30 June 2004 handover date approached, the United States remained concerned about maintaining its influence in Iraq and ensuring that the starting trajectory of Iraq would reflect U.S. preferences. The UN envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi, was tasked to select the prime minister

[433] United States Senate Committee on Appropriations, *Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2005* (2004), https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-108shrg92146/pdf/CHRG-108shrg92146.pdf, p.28, accessed 12 May 2020.
[434] Ibid. p.29.
[435] Ibid. pp.28-29.

and president and the cabinet ministries for the interim government.[436] These nominations needed to be ratified by the IGC.[437] Brahimi, reflecting Bush's original democratic ethos, attempted to fill the cabinet with more independent and secular internal Iraqis and heavily bar the externals from the IGC.[438] Despite the largely symbolic function and limited powers of the interim government, the Bush administration tried to tilt the post-handover period to a favourable position by choosing the leaders of the interim government. Bremer and the Bush administration attempted to install its favoured candidates into the most crucial leadership roles: the prime minister and president. The U.S. preferred candidates were Iyad Allawi and Adnan Panachi. For the interim president's position, the IGC initially agreed on Ghazi Yawer; however, Bremer postponed the IGC's intended ratification process to prevent his appointment.[439] Yawer was viewed by many in the IGC as independent and less supportive of the United States.[440] He frequently criticised the United States and the occupation and appeared to be an actor who would undermine U.S. interests in Iraq.[441] Bremer preferred Adnan Panachi, who was viewed as very pro-western and moderate.[442] However, the IGC successfully mobilised against Bremer and Panachi, who then withdrew his candidacy.[443] Hence, Yawer was ratified as Iraq's interim president.[444]

Brahimi proposed Hussein al-Shahristani for prime minister, as he appeared to be an independent and competent technocrat.[445] Yet, Bremer and the administration favoured another figure, Iyad Allawi, who had strong connections with the CIA.[446] Moreover, Allawi was viewed as an inclusive and secular politician whose opposition group, the Iraqi National Accord, consisted of both Shia and Sunni Iraqis and former Baathists.[447] It is reported that substantial backroom negotiations, entailing Bremer and U.S. ambassador Robert Blackwill pressuring the IGC to appoint Allawi, occurred.[448] Despite Shahristani having support from the majority of the IGC, he withdrew his candidacy and Allawi was nominated as prime minister

[436] Rajiv Chandrasekaran, 'Envoy Bowed to Pressure in Choosing Leaders', *Washington Post*, 2 June 2004, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 20 July 2020.
[437] Ibid.
[438] Ibid. para. 13.
[439] 'Bremer accused of interfering in vote', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 June 2004, https://www.smh.com.au/world/middle-east/bremer-accused-of-interfering-with-vote-20040601-gdj1da.html, para. 3, accessed 18 July 2020.
[440] 'Dissent over US push for interim head', *Age*, 31 May 2004, https://www.theage.com.au/national/dissent-over-us-push-for-interim-head-20040531-gdxy4u.html, para. 4, accessed 12 July 2020 and Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, pp.256-262.
[441] 'Dissent over US push for interim head', *Age*, para. 4.
[442] Ibid. para. 3.
[443] Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, pp.258-262.
[444] Chandrasekaran, 'Envoy Bowed to Pressure in Choosing Leaders'.
[445] Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, p.258.
[446] Bremer and Malcom, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, p.360.
[447] 'Dissent over US push for interim head', *Age,* para. 7.
[448] Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, pp.258-262.

due to Bremer and Blackwill.[449] A Kurdish member of the IGC condemned this intervention stating, “the CPA and Mr Bremer are pressuring us not to use our hearts”.[450] Consequently, Allawi was appointed and voted in as the interim prime minister.

Overall, the majority of top positions of the interim government were allocated to exiles and those in the Iraq opposition that had spent the majority of their exile in London, the United States, Europe, and Iran.[451] This departed from Brahimi’s intentions to reduce the presence of the exiles. Brahimi was dismayed by this outcome. In the immediate press conference, he stated that he came under “terrible pressure”, and the interim government was mostly a compromise between the IGC and the United States.[452] Pessimistically, he stated, “I believe this government is the best we can reach right now”.[453] Moreover, he highlighted Bremer’s influence in determining the candidates for the top positions. He stated at the same press conference, “I sometimes say -- I'm sure he doesn't mind me saying that -- that Bremer is the dictator of Iraq… He has the money. He has the signature. Nothing happens without his agreement in this country”.[454] Hence, this episode indicated the Bush administration's remaining influence from Iraq’s dependency. As Brahimi indicated, Bremer still controlled the material resources that Iraq and the IGC needed. Thus, this dependency still allowed Bremer and the administration to exercise influence.

Allawi and the Interim Government

At the start of Allawi’s six-month tenure, the Bush administration prioritised its strategic goals over Bush’s fragile democratic goals. The strategic objectives were to bring stability to Iraq through political reconciliation in Iraq’s population and defeating the emerging insurgency.[455] These were crucial steps to reduce the U.S. footprint in Iraq. Throughout these six months, Iraq’s dependence on the United States remained high; however, there appeared to be limited influence attempts by the Bush administration. This resulted from the strong relationship between the Bush administration and its preferred candidate Iyad Allawi. During his tenure, Allawi mostly implemented the preferences of the United States. He visited Washington, DC in September 2004, where he explicitly thanked the U.S. for the invasion and overthrow of

[449] ‘U.N. Special Envoy to Iraq, Lakhdar Brahimi’, *PBS*, 9 June 2004, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/u-n-special-envoy-to-iraq-lakhdar-brahimi, para. 19, accessed 25 July 2002.
[450] ‘Bremer accused of interfering in vote’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, para. 9.
[451] Sharon Otterman, ‘Iraq: The Interim Government Leaders’, *Council on Foreign Relations* [website], (2 Feb. 2005), https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/iraq-interim-government-leaders, accessed 10 July 2020.
[452] Chandrasekaran, ‘Envoy Bowed to Pressure in Choosing Leaders’, para. 1.
[453] Ibid. para. 3.
[454] Ibid. para. 5.
[455] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* pp.108-110.

Saddam.[456] Additionally, he regularly communicated with the U.S. administration to coordinate policies to combat the insurgency to bring stability to Iraq.[457] U.S. forces trained and worked with Iraqi Security Forces to combat the insurgency in both Sunni and Shia areas.[458] Also, Allawi launched initiatives for political reconciliation with Iraq's population. He relaxed the de-Baathification process, which under Ahmed Chalabi had a polarising effect on Iraq's society.[459] Furthermore, he offered amnesties to insurgents in Shia and Sunni areas and claimed to have frequent meetings with insurgent leaders to get them involved in the political process.[460]

Given how receptive he was to U.S. preferences, the Bush administration wanted to keep Allawi in power in the first elected transitional government scheduled for January 2005. Yet, Allawi failed to generate significant popularity in Iraq, and his prospects in the election looked slim. Moreover, the process of establishing the interim government with Bremmer and the Bush administration lobbying for its preferred candidates tainted Allawi's government. Many in society called the government a Western puppet by highlighting that most of the interim government were members from the U.S. handpicked IGC.[461] Also, others criticised it for being full of exiles who were "out of touch with their homeland".[462] Furthermore, during the six months, there was a significant increase in corruption and instability in Iraq underpinned by insurgencies, which further reduced his popularity.[463] Additionally, Allawi publicly took an image of authorising crackdowns on insurgents in Fallujah and Najaf.[464] The operation in Fallujah, led by coalition forces, was significantly destructive.[465] Moreover, it had a polarising effect on many Sunni elements of society.[466] For Najaf, the Shia religious centre of Iraq, the

[456] Leigh Sales, 'Iyad Allawi makes historical visit to Washington; We are succeeding Iraqi PM', *ABC*, 24 Sep. 2004, para. 2, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 14 Jul 2020.
[457] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* pp.108-110.
[458] Daniel Bolger, *Why We Lost: A General's Inside Account of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars*, (U.S.A: HMH, 2015), pp.186-191.
[459] Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace,* pp.317-318 and 'Ambassador Bremer's Meeting with Ahmad Chalabi [memorandum]', Coalition Provisional Authority, *Digital National Security Archive*, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 27 Nov. 2018.
[460] Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace,* pp.317-318.
[461] Hamza Hendawi, 'U.N. Envoy backs interim choices, despite role of "dictator" Bremer', *Ocala Star-Banner,* 3 June 2004, https://www.ocala.com/article/LK/20040603/news/604228362/OS, para. 3, accessed 15 July 2020.
[462] Ibid.
[463] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* pp.130-133.
[464] House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20171123122743/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/the-report/, Vol. 9 Section 3, p.403, accessed 13 Apr. 2019
[465] 'Iraq Security: The Impact of Fallujah' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 8 Dec. 2004, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20171123123237/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk//media/225339/2004-12-08-jic-assessment-iraq-security-the-impact-of-fallujah.pdf, accessed 8 Mar. 2019.
[466] Ibid.; Bolger, Daniel P. *Why We Lost: A General's Inside Account of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars*, pp.186-191; and Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* pp.119-121.

crackdown was seen by some as an attempt by the interim government to eliminate political rivals for the January elections as well as continuing the perceived U.S. agenda.[467]

Allawi's unpopularity put the United States in a quagmire as Bush's democratic aspirations began conflicting with strategic goals. In September 2004, the Bush administration realised the increasing unpopularity of Allawi and attempted to improve his image by directing him to recruit more staff to help with his political and communication campaigns.[468] British Prime Minister Tony Blair sent two political advisors to Allawi.[469] Blair stated that "Allawi needs helps now" and required "a first class political, media and strategic capability put it now".[470] However, an explosive report by Seymour Hersh provides details of how the State Department funnelled millions of dollars to Allawi's election campaign to improve his publicity by funding extensive media coverage of him.[471] For the administration, "the January elections are critical" to ensure that the United States could remain the dominant actor in directing the development of Iraq and preventing it from falling to the Iranian sphere.[472]

It became increasingly evident that Allawi would be unlikely to retain the position as prime minister despite the attempts to bolster his image. Hence, the Bush administration was in another strategic dilemma: how to ensure that Iraq's next government would accommodate U.S. interests. Moreover, Bush needed to determine how to achieve this accommodation without undermining his already fragile democratic vision. The strategic challenge was precarious given that it was likely that the dominant Shia parties, including Dawa and SCIRI, would form a government. Yet, Bush emotionally remained committed to his democratic aspirations by stating to his administration that they "we're not going to pick winners".[473] Despite Bush's rhetoric, the administration continued to plan how to get a favourable electoral outcome. The increase of insurgent attacks in 2004 and the increasing instability of Iraq – factors that would delay a U.S. withdrawal – made it imperative to avoid an election result that would further exacerbate these conditions.[474] Therefore, a pragmatic attitude emerged within

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[467] Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace,* p.297, 352 and 390.
[468] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.111.
[469] Bob Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007), p.254.
[470] Tony Blair, 'Iraq [minute]', 29 Aug. 2004, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20171123123237/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk//media/211921/2004-08-29-minute-prime-minister-to-sheinwald-iraq.pdf, p.2, accessed 11 Mar. 2019.
[471] Seymour M. Hersh, 'Get Out The Vote: Did Washington try to manipulate Iraq's election?', *New Yorker,* 18 July 2005, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2005/07/25/get-out-the-vote, para. 16, accessed 14 July 2020.
[472] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.111.
[473] Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, p.254.
[474]Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* pp.111 and 130-135.

the administration, which sidelined Bush's democratic rhetoric. According to Hersh, as the prospects of Allawi continued to diminish, Bush authorised the CIA to direct more funding and aid to Allawi's campaign.[475] This further exemplified the fracturing of the authenticity of Bush's democratic project.

In addition to the diminishing prospects for Allawi, there was also an indication that there would be a Sunni boycott of the election.[476] This boycott would likely ensure that Shia parties would emerge as the clear victors of the election. Hence, the United States – fearing the outcome of a SCIRI-Dawa victory – needed to form a strategy to mitigate this risk. According to Dodge, the U.S. embassy in Iraq wanted to create a "monster coalition" list of all the parties in the previous IGC. Additionally, it hoped to broker a deal that would allow Allawi to retain a prominent position, such as the Minister of Interior.[477] Moreover, the administration wanted to absorb both SCIRI and Dawa into this broad coalition list.[478] This would prevent one party from dominating the elected government and could allow an opportunity for the United States to manoeuvre through competing parties in this coalition to prevent unfavourable policies emerging against it. This would mimic the political engagements with Bremer and the IGC. However, this strategy became void due to Sistani, SCIRI and Dawa. While the administration focused on promoting Allawi for the election, Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani's office brokered a coalition with many of Iraq's Shia parties. This coalition, named the United Iraqi Alliance, was led by SCIRI and Dawa.[479] Sistani's blessing to the coalition gave it immense popularity, and it convincingly won the January election with an outright majority.[480] It won 140 seats. In contrast, Allawi's Iraqi National Accord only won 40 seats.[481]

[475] Douglas Jehl and David E. Sanger, 'Plan Called for Covert Aid in Iraq Vote', *New York Times*, 2005, A6, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 4 July 2019 and Dafna Linzer, 'U.S. Says It Did Not Carry out Plans to Back Iraqis in Election', *Washington Post*, 18 July 2005, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2005/07/18/us-says-it-did-not-carry-out-plans-to-back-iraqis-in-election/d2de787a-19bc-4ca5-9464-6c40d39ac453/, accessed 5 June 2019.
[476] Kenneth Katzman, 'Iraq: Post-Saddam Governance and Security', 28 Oct. 2009, *Congressional Research Service,* https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL31339.pdf, pp.15-17, accessed 10 Aug 2020.
[477] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.139.
[478] Marina Ottaway, 'Don't Rig the Iraqi Election', *Washington Post*, 8 Nov. 2004, para. 3-5, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 10 Aug 2020.
[479] Rory McCarthy, 'Sistani pulls main Shia parties together to dominate Iraq poll', *Guardian*, 1 Dec. 2004, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/dec/01/iraq.rorymccarthy, accessed 26 July 2020.
[480] Ibid. and Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), T*he U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 1: Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War 2003 – 2006*, p.369.
[481] Ibid.

The January election: The Emergence of Mutual Dependency

The January 2005 election brought to power a governing coalition of Shia parties, the Shia bloc, led by SCIRI and Dawa. This was the outcome that the Bush administration had tried to avoid since the CPA period. Moreover, Iran heavily funded the new prime minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari's electoral campaign, further exacerbating the outcome for the United States.[482] Furthermore, a newly established movement, sidelined from the IGC, gained some political representation in the new coalition. This was the Sadrist movement. The Sadrists were led by a cleric, Muqtada al-Sadr, who built his status by being a staunch opponent of the United States and its occupation of Iraq. He was an elusive thorn for the United States. Moreover, his Mahdi Army militia engaged in frequent skirmishes with U.S.-led coalition forces.[483] In 2003, Bremer issued an arrest warrant for him which eventually was retracted given the domestic backlash.[484] Sadr did not formally participate in the elections. In fact, Sadr and his aides denounced the national elections as legitimising the occupation vis-à-vis the remaining 140,000 U.S. troops.[485] Nonetheless, there were 17 candidates elected who were openly pro-Sadr.[486] Additionally, provincial elections were held on the same day as the national elections, resulting in pro-Sadr candidates winning the majority of several Shia populated provinces in Iraq.[487] Hence, the Sadrists were becoming a political force through the democratic process. Although the Bush administration welcomed the triumph of a democratic election, the boycott of the Sunni population and the election of SCIRI and Dawa and Sadrists placed U.S. interests at risk.[488]

The United States did not have its desired pro-U.S. political leadership. Instead, the new leadership harboured resentment towards the United States due to the antagonism that emerged in the CPA period between the IGC and Bremer. For instance, immediately after the election, the leader of SCIRI, Hakim, and Sadr stated that they would be discussing a timetable

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[482] Mahjoob Zweiri, 'Iran's Presence in Iraq: New Realities?', 10 May 2007, *Center for Strategic Studies*, University of Jordan, http://www.mzweiri.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/irans-presence-in-iraq-new-realties.pdf, p.7, accessed 4 Apr. 2018 and Edmund Sanders, 'Iran Plays a Role in Iraq Vote', *Los Angeles Times*, 9 Jan. 2005, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2005-jan-09-fg-iran9-story.html, para. 12, accessed 25 July 2020 and Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.142.
[483] 'US forces under attack in Iraq', *ABC News*, 8 Apr. 2004, https://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2004/s1084067.htm, accessed 4 Feb. 2019
[484] 'Interview: L. Paul Bremer III', *Frontline* [website], (9 Jan. 2007), https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gangsofiraq/interviews/bremer.html, para. 9, accessed 20 Aug. 2020.
[485] Qassim Abdul-Zahra, 'Al-Sadr says elections legalized occupation', *The Spokesman-Review* [website], 7 June 2005, https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2005/jun/07/al-sadr-says-elections-legalized-occupation/, accessed 23 Mar. 2019.
[486] Kenneth Katzman, 'Iraq: Elections and New Government', *Congressional Research Service*, 11 May 2005, https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20050511_RS21968_c247326fe22406d3acfe00a9b1453e9cf19e47fb.pdf, p.4, accessed 15 Feb. 2019.
[487] Ibid. p.5.
[488] 'President Welcomes Iraqi Prime Minister Jaafari to White House', 24 June 2005, *US Fed News Service*, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 22 Aug 2020.

for an immediate U.S. withdrawal.[489] Hence, the United States was in an unfavourable environment to pursue its objective in Iraq. Nonetheless, the new government was dependent on the United States, given Iraq's security and economic dependencies. However, the United States was now dependent on the new prime minister of Iraq, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, for his support and compliance with U.S. goals. Yet, this desired compliance would not easily materialise. Jaafari benefited from Iran's patronage for the election. Moreover, he maintained a friendship with the renegade cleric, Muqtada al-Sadr.[490] Furthermore, even if Jaafari wanted to support U.S. objectives, he would be required to balance the competing interests emerging from the Shia bloc. This will be demonstrated in the following chapter.

Conclusion

The January 2005 election was a milestone that laid the foundations for transforming the U.S.-Iraq relationship into one of mutual dependence. This was a significant departure from the aims of the OSD's Afghan model. Moreover, it heavily diverged from the unilateral position of influence the United States enjoyed after the invasion due to the asymmetrical dependency. The CPA period epitomised Emerson's characterisation of asymmetrical dependence. According to Emerson, asymmetrical dependence is when "A's power over B derives from, and is equal to, B's dependence on A".[491] Iraq and the IGC was dependent on U.S. economic and security aid. Also, the future of the IGC members was dependent on the preferences of the Bush administration. Given this dependency, Bremer was able to impose his preferences on the IGC leadership despite their opposition to Bremer's objectives. However, the reversion to Rumsfeld's quick extraction strategy and corresponding conclusion of the CPA weakened the U.S. ability to exercise influence. Bremer had to plan for an immediate transition of authority to an Iraqi entity while ensuring that the United States could maintain influence over Iraq and prevent it from falling to Iran's sphere. Yet, this scramble for influence was not successfully achieved. The intervention of the UN and Sistani prevented the administration from attaining the position of influence it desired. Consequently, Bremer was compelled to compromise on the formation of the post-occupation government. Nonetheless, the Bush administration attempted to influence the development of the post-occupation period through

[489] Nir Rosen, 'If America Left Iraq: The case for cutting and running', *The Atlantic* [website], Dec. 2005, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2005/12/if-america-left-iraq/304412/, para. 1, accessed 18 Aug 2020 and Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.136.
[490] Marisa Sullivan, 'Fact Sheet: Ibrahim al-Jaafari', *Institute for the Study of War,* (12 May 2010), https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/JaafariFactSheet1.pdf, p.1, accessed 7 Mar. 2019.
[491] Linda D. Molm, 'Power and Social Exchange', in Dean Tjosvold and Barbara Wisse (eds), *Power and Interdependence in Organisations,* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.154 and Richard M. Emerson, 'Exchange Theory, Part I: A Psychological Basis for Social Exchange' in J. Berger, M. Zelditch and B. Anderson (eds.), *Sociological Theories in Progress, vol. 2*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

Iyad Allawi. Yet, this only brought a temporary benefit as Allawi's tenure was just six months, and his party performed poorly in the 2005 election.

The 2005 election brought to prominence SCIRI, Dawa and the Sadrist movement. Despite consistently engaging with the United States before and after the invasion, the administration was apprehensive about SCIRI and Dawa's extensive connections with Iran. Bremer and the administration consistently feared the outcome of SCIRI and Dawa forming government. They believed these parties would undermine U.S. strategic interests if they ever rose to power. Additionally, Muqtada al-Sadr, who had consistently opposed the United States through an insurgency, gained substantial political power through the election. Therefore, the future success of U.S. goals in Iraq was not guaranteed. Thus, the 2005 election was a disastrous outcome for the United States. Despite this non-desirable outcome, U.S. influence would not completely disappear. Iraq's security and economic dependences would give the United States the ability to try and exert influence over Iraq's new leadership to pursue its objectives. Nevertheless, given that the U.S. strategic goals required the support of Iraq's leadership, the United States was also dependent on the new government. Therefore, according to Emerson, there was no guarantee that the asymmetrical-power capabilities of the United States could be transformed into successful influence.

Chapter III – Jaafari and the Shia Bloc, 2005-2006

The emergence of Ibrahim al-Jaafari as prime minister backed by a coalition dominated by SCIRI, Dawa and the Sadrists in January 2005 marked a transitioning point in the U.S.-Iraq relationship. It solidified the transformation of the relationship from a position of asymmetrical dependence to one of mutual dependence. Given that the U.S. desired leadership did not materialise with the Iraqi Interim Authority and Iyad Allawi was no longer prime minister, the Bush administration was dependent on the new Iraqi government to support its objectives. This government included an array of political parties that maintained various relationships with Iran and held degrees of antipathy towards the United States. Nonetheless, Iraq remained dependent on the administration for military, security, and economic aid. Hence, mutual dependence arose. According to Molm, mutual dependence can balance an asymmetric power relationship.[492] It can prevent the stronger actor's asymmetrical power capabilities from influencing the subordinate actor's behaviour to suit its preferences.[493] This transpired throughout the Jaafari period.

At the start of Jaafari's tenure, Bush still maintained his aspirations for a democratic Iraq. He re-affirmed his commitment to his fragile democratic goals. After the election, Bush stated that "the people of Iraq have spoken to the world, and the world is hearing the voice of freedom from the center of the Middle East".[494] However, the Bush administration's most immediate priorities were stability and withdrawal while ensuring that Iraq remained in the U.S. sphere of influence. Bush outlined this policy, stating that "as the Iraqis stand up, we will stand down". The administration sought two objectives to create this desired stability: reduce sectarian tension, which was fuelling the al-Qaeda led Sunni insurgency and build up Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to counter the insurgency and provide security.[495] For the administration, security would allow for good governance to emerge, leading to stability in Iraq.[496] Moreover, it would give Bush's democratic aspirations a chance to transpire. Most importantly, the increased capability of the ISF would allow the United States to wind down its military footprint. This was the priority for Secretary Rumsfeld and Multi-National Force Iraq Commander General George

[492] Linda D. Molm, 'Power and Social Exchange', in Dean Tjosvold and Barbara Wisse (eds), *Power and Interdependence in Organisations,* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.154-155.
[493] Richard M. Emerson, "Power-Dependence Relations." *American Sociological Review,* 27/1 (1962), pp.33-34.
[494] David E. Sanger, 'Bush Hails Iraqi Vote, but Warns of More Fighting Ahead'*, New York Times*, 31 Jan. 2005, https://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/31/politics/bush-hails-iraqi-vote-but-warns-of-more-fighting-ahead.html, para. 2. accessed 10 Jan. 2020.
[495] Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* (London: Atlantic Books, 2012), p.144 and House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122743/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/the-report/, Vol. 9 Section 3, p.458 and 469, accessed 13 Dec. 2020.
[496] 'When prime minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari began announcing members of his', *Pittsburgh Post – Gazette*, 16 May 2005, A-4., in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 5 Apr. 2020.

Casey, who wanted to reduce the U.S. troop presence as soon as possible.[497] Yet, these goals did not materialise.

Although Jaafari was leading a one-year transitional government, the U.S. stability goals through reducing sectarian tensions and withdrawal of U.S. troops were shattered. The Bush administration was confronted with a government dominated by the newly emerged Shia bloc, which possessed an array of competing interests that contradicted the preferences of the United States. Consequently, the administration became increasingly reliant on Jaafari to navigate these competing interests. Attempts to persuade Jaafari to implement policies that would support U.S. objectives were largely unsuccessful. Jaafari refused to undertake any action that would harm the interests of the dominant members of the Shia bloc. Under Jaafari, Shia militias associated with the Shia bloc infiltrated the police as well as the army and conducted horrific sectarian killings. This sparked reprisals from the Sunni population and the Sunni insurgents and fuelled the al-Qaeda led Sunni insurgency. This fostered further instability and led to Iraq's low-grade civil war between 2006 and 2008. These developments threatened the survivability of the central government and the scheduled withdrawal of U.S. forces.

Throughout 2005, the administration made limited influence attempts to induce Jaafari into compliance. Despite Iraq remaining heavily dependent on the United States for economic and military aid as well as a 130,000 U.S. troop presence, these dependencies did not produce high levels of influence. This can be attributed to two primary factors: the Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's policy of engagement with Jaafari and his government and the mutual dependence of the dyadic relationship. Rumsfeld adopted the notion that politics in Iraq should be left to Iraqis to solve. Hence, while he remained Secretary of Defense, he did not engage with Jaafari to influence his preferences. Others in the Bush administration, such as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, attempted to influence Jaafari. However, this was unsuccessful due to the Shia bloc. Jaafari continued to placate these parties' interests that he saw as critical to remain as prime minister, despite these interests contradicting U.S. objectives. Consequently, the Bush administration found itself paralysed and needed to reformulate its Iraq strategy.

[497]George W. Casey, Jr., *Strategic Reflections: Operation Iraqi Freedom July 2004–February 2007*, (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2012), pp.60-61 and 'An Exit Interview with General John P. Abizaid'*, U.S Army Military History Institute*, (2007), http://cdm16635.contentdm.oclc.org/utils/getdownloaditem/collection/p16635coll26/id/61/type/singleitem/filename/62.pdf/width/0/height/0/mapsto/pdf/filesize/3855964/title/Exit%20interview%20with%20General%20John%20P.%20Abizaid, pp.30-32 accessed 1 Feb. 2019.

The Insurgency and Reconciliation

One of the administration's main priorities was to combat the ongoing insurgency that started in 2004. The United States was confronted with an insurgency led by al-Qaeda in Iraq under Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and supported by disenfranchised Sunni tribes. The insurgency was judged "to put at risk the achievement of a unified and democratic Iraq".[498] To deflate the insurgency, the Bush administration adopted the policy of "Al Qaeda out, Sunni in, ISF in the lead".[499] This entailed bringing more of Iraq's Sunni population into the political process.[500] The Sunni population largely boycotted the 2005 election. Consequently, it was underrepresented in Iraq's government.[501] Thus, giving the population more representation was intended to dismantle the support and sympathy towards al-Qaeda.[502] Moreover, political inclusion of the Sunni population was designed to reduce sectarian tensions and promote political reconciliation, which the Bush administration desired.[503] In mid-2005, coalition forces began to reach out to disgruntled Sunni tribal insurgents who resented being under the control of al-Qaeda in Iraq.[504] This would culminate into the so-called Anbar Awakening which would further develop in 2007. The Bush administration wanted the Jaafari government to facilitate this political reconciliation between the Shia dominated government and Iraq's Sunni population. It was viewed that,

> …the actions of the Iraqi Transitional Government (ITG) will be critical in changing Sunni perceptions. ITG failure to deliver on Sunni concerns will play into the hands of the insurgents and again deepen the violence. But if the political process gains momentum Sunni support for the insurgency will diminish.[505]

The Bush administration saw the formation of Jaafari's cabinet as an opportunity to increase Sunni representation in the Shia dominated government. However, this quickly became

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[498] 'Iraq: Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 3 Feb. 2005, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122559/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/195001/2005-02-03-jic-assessment-iraq-insurgency-and-counter-insurgency.pdf, p.1, accessed 15 June 2020.
[499] Casey, Jr., *Strategic Reflections: Operation Iraqi Freedom July 2004–February 2007*, p.68.
[500] Ibid.
[501] Ryan Carroll, 'Sunnis admit poll boycott blunder and ask to share power', *Guardian*, 15 Feb.2005, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/feb/15/iraq.rorycarroll, accessed 16 Apr. 2020.
[502]'Iraq: Post Election Landscape' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 16 Feb. 2005, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20171123123237/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk//media/195025/2005-02-16-jic-assessment-iraq-post-election-landscape.pdf, p.2, accessed 17 Aug. 2018.
[503] 'Iraq: The State of the Insurgency' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 6 Apr. 2005, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123123511/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/195073/2005-04-06-jic-assessment-iraq-the-state-of-the-insurgency.pdf, p.3, accessed 15 June 2020.
[504] Carter Malkasian, *Illusions of Victory: The Anbar Awakening and the Rise of the Islamic State*, (U.SA: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp.46-47.
[505] 'Iraq: The State of the Insurgency' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, p.1.

problematic. Jaafari appointed a Sunni politician as Minister for Defence as a symbolic gesture. Yet this was vetoed by SCIRI and other Shia parties in the coalition, leaving Jaafari to take the position himself temporarily.[506] Despite these setbacks, a senior embassy diplomat, James Jeffrey, continued to lobby the dominant Shia coalition to allow more Sunni politicians into Jaafari's cabinet for more representation.[507] Jeffrey was able to secure an agreement with the Shia coalition's leadership to increase the Sunni representation.[508] However, this promise was reneged on by April. Only 6 out of the 31 ministers were Sunni.[509] Additionally, Jaafari's coalition was subsequently accused of "impos[ing]" their own preferred Sunni ministers.[510] Sunni politicians immediately "responded critically to the announcement of the new government''.[511] This stands as the first clear indication of the tension between the preferences of the Shia bloc and U.S. objectives.

The new Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, was dismayed at the progress. She berated Jaafari for the lack of inclusion of the Sunnis in his cabinet, stating, "you just don't get it …. you got to grandfather this political process".[512] She continued to emphasise the need to include the Sunni population, whose "marginalis[ation]" was helping fuel the insurgency.[513] The anxiety over the lack of Sunni representation was further increased by the discovery of 34 Sunni and Shia Iraqi bodies who were executed by a militia the day before Rice's visit.[514] According to Rice, Jaafari appeared to "have only a marginal interest in the fundamental problem. He said the right things about wanting to reach out to the Sunnis but gave no indication that he knew how to do it".[515] Despite her direct intervention, the trajectory of the Jaafari's government would continue to escalate into more sectarian policies furthering the instability in Iraq.

[506] 'Iraq's New Cabinet', *New York Times*, 29 Apr. 2005, https://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/29/opinion/iraqs-new-cabinet.html, para. 4, accessed 11 June 2020.
[507] Bob Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), pp.393-394.
[508] Ibid.
[509] Michael Howard, 'Discord as Iraqi cabinet is filled', *Guardian*, 10 May 2005, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/may/09/iraq.michaelhoward, para. 7. accessed 2 July 2020.
[510] House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), Vol. 9 Section 3, p.493.
[511]Ibid.
[512] Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, pp.393-394.and 'When prime minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari began announcing members of his', *Pittsburgh Post – Gazette*.
[513] Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honour: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*, (New York: Crown Publishers, 2011), p.369.
[514] 'Rice, In Iraq, Urges Patience', *CBS News*, 15 May 2005, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/rice-in-iraq-urges-patience-15-05-2005/, para. 8, accessed 3 July 2020.
[515] Rice, *No Higher Honour: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*, p.370.

The Shia Bloc and its Militias

Instead of an inclusive cabinet, Jaafari's cabinet became dominated by the newly established Shia bloc.[516] Powerful ministries went to the SCIRI and the Sadrists.[517] This political configuration started the familiar pattern in Iraqi politics where political parties vie for powerful cabinet portfolios. Jaafari's cabinet reflected the Shia bloc's political competition, which sought to realise its preferences and interests. Although parties, such as SCIRI and Dawa, ran together as a coalition under the Iraqi National Alliance, the Shia bloc was far from harmonious partners. They had considerable differences arising from ideology and experiences during the Iran-Iraq war. For example, SCIRI's spiritual guide was Ayatollah Baqir al-Hakim, who was assassinated in 2003, while Dawa members had primarily followed the religious leadership of Ayatollah Baqir al-Sadr and Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr. The latter Sadr's were Muqtada al-Sadr's uncle and father.[518] Furthermore, SCIRI and Dawa spent significant time in Iran during the Iran-Iraq war. Moreover, both their militias were trained by Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).[519] However, the Dawa party split into three fragments based on disagreements with the IRGC and the spiritual leadership of Iran's former Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khomeini.[520] The leadership of Dawa then dispersed to the three different offices in Iran, Syria, and the United Kingdom.[521] In contrast, SCIRI predominantly stayed in Iran and remained loyal to the IRGC and Khomeini's ideology.[522]

Complicating this picture was the emergence of the Sadrist movement. Although there were only 20 members of parliament that had pro-Sadr leanings, the Sadrist movement had significant representation in provincial councils in Baghdad and southern Iraq. Also, Sadr had a prominent standing in Iraq due to his family lineage, in particular his father Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr, who was murdered in 1999 by Saddam's regime.[523] The Sadrist

[516] Lionel Beehner, 'Iraq: Cabinet Ministers', *Council on Foreign Relations* [website], (2 May 2005), https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/iraq-cabinet-ministers, accessed 19 Aug. 2018.
[517] For example, SCIRI secure the Interior Ministry as well as the Ministry for Finance, see Kenneth Katzman, 'Iraq: Elections and New Government', *Congressional Research Service*, (11 May 2005), https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20050511_RS21968_c247326fe22406d3acfe00a9b1453e9cf19e47fb.pdf, p.6, accessed 20 Aug. 2018.
[518] Joseph Felter and Brian Fisherman, 'Iranian Strategy in Iraq Politics and "Other Means"', *Combating Terrorism Center*, (13 Oct. 2008), https://ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Iranian-Strategy-in-Iraq.pdf, p.7 and p.23, accessed 15 Mar. 2018.
[519] Benjamin Isakhan and Peter E. Muherin, 'Shi'i division over the Iraqi state: decentralization and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq', *British Journal of Middle East Studies*, 47/3 (2020), p.361.
[520] Ibid. and Soren Schmidt, 'Shia-Islamist political actors in Iraq: Who are they and what do they want?', *Danish Institute For International Studies*, (2008), https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/46712/DIIS-RP_2008-3_web.pdf, p.22, accessed 5 June 2018.
[521] Schmidt, 'Shia-Islamist political actors in Iraq: Who are they and what do they want?', p.22.
[522] Felter and Fisherman, 'Iranian Strategy in Iraq Politics and "Other Means"', p.19 and p.23.
[523] Sami Ramadani, 'There's more to Sadr than meets the eye', *Guardian*, 25 Aug. 2004, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/aug/24/iraq.comment, para. 4, accessed 3 Dec. 2018.

movement had a significant rivalry with SCIRI, the origins of which seemed to emerge from a historical competition to lead the Shia community in Iraq.[524] However, in the 1990s, this competition intensified when Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr criticised and denounced SCIRI's leader, Ayatollah Baqir al-Hakim, for fleeing Iraq and abandoning Iraq's Shia population under Saddam's crackdown during the 1991 Iraqi uprising.[525] Sadiq al-Sadr's son, Muqtada, continued his father's attack on SCIRI when they returned to Iraq and denounced them for cooperating with the United States.[526] The rivalry evolved to become portrayed as a class struggle between the urban poor in the Shia provinces, which the Sadrist movement claimed to represent, against the well-off middle class and business owners siding with SCIRI.[527] This rivalry eventually culminated in competition for influence and control over the Shia dominated provinces in southern Iraq and Baghdad.[528] Often leading to violence between Sadr's militia and SCIRI's Badr militia from 2005 to 2011.[529] Nevertheless, this historical and ideological divide laid the foundation for the competition amongst these prominent political groups from the 2005 election onwards. As emphasised in the previous chapter, the bloc shared a common cause to capture political power. They believed it was pre-ordained that they would dominate "the government and transform years of repression into real power" given Iraq's Shia majority.[530] Yet, the tension and rivalry within the Shia bloc remained, with each component pursuing its own individual preferences, which following Moravcsik's logic, sought to realise through Iraq's state institutions.

Jaafari's nomination and confirmation as prime minister appeared to be somewhat of a compromise amongst these competing parties. SCIRI and the Sadrists would not agree to any candidate from each party to become prime minister. Although there was historical tension between Dawa and SCIRI, Jaafari and Dawa's leadership maintained cordial ties with SCIRI

[524] 'Shiite Rivalry Slows PM Appointment', *CBS News*, 12 Apr. 2006, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/shiite-rivalry-slows-pm-appointment/, para. 19, accessed 8 Oct. 2018.
[525] Matthew Duss and Peter Juul, 'The Fractured Shia of Iraq Understanding the tensions within Iraq's majority', *Center For American Progress,* (Jan. 2009), https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2009/01/pdf/shia_elections.pdf, p.9, accessed 22 Aug. 2018 and 'Iraq's Muqtada Al-Sadr: Spoiler or Stabiliser?', *International Crisis Group*, (11 July 2006), https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/55-iraq-s-muqtada-al-sadr-spoiler-or-stabiliser.pdf, p.3, accessed 14 Sep. 2020.
[526] Duss and Juul, 'The Fractured Shia of Iraq Understanding the tensions within Iraq's majority', *Center For American Progress,* p.9.
[527] 'Iraq's Civil War, The Sadrists and The Surge', *International Crisis Group*, (7 Feb. 2008), https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/72-iraq-s-civil-war-the-sadrists-and-the-surge.pdf, p.12, accessed 4 Feb. 2019.
[528] Mahjoob Zweiri and Andrew E. Johnson, 'Transnational Implications of Civil Conflicts in Iraq, Lebanon, and Palestine', Feb. 2007, *Research Institute for European and American Studies* (*RIEAS*), https://www.rieas.gr/images/rieas118.pdf, p.13, accessed 5 Sep. 2018 and Anthony H. Cordesman, 'Understanding the Fighting in Southern Iraq Between Sadr and the Iraqi Forces', *Center for Strategic and International Studies* [website], (26 Mar. 2008), https://www.csis.org/analysis/understanding-fighting-southern-iraq-between-sadr-and-iraqi-forces, para. 2, accessed 20 July 2018.
[529] Joel D. Rayburn and Frank K. Sobchak (eds), *THE U.S ARMY IN THE IRAQ WAR VOLUME 1: Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War, 2003-2006*, (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S Army War College Press), p.501.
[530] 'Iraq: Post Election Landscape' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, p.1.

due to Iranian mediation before the invasion of Iraq.[531] Moreover, Jaafari had an extensive friendship with Sadr.[532] Therefore, Jaafari appeared as an ideal compromise between SCIRI and the emerging Sadrist movement.[533] Yet, more importantly, the Dawa party paled in size and power compared to SCIRI and the Sadrists.[534] Additionally, unlike SCIRI and the Sadrist movement, Dawa no longer had a militia. Hence, giving the prime minister position to Dawa was viewed as a compromise that would not intrude on SCIRI's and the Sadrist movement's interests. Furthermore, there was an agreement amongst the competing parties that Dawa would not receive significant ministries given they received the prime ministerial post.[535] This arrangement, however, had significant ramifications on Jaafari's as well as Maliki's tenure. Jaafari's and Maliki's position as prime minister would be conditional on the support of SCIRI and the Sadrists. Accordingly, it would influence their political behaviour towards these groups' interests, with the frequent calculation that undermining their preferences would affect their own fortunes.

Exemplifying Moravcsik's theory, these Shia bloc entities sought to realise their preferences through state institutions. Thus, after the formation of Jaafari's cabinet, there was an immediate increase of corruption and militia infiltration into the ISF. General Casey highlighted how all cabinet portfolios were viewed as fiefdoms with each portfolio's budget raided.[536] These became divided up between Sadrists, SCIRI and Dawa as well as the Kurdish parties, KDP and PUK, which joined the governing coalition. The most significant development was the allocation of the Ministry of Interior. The Ministry of Interior controls Iraq's police and internal security forces.[537] Hence, it is a powerful ministry still competed for by parties in elected coalitions. The United Kingdom's (UK) Foreign Minister, Jack Straw, stressed to Jaafari the "importance of getting good people into the key security Ministerial positions (Defence and Interior)" and the "enormous damage that could be done" if these were given to

[531] Schmidt, 'Shia-Islamist political actors in Iraq: Who are they and what do they want?', p.23.
[532] Marisa Sullivan, 'Fact Sheet: Ibrahim al-Jaafari', *Institute for the Study of War,* (12 May 2010), https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/JaafariFactSheet1.pdf, p.1, accessed 7 Mar. 2019.
[533] Ibid.
[534] 'Shiite Politics in Iraq: The Role of the Supreme Council', *International Crisis Group*, pp.11-12.
[535] Zalmay Khalilzad, 'Government Formation Update: Moderate Shia Islamist Says PM Race is Dead Heat' [cable], 06BAGHDAD420_a, 11 Feb. 2006, *WikiLeaks,* https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06BAGHDAD420_a.html, para. 1, accessed 5 Nov. 2018.
[536] 'George Casey Oral History', *Miller Center,* University of Virginia*,* (25 Sep. 2014), http://web1.millercenter.org/poh/transcripts/casey_george_2014_0925.pdf, p.60, accessed 8 Jan. 2020 and Renad Mansour & Faleh A. Jaba, 'The Popular Mobilization Forces and Iraq's Future', *Carnegie Middle East Center,* (Apr. 2017), https://carnegieendowment.org/files/CMEC_63_Mansour_PMF_Final_Web.pdf, pp.19-20, accessed 1 Dec. 2019.
[537] Peter Khalil, 'Rebuilding and Reforming the Iraqi Security Sector: U.S Policy During Democratic Transition', *Saban Center for Middle East Policy,* Brookings Institute*,* (July 2006), https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/khalil20060713.pdf, p.x, accessed 5 Aug. 2020.

sectarian actors.[538] However, SCIRI was able to successfully gain control of this ministry with the appointment of Bayan Jabr.[539] Jabr was a SCIRI member as well as a former commander of SCIRI's Badr militia.[540] Under his tenure, the ministry recruited militia members from Badr into security forces.[541] Additionally, in an attempt to balance the dominance of SCIRI, the Sadrists began recruiting members from Sadr's Mahdi Army militia as security personnel for the ministries they controlled.[542] Moreover, many Mahdi Army members formed police units in the provinces where the Sadrist movement won a majority in the January provincial elections.[543]

The motivations of this infiltration may speak to SCIRI's and Sadrists' desire to consolidate and expand their power in the newly elected government. Yet, it is often attributed to some form of nepotism.[544] However, it is also claimed that the recruitment of militia members into the police resulted from pressure by the United States to build up the ISF to speed up U.S. troop withdrawal.[545] Nonetheless, the recruitment of militiamen effectively politicised the ISF.[546] Some even claimed that the security forces became SCIRI's legitimate militia.[547] Nonetheless, General Abizaid, the CENTCOM Commander, conceded that "Iraqi police essentially became a Shia militia".[548] Moreover, many regional police chiefs, as well as mayors who were initially appointed by the Coalition Provincial Authority (CPA), were replaced with SCIRI members.[549] Furthermore, these SCIRI members,

[538] Jack Straw, 'Iraq: Ad Hoc Ministerial Meetings [letter]', 24 Mar. 2005, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122556/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/195361/2005-03-24-letter-straw-to-prime-minister-iraq-ad-hoc-ministerial-meetings.pdf, pp.2-3, accessed 1 Sep. 2020.
[539] General James L. Jones USMC (Ret.), 'Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq', *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, (*6* Sep. 2007), https://www.csis.org/programs/former-programs/independent-commission-security-forces-iraq, p.88, accessed 15 Nov. 2020.
[540] Ibid.
[541]'Iraq: Sectarianism' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 5 Apr. 2006, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122508/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/211425/2006-04-05-jic-assessment-iraq-sectarianism.pdf, accessed 5 Sep. 2020.
[542] 'Iraq's Muqtada Al-Sadr: Spoiler or Stabiliser?', *International Crisis Group*, p.23.
[543] 'Militias in Iraq: The hidden face of terrorism', *Geneva International Centre for Justice,* (Sep. 2016), http://www.gicj.org/GICJ_REPORTS/GICJ_report_on_militias_September_2016.pdf, pp.4-6, accessed 19 Dec. 2018.
[544] 'Iraq: overview of corruption and anti-corruption', *Transparency International,* (Apr. 2013), https://www.transparency.org/files/content/corruptionqas/374_Iraq_overview_of_corruption_and_anticorruption.pdf, pp.3-4, accessed 1 Oct. 2020.
[545] 'Militias in Iraq: The hidden face of terrorism', *Geneva International Centre for Justice*, p.4.
[546] Khalil, 'Rebuilding and Reforming the Iraqi Security Sector: U.S Policy During Democratic Transition', p.13.
[547] Duss and Juul, 'The Fractured Shia of Iraq Understanding the tensions within Iraq's majority', *Center For American Progress,* p.12.
[548] 'Abizaid, John-Surge Interview', *Center For Presidential History,* SMU, (13 Apr. 2016), https://www.smu.edu/-/media/Site/Dedman/Academics/InstitutesCenters/CPH/Collective-Memory-Project/The-Surge/Abizaid-John--FINAL--20199.pdf?la=en, p.12, accessed 4 Feb. 2020.
[549] James Glanz, 'Baghdad Mayor Is Ousted by a Shiite Group and Replaced', *New York Times*, 10 Aug. 2005, https://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/10/washington/world/baghdad-mayor-is-ousted-by-a-shiite-group-and-replaced.html?searchResultPosition=19, para. 11-12, accessed 4 Aug. 2020.

> *…sanctioned the use of vehicular Badr militia patrols and checkpoints throughout Baghdad to provide security in Shia majority areas. Moreover, Al-Hakim has reportedly encouraged the provincial leadership to utilize the Badr militia network to facilitate more effective security operations and security-related information sharing across provincial jurisdictions.*[550]

These developments in 2005 had enormous consequences. Shia militias wearing government uniforms began targeting the Sunni population, which increased existing tensions between Iraq's Sunni and Shia populations. There were notorious accounts and incidents, such as the atrocities of the Wolf Brigade of the Ministry of Interior, which led to gruesome findings of bodies.[551] The Wolf brigade predominantly consisted of SCIRI's Badr militia members.[552] They were accused of conducting horrific sectarian killings, including the execution of Sunni clerics.[553] This was seen as a gift for the al-Qaeda insurgency, which presented itself as the defender against "apostate" Shia and the "American-installed" government.[554] These pogroms and reprisals would be identified as one of the main factors driving the upcoming civil war in 2006. For these reasons, instead of the Bush administration's desired stability emerging, Iraq slid further into chaos.

This militia problem was an unforeseen consequence of the CPA period and the 2005 election. Militias were initially accepted after the invasion, given the minimal coalition troop presence. They provided security in local areas.[555] According to Katzman, they were the only entities that could provide protection for their respective parties, especially as political assassinations were frequent in Iraq after the fall of Saddam.[556] The Bush administration implicitly acknowledged that there would be a slim chance that these parties would voluntarily disband

[550] David M. Satterfield, 'Building a House on Shifting Sands—Iran's Influence in Iraq's Center-South' [cable], 05BAGHDAD3015_a, 20 July 2005, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05BAGHDAD3015_a.html, para. 6, accessed 5 Feb. 2019.
[551] 'Iraq's Wolf Brigade Said to Be Effective, at Times Brutal', *ABC News,* 15 Dec. 2005, https://abcnews.go.com/WNT/IraqWhereThingsStand/story?id=1403032, accessed 11 Oct. 2020.
[552] David M. Satterfield, 'Badr Corps and MUC Conduct Muqtada Al-Sadr-Facilitated Negotiations on "Letter of Promise"' [cable], 05BAGHDAD2375_a, 2 June 2005, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05BAGHDAD2375_a.html, para. 4, accessed 7 Feb. 2019.
[553] Ibid. para. 1-3.
[554] 'The Islamist Jihad in Iraq: Getting Worse' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 29 June 2005, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123123610/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/195129/2005-06-29-jic-assessment-the-islamist-jihad-in-iraq-getting-worse.pdf, p.4, accessed 15 Oct. 2019.
[555] David Phillips, 'Power-Sharing in Iraq', *Council on Foreign Relations*, (6 Apr. 2005), https://cdn.cfr.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2005/04/Iraq_CSR.pdf, p.3, accessed 16 June 2020.
[556] Sharon Otterman and Lionel Beehner, 'Iraq: Drafting the Constitution', *Council on Foreign Relations* [website], (27 Apr. 2005), https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/iraq-drafting-constitution, para. 18, accessed 18 July 2020 and Edward Wong, 'The Struggle for Iraq: Private Armies; Iraqi Militias Resisting U.S Pressure to Disband', *New York Times*, 9 Feb. 2004, https://www.nytimes.com/2004/02/09/world/struggle-for-iraq-private-armies-iraqi-militias-resisting-us-pressure-disband.html, para. 1-3, accessed 12 Apr. 2020.

their militias.[557] It was evident that the Kurdish KDP and PUK parties[558] would not give up their Peshmerga militias. The President of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Masoud Barzani, told senior diplomats Jeffrey and David Satterfield,

> …that the pesh merga must remain until the Iraqi government is able to convince Kurds that Baghdad will not again turn against them. Democracy was more than words; it would take years to rebuild trust, given the bad blood between the Iraqi government and the Kurds.[559]

They emphasised that the Kurds would be vulnerable to any future central government.[560] Saddam's brutal campaigns against Iraq's Kurdish population provided sound justification.[561]

One can speculate that the Bush administration knew it could not consent to the KDP and PUK keeping their Peshmerga militias while attempting to convince SCIRI and Sadr to disband theirs. This point was more pronounced given that militias were a source of influence and power in Iraq.[562] Thus, there was no compelling incentive to disband them. However, under Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) Order 91, militiamen were to either join the ISF, receive professional training, or retire on pension.[563] SCIRI's Badr militia and the Kurdish Peshmerga militia signed this order. Yet, Sadr's Mahdi Army was excluded from this order after its violent campaign against coalition forces in 2004.[564] Nevertheless, after SCIRI took over the Interior Ministry, many Badr militiamen legally joined while the Kurdish forces rebranded themselves as regional security forces.[565] However, a British Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) assessed that "the loyalty of integrated Badr members remains firmly to their former command structures, many of which remain intact, and that they continue to pursue their own political agendas".[566] This equally applied to the Kurdish Peshmerga as well.[567] The administration appeared unable to address the status of militias given that the recruitment of militiamen was

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[557] Otterman and Lionel 'Iraq: Drafting the Constitution', para. 14; Edward Wong, 'Kurds Vow to Retain Militia as Guardians of Autonomy', *New York Times,* 27 Feb. 2005, https://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/27/world/middleeast/kurds-vow-to-retain-militia-as-guardians-of-autonomy.html, para. 16, accessed 20 Apr. 2020; and Pau L. Bremer III and Malcom McConnell, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), p.275.
[558] The Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.
[559] James Jeffrey, 'Kurds Can't Conceive of Life Without Pesh' [cable], 05BAGHDAD2538_a, 16 June 2005, *WikiLeaks,* https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05BAGHDAD2538_a.html, para. 3, accessed 14 Feb. 2019.
[560] Wong, 'The Struggle for Iraq: Private Armies; Iraqi Militias Resisting U.S Pressure to Disband', para. 25.
[561] Wong, 'Kurds Vow to Retain Militia as Guardians of Autonomy'.
[562] Wong, 'The Struggle for Iraq: Private Armies; Iraqi Militias Resisting U.S Pressure to Disband', para. 24-28.
[563] Phillips, 'Power-Sharing in Iraq', *Council on Foreign Relations*, (6 Apr. 2005), p.3.
[564] 'Iraq: The Problem with Militias' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 23 Aug. 2006, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123123303/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/211265/2006-08-23-jic-assessment-iraq-the-problem-with-militias.pdf, p.3, accessed 21 June. 2020.
[565] Omar al-Nidawi and Michael Knights, 'Militias in Iraq's Security Forces: Historical Context and U.S Options', *Washington Institute for Near East Policy* [website], (22 Feb. 2018), https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/militias-iraqs-security-forces-historical-context-and-us-options, para. 4, accessed 5 Jan. 2019.
[566] 'Iraq: The Problem with Militias' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, p.1.
[567] Ibid. p.3.

technically legal. Moreover, Iraq's interim constitution allowed militias to become regional security forces.[568] The UK Foreign Minister Jack Straw emphasised that this would need to be addressed in a constitutional review.[569] Yet, this never transpired; instead, it was left to fester.[570]

In addition to the threat of a sectarian civil war, the Shia militias also presented a challenge to the Bush administration, given their connection to Iran. SCIRI's Badr militia and the Sadr's Mahdi Army were most concerning. As highlighted, Badr was formed in Iran and trained by Iran's IRGC. Moreover, "despite SCIRI's cooperative disposition" towards the United States after the invasion, it still received substantial funding from Iran.[571] According to Satterfield, in 2005, SCIRI received USD 100 million from Iran, with USD 45 million going to Badr.[572] Satterfield concluded that,

> …as SCIRI and its partners play the game in line with U.S interests, unchecked IRGC-QF and other Iranian patronage ensures that the Shia political spectrum is conclusively dominated by political parties that are at least sympathetic, if not entirely beholden, to their financial benefactors.[573]

However, the most significant aspect was Iran's connection with Sadr's Mahdi Army. In contrast to SCIRI "play[ing] the game in line with U.S. interests", Sadr's Mahdi Army was directly acting against them. Notwithstanding Sadr's involvement in politics, his Mahdi Army continued to sporadically engage with coalition forces, especially with the British in southern Iraq.[574] This was a delicate situation. Sadr was not officially a member of Iraq's parliament but was the overarching leader of the Sadrist political movement, which formed a significant component of Jaafari's governing coalition. Nonetheless, after the 2005 election, Sadr's Mahdi Army continued attacks against U.S. forces, which had begun from the CPA period. These

[568]Nathan Brown, 'The Final Draft of the Iraqi Constitution: Analysis and Commentary', *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* [website], (16 Sep. 2005), https://carnegieendowment.org/files/FinalDraftSept16.pdf, p.14, accessed 3 July 2020 and Thomas S. Mowle, 'Iraq's militia problem', *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 48/3 (2006), para. 14-23, available in Taylor&Francis Online [online database], accessed 30 Mar. 2019.
[569] House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122743/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/the-report/, Vol. 9 Section 4, p.499 accessed 13 Dec. 2020.
[570] Christopher Allbritton, 'Why Iraq's Police Are a Menace', *TIME*, 20 Mar. 2006, http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1175055,00.html, para. 6, accessed 12 July 2020.
[571] Satterfield, 'Building a House on Shifting Sands—Iran's Influence in Iraq's Center-South' [cable], para. 4.
[572] Ibid.
[573] Ibid.
[574] 'Iraq: The State of the Insurgency' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, p.4 and 'Iraq's Muqtada Al-Sadr: Spoiler or Stabiliser?', *International Crisis Group*, p.13.

included IED[575] attacks that Iran supplied.[576] Moreover, according to a JIC assessment, the IRGC continued to train, fund and arm Sadr's militia.[577] This was consistent with the IRGC arming and training other Shia militant groups to conduct attacks against coalition forces.[578] An interrogation report of a former prominent Sadrist, Qais al-Khazali,[579] stated that Iran was using Sadr's militia as well as other Shia militias to bog down U.S. forces and give them a bloody nose.[580]

Despite the Iranian connection to both SCIRI and Sadr, it should be stated that both Badr and the Mahdi Army were not unconditionally loyal to Iran. Jeffrey and Satterfield both argued that often SCIRI's policy and actions "appear to originate from within the party rather than through the invisible hand of Tehran [and] SCIRI's policy decisions are motivated more by an internal political calculus".[581] Additionally, Iran's influence over Sadr was constantly evolving and changing. A JIC assessment concluded that "the exact degree of Iranian involvement and the relationship between al-Sadr and the Iranian regime remain unclear" given Sadr "has publicly taken an anti-Iranian approach and is fiercely nationalistic".[582] Furthermore, Sadr's Mahdi Army frequently fought against Badr dominated ISF units given the rivalry between Sadr and SCIRI.[583] This often prompted IRGC led mediation between Badr and Sadr to negotiate a ceasefire.[584] This disunity indicated that these groups were not "wholly-owned clients" of Iran.[585] Nonetheless, given the Iranian financial and material backing of these groups, they would be "at least sympathetic" or possibly "beholden to their financial benefactors".[586]

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[575] Improvised Explosive Devices were notorious for causing U.S. casualties in Iraq, see Gregg Zoroya, 'How the IED changed the U.S military', *USA TODAY,* 18 Dec. 2013, https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/12/18/ied-10-years-blast-wounds-amputations/3803017/, accessed 4 Aug. 2020.

[576] Lionel Beehner, 'U.S Intervention in Iraqi Politics', *Council on Foreign Relations* [website], (30 Mar. 2006), https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-intervention-iraqi-politics, para. 11. accessed 11 Aug. 2020.

[577] 'Iraq Security: Shia Violence' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 11 Aug. 2004, *The National Archives,* https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20171123123237/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk//media/225269/2004-08-11-jic-assessment-iraq-security-shia-violence.pdf*,* p.*3,* accessed 10 Feb. 2019.

[578] Satterfield, 'Building a House on Shifting Sands—Iran's Influence in Iraq's Center-South' [cable], para. 12-13.

[579] The current leader of Asa'ib Ahl-al Haq an Iraqi militia and political party.

[580] United States. Central Command, 'Qayis al-Khazali Papers: Tactical Interrogation Report Number 47'[report], 4 Apr. 2007, *Homeland Security Department Library,* https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=815597, p.5., accessed 17 May 2020.

[581] Ibid. para. 3.

[582] 'Iraq Security: Shia Violence' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, p.3.

[583] Peter Spiegel, 'Rivalry between Badr and Sadr militias worries UK forces', *Financial Times*, 15 Dec. 2005, https://www.ft.com/content/4ae65a6c-6cc9-11da-90c2-0000779e2340, accessed 20 Sep. 2020 and 'Iraq's Civil War, the Sadrists and the Surge', *International Crisis Group*, (7 Feb. 2008), https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/72-iraq-s-civil-war-the-sadrists-and-the-surge.pdf, accessed 28 Sep. 2020.

[584] Anthony H. Cordesman, 'Sadr and the Mahdi Army: Evolution, Capabilities, and a New Direction', *Center for Strategic and International Studies,* (4 Aug. 2008), https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/media/csis/pubs/080804_jam.pdf, p.2, accessed 28 Nov. 2018.

[585] Suzanne Maloney, 'How the Iraq War Has Empowered Iran', *Brookings Institution* [website], (21 Mar. 2008), https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/how-the-iraq-war-has-empowered-iran/, p.3, accessed 18 Aug. 2021 and Mahjoob Zweiri, 'Iran's Presence in Iraq: New Realities?', 10 May 2007, *Center for Strategic Studies*, University of Jordan, http://www.mzweiri.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/irans-presence-in-iraq-new-realties.pdf, p.5, accessed 4 Apr. 2018.

[586] Satterfield, 'Building a House on Shifting Sands—Iran's Influence in Iraq's Center-South' [cable], para. 4.

Confronting Shia Militias in 2005

The dubious arrangement surrounding the militias placed the Bush administration in an awkward position. Democratic elections had transpired, the allocation of cabinet positions to parties within the governing Shia bloc was legitimate, and militia members were legally joining the ISF. However, the sectarian killings of militias continued to persist into 2005, sparking further retaliation from Sunni insurgents and leading to further instability.[587] Satterfield highlighted this paradox and its consequences for the Bush administration in a lengthy cable. He wrote,

> Despite the relative spirit of democratic cooperation demonstrated by the Shia parties that dominate the governing coalition in Iraq …[there] exists a dark, menacing undercurrent of aggressive IRGC activity inimical to U.S interests in Iraq…The operational thrusts of this campaign are to support financially the dominance of pro-Iranian Shia political parties at the national and provincial levels; consolidate the authority of the Badr militia over the security environment in specific regions of interest; promote an extreme Shia-Islamic social order in the southernmost provinces using intimidation and violence if necessary; and develop the capability to disrupt, through force of arms, the ability for Coalition Forces to master the security situation.[588]

For Satterfield, this was a complex environment given that "the Sunni insurgency, responsible for the preponderance of kinetic attacks, commands the attention of the Coalition, [while] the Shia-dominated regions appear deceptively tranquil".[589] Furthermore, the complexity was pronounced due to SCIRI and Badr pursuing their interests in a tacit and legal way. For example, Satterfield wrote,

> …the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) has tempered the revolutionary agenda and proved accommodating in both its political rhetoric and actions within the [Iraqi Transitional Government] ITG. For example, as anticipated in previous reporting, at the national level, the SCIRI, and more generally the UIA, has eschewed radical moves within the security services. Minister of Interior Bayan Jabr, a SCIRI party member with reportedly strong associations to the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS), has conducted himself like a dedicated, professional technocrat. Though accusations have been leveled at him for purging Sunni officials from the ministry, it can be argued that these actions served to streamline the institution rather than effect any sectarian vendetta.[590]

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[587] 'Iraq: Outreach to Sunni Arabs' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 14 July 2005, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123123544/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/195133/2005-07-14-jic-assessment-iraq-outreach-to-sunni-arabs.pdf, accessed 10 May 2019.

[588] Satterfield, 'Building a House on Shifting Sands—Iran's Influence in Iraq's Center-South' [cable], para. 1.

[589] Ibid.

[590] Ibid. para. 2.

Yet, Satterfield reinforced that behind this benign appearance, SCIRI and Badr were consolidating "the authority of the Badr militia over the security environment in specific regions of interest".[591]

The United States struggled to deal with this militia infiltration and sectarian killings. On the ground, U.S. field commanders were alerting their superiors of the sectarian killings and arbitrary arrests amongst the Sunni population. Moreover, they intervened in numerous cases. For example, General Petraeus confronted Minister of Interior Bayan Jabr on the killings, who downplayed them as Sunni insurgency propaganda.[592] Also, Satterfield approached Jabr, who continued to deny the accusations against the Wolf Brigade and stated they were "the most effective of the special police forces".[593] Other commanders directly intervened by preventing militias from carrying out arbitrary detentions of the Sunni population.[594] According to the U.S. Army's official account, in-depth study of the army's experience in Iraq, the military's focus on the Sunni insurgency in the west of Iraq reduced its ability to comprehend and engage with the polarising developments from the Shia bloc.[595] Furthermore, there appeared little prospect of gaining support from Jabr or Jaafari himself to confront the militias and their activities which were destabilising Iraq. Satterfield assessed that although Jabr is a "politically astute and a skilled technocrat…it is unclear to what degree his decisions are influenced by SCIRI, particularly its leader Hakim".[596]

Despite Iraq's dependence on the United States, Prime Minister Jaafari placated the interests of SCIRI and the Sadrists at the expense of U.S. objectives. This dependence was exemplified in July 2005 when the Bush administration undertook a strategic review. Jaafari feared that the administration would begin withdrawing troops and continued to appeal for the troops to remain given the declining security conditions and increased violence.[597] The administration

[591] Ibid. para. 1 and 5-7.
[592] John F. Burns, 'Torture Alleged at Ministry Site Outside Baghdad', *New York Times*, 16 Nov. 2005, https://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/16/world/middleeast/torture-alleged-at-ministry-site-outside-baghdad.html?searchResultPosition=1, accessed 10 Oct. 2020.
[593] David M. Satterfield, ' July 2 Meeting of Charge MNF-I CG With Iraqi Interior Minister' [cable], 05BAGHDAD2955_a, 15 July 2005, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05BAGHDAD2955_a.html, para. 5, accessed 11 Feb. 2019.
[594] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.312.
[595] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S Army In The Iraq War Volume 1: Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War, 2003-2006*, p.468.
[596] David M. Satterfield, 'Assessment of Iraq's Minister of Interior After One Month' [cable], 05BAGHDAD2376_a, 2 June 2005, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05BAGHDAD2376_a.html, para. 7, accessed 16 Feb. 2019.
[597] John Reid, 'Operational Transition in Iraq' [letter], 18 July 2005, *The National Archives,* https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122339/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/195401/2005-07-18-letter-reid-to-powell-operational-transition-in-iraq-attaching-operational-transition-in-iraq-paper-by-secretary-of-state-for-defence.pdf, p.8, accessed 7 Oct. 2020.

and UK Defence Secretary, John Reid, had to reassure Jaafari that they were staying.[598] Nonetheless, Jaafari undermined U.S. interests by his support for SCIRI and the Sadrist movement. On 5 June 2005, Jaafari and the Kurdish President Jalal Talabani, with the leader of SCIRI, Sayyed Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, gathered to celebrate the anniversary of the founding of the Badr.[599] Talabani stated, "the heroes of Badr and their Kurdish brothers",[600] the Peshmerga, "are wanted and are important to fulfilling this sacred task, to establishing a democratic, federal and independent Iraq".[601] Moreover, al-Hakim stated Badr is "a patriotic group that works for Iraq's interest and it will not be dragged into sectarian or any other kind of struggle".[602] Additionally, Jaafari claimed that Badr was the "shield protecting Iraq".[603] When confronted on these statements about militias, the State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said, "American officials no longer played a role in determining the policy on militias …[and]… that I have to emphasise this is an Iraqi issue that they will decide and that they will deal with".[604]

Jaafari further exemplified defiance to U.S. preferences surrounding militias. Jaafari and Jabr created new "public order battalions" that enlisted several thousand of recruits.[605] According to the U.S. Army's official account[606], U.S. commanders took this initiative at "face value", believing it was an attempt to improve the immediate security conditions.[607] However, they concluded it was an attempt to recruit more Shia militia members outside of U.S. supervision.[608] Furthermore, Jaafari acted as a roadblock to the United States when it wanted to confront Sadr's Mahdi Army which was still conducting attacks against coalition forces. Jaafari was uncooperative and prevented the United States from targeting Sadr's forces. At his senate testimony, Casey expressed his frustration with Jaafari. He stated,

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[598] Ibid.
[599] Edward Wong, 'Iraq's top leaders voice approval of Kurdish, Shiite militias / Support rankles Sunnis who blame them for killings', *SFGate*, 9 June 2005, https://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Iraq-s-top-leaders-voice-approval-of-Kurdish-2663719.php, para. 3, accessed 3 Aug. 2020.
[600] Qassim Abdul-Zahra, 'Iraq's Kurdish president backs Shiite militia as insurgents press campaign against government', *Boston Globe*, 6 Aug. 2005, http://archive.boston.com/dailynews/159/world/Iraq_s_Kurdish_president_backs:.shtml, para. 5, accessed 3 May 2020.
[601] Wong, 'Iraq's top leaders voice approval of Kurdish, Shiite militias / Support rankles Sunnis who blame them for killings', para. 13.
[602] Jonathan Finer and Naseer Nouri, 'Sectarian Divide Widens on Iraq's Constitutional Panel', *Washington Post*, 9 June 2005, A 13., in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 5 Aug. 2020.
[603] Ibid.
[604] Wong, 'Iraq's top leaders voice approval of Kurdish, Shiite militias / Support rankles Sunnis who blame them for killings', para. 4-5.
[605] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S Army In The Iraq War Volume 1: Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War, 2003-2006*, p.468.
[606] MNF-I Commander, Raymond Odierno, commissioned a study of United States Army's experience in Iraq to reflect and learn on the lessons from Iraq. This manifested into two volumes of work. See Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S Army In The Iraq War Volume 1: Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War, 2003-2006,* p.xxvii.
official in-depth account of this period commissioned by MNF-I Commander General Raymond Odierno
[607] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S Army In The Iraq War Volume 1: Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War, 2003-2006,* p.468.
[608] Ibid.

> I do not ever recall him asking me to take any action, particularly a military strike against militia, that government was an impediment to our action against the militia. He was working very hard on the political side of things to keep the Sadrists under control. But frankly, I went to him with a group several times to get him to take action and allow us to take military action against the militia, and was denied.[609]

Furthermore, after a raid on Sadr's forces, Jaafari organised a meeting with the new U.S. ambassador, Zalmay Khalilzad,[610] and UK ambassador William Patey to condemn the operation.[611] Moreover, according to *The International Crisis Group,* Jaafari attempted to protect Sadr from an investigation into the 2003 killing of Abdul Majid al-Khoei, a Shia cleric supportive of the coalition. They claimed that Jaafari tried to destroy evidence that implicated Sadr's responsibility for the 2003 assassination.[612]

Although these accounts may portray Jaafari as a sectarian actor, Jaafari's actions towards Sadr can be attributed to the Shia bloc influencing Jaafari's preference. As a result of the growing influence of SCIRI and its Badr militia, highlighted in Satterfield's cables, Jaafari began to further develop his political alliance with Sadr to counter SCIRI.[613] As mentioned, Jaafari was from the Dawa party, which paled in size and power in contrast to SCIRI and the Sadrists.[614] Therefore, Jaafari's preference was to maintain and strengthen his alliance with Sadr and thus frustrate U.S. efforts to pursue Sadr's Mahdi Army. However, Jaafari supported other aspects of the Bush administration's political reconciliation objectives. Casey and Jaafari often met with the heads of Iraq's largest Sunni tribes. This included discussions on prisoner release, central government aid, and potential reconciliation with Sunni insurgents, which would see them incorporated into Iraq's police and army.[615] Moreover, Jaafari promised to release more Sunni prisoners and increase the recruitment of Sunni personnel in the armed forces.[616] Furthermore, Casey commended Jaafari's ability to reach out to the Sunni

[609] United States Senate Committee on Armed Services, *Nominations Before the Senate Armed Services Committee* (2007), https://irp.fas.org/congress/2007_hr/sasc.pdf, p.204, accessed 4 Feb. 2019.
[610] Khalilzad replaced John Negroponte as ambassador in June 2005.
[611] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.184.
[612] 'Iraq's Muqtada Al-Sadr: Spoiler or Stabiliser?', *International Crisis Group*, p.15 and Ian Black, 'Shia cleric backed by Washington murdered', *Guardian*, 11 Apr. 2003, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/apr/11/iraq.ianblack, accessed 17 June 2020.
[613] 'Iraq's Muqtada Al-Sadr: Spoiler or Stabiliser?', *International Crisis Group*, p.15.
[614] 'Shiite Politics in Iraq: The Role of the Supreme Council', *International Crisis Group*, pp.11-12.
[615] Anthony Cordesman, 'Iraq's Evolving Insurgency and the Risk of Civil War', *Center for Strategic and International Studies,* (26 Apr. 2006), https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/1B26E4C64879415AC125715D002C49E3-csis-irq-26apr.pdf, p.192, accessed 5 Dec. 2018 and Casey, Jr., *Strategic Reflections: Operation Iraqi Freedom July 2004–February 2007*, pp.84-86.
[616] Cordesman, 'Iraq's Evolving Insurgency and the Risk of Civil War', p.192.

population.[617] Nonetheless, when it came to addressing the primary driver of instability in Iraq, Shia militias and their sectarian activities, Jaafari would not act against the interests of the Shia bloc.

Overall, the U.S. embassy and military commanders were hamstrung when confronted with the development of the Shia bloc and its militias. Coalition forces were predominantly preoccupied with the al-Qaeda led insurgency and neglected the polarising effect of Shia militias.[618] They also relied on Iraqi Security Forces, dominated by Shia militias, to support the fight against the insurgency.[619] Moreover, there appeared to be no tangible way to influence Jaafari's preferences to become supportive of U.S. objectives towards militias and stabilising Iraq. There were incidents when General Casey was able to persuade Jaafari from undertaking destabilising behaviour such as purging senior Sunni defence personnel and replacing them with Shia members.[620] Yet, these were last-minute interventions. It was "the fact that Ja'afari had attempted the move" against U.S. objectives that was most concerning.[621] Other episodes narrated in the U.S. Army's official account illustrates this environment facing the U.S.-led coalition. To prevent further sectarian killings, one U.S. commander threatened specific militia-dominated police units and "promised them we would kill them from their leader on down if they came across their [territory] boundary" and conducted sectarian activities.[622] Nonetheless, this hostile environment was fast eroding the Bush administration's goals.

Hands-off the Bicycle

In Washington, the administration was aware of these sectarian killings and comprehended its damaging effect on its stability goals. The Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, passed reports of the militia activity to President Bush yet appeared comfortable with the current military approach to Iraq.[623] Despite this awareness of militia activity, the Bush administration could not influence Jaafari's government to halt this polarising behaviour from the militias within ISF. There appeared to be no immediate influence attempts by the Bush administration to stop these militia activities. This lack of engagement seemed to be a consequence of the dominance of Rumsfeld's avoid dependency approach and ongoing division within the Bush administration. This division stemmed from diverging strategies and goals between the State

[617] 'George Casey Oral History', *Miller Center,* p.71.
[618] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S Army In The Iraq War Volume 1: Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War, 2003-2006*, p.468.
[619] Lionel Beehner, 'Shiite Militias and Iraq's Security Forces', *Council on Foreign Relations* [website], (2 May 2005), https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/shiite-militias-and-iraqs-security-forces, para. 3, accessed 19 Aug. 2018.
[620] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S Army In The Iraq War Volume 1: Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War, 2003-2006*, p.496.
[621] Ibid.
[622] Ibid. p.497.
[623] Ibid. p.498.

Department and the Department of Defense, which persisted since the pre-war planning. Nonetheless, given that the Department of Defense was the lead agency in Iraq, Rumsfeld continued his avoiding "dependency syndrome" attitude and remained fixated on reducing Iraq's dependence on the United States.[624]

Rumsfeld argued that Iraqis should be solving their political and sectarian problems by themselves. Thus, he continued this hands-off approach despite Iraq's leadership directly undermining his and the administration's objectives of stability and withdrawal. In his autobiography, the chapter covering the Jaafari period is titled "hands-off the bicycle", continuing the theme of avoiding dependency. In this chapter, Rumsfeld further articulates that "ultimately we knew that we couldn't succeed for them" and if "Iraqis didn't stop [the] insurgents" and overcome the sectarian problem, they "were doomed to live in a destroyed, violence engulfed country".[625] Woodward further stipulates that "Rumsfeld said strongly and repeatedly, that Iraqis need to be given the chance to fall on their faces, and only then would they pick themselves up, dust themselves off and come up with a solution".[626] This attitude is corroborated by Jeffrey, who stated that Rumsfeld continued to emphasise that Iraqi forces should be dealing with the al-Qaeda led Sunni insurgency and protecting infrastructure from insurgent attacks.[627] Jeffrey defined this as Rumsfeld's "exit strategy" for U.S. troops to get out of Iraq.[628] Yet, he did not address the sectarian killings.[629]

To implement this desired exit strategy, Rumsfeld, Casey and General John Abizaid remained fixated on recruiting the numbers the Pentagon desired for the ISF while temporarily taming the insurgency. Rumsfeld summarised this logic by stating,

> We're not going to win against the insurgency. The Iraqi people are going to win against the insurgency. That insurgency could go on for any number of years. Insurgencies tend to go on five, six, eight, 10, 12 years.[630]

[624] Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir*, (U.SA.: Penguin Group, 2011), p.679.
[625] Ibid. p.466.
[626] Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, p.393.
[627] 'Jeffrey, James-Surge Interview', *Center For Presidential History*, SMU, (17 Aug. 2015), https://www.smu.edu/-/media/Site/Dedman/Academics/InstitutesCenters/CPH/Collective-Memory-Project/The-Surge/Jeffrey-Jim--FINAL--20199.pdf?la=en, pp. 7-18, accessed 4 Mar. 2019.
[628] Ibid.
[629] Ibid.
[630] Julian Borger, 'Iraq insurgency could last a decade, admits Rumsfeld', *Guardian,* 27 June 2005, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/jun/27/usa.iraq, para. 5, accessed 1 July 2020.

Nevertheless, the emphasis on boosting numbers in the ISF led to the continual recruitment of Shia militia members and other poorly trained and unvetted personnel.[631] Gates stated that the Defense Department was "wedded to this transfer-of-security strategy".[632] Hence, for Rumsfeld, there was no genuine attempt at addressing the fundamental cause of the violence in Iraq: the politicisation of the ISF by the Shia bloc and its sectarian activities. Instead, according to Woodward, Rumsfeld believed that it was the State Department's responsibility to address any issue with Iraq's politics and governance while the Department of Defense focused on combatting the insurgency and training the army.

This was problematic for several reasons. First, the Department of Defense still consisted of the bulk of the U.S. presence in Iraq compared to the State Department. Moreover, military objectives could not be completely segregated from political goals given they were entwined. Furthermore, the State Department, under Rice, did not share this sense of responsibility that Rumsfeld attributed to her department. The State Department's official view was that security came first, then politics and the economy would prosper.[633] Additionally, there was a deliberately low level of State Department personnel in Iraq given the abysmal security conditions.[634] Thus, there was a lack of engagement with State personnel and Iraq's government, and it is clear that the political and military goals at this time were not synchronised and jointly pursued. Instead, security was prioritised. However, this entailed concentrating on combatting the insurgency and not addressing its causes: bad governance and militia infiltration in the security forces.

Although this appears to be a simplification of the conflicting attitudes of both the State Department and Departments of Defense, it is corroborated by many sources. Casey writes that "building the One Team was equally challenging. The old adage that Defense is from Mars and State is from Venus just scratches the surface".[635] Additionally, Abizaid stated in an interview that both governance and military policies were "never properly synchronized" and emphasised that the attempts at political reform from the administration were not prioritised as "they believe it [wouldn't] happen until security happens".[636] Moreover, General Raymond

[631] 'Interview Gen. David Petraeus', *Frontline* [website], (11 Oct. 2006), https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gangsofiraq/interviews/petraeus.html, para. 16-20, accessed 15 May 2020 and Khalil, 'Rebuilding and Reforming the Iraqi Security Sector: U.S Policy During Democratic Transition', p.13.
[632] 'Robert Gates Oral History' *Miller Center* [website], University of Virginia, 9 July 2013, http://web1.millercenter.org/poh/transcripts/gates_robert_2013_0709.pdf, p.32, accessed 10 Jan 2019.
[633] 'Rice, Condoleezza- Surge Interview', *CENTER FOR PRESIDENTIAL HISTORY,* SMU, 20 July 2015, https://www.smu.edu/-/media/Site/Dedman/Academics/InstitutesCenters/CPH/Collective-Memory-Project/The-Surge/Rice-Condoleezza--FINAL--20199.pdf?la=en, p.7, accessed 11 Feb. 2020.
[634]Ibid. p.21 and David E. Johnson et al., *The U.S Army and the Battle for Baghdad: Lessons Learned — And Still to Be Learned*, (Santa Monica, Calif, Rand Corporation, 2019), pp.126-127.
[635] Casey, Jr., *Strategic Reflections: Operation Iraqi Freedom July 2004–February 2007*, p.158.
[636] 'An Exit Interview with General John P. Abizaid', *U.S Army Military History Institute*, p.33.

Odierno, commander of the Multi-National Corps Iraq in 2007, stated that focusing "on security first was a mistake" as a result of wanting "to get out of there [Iraq] as quickly as possible".[637] Also, he argued that there was misjudgement trying to make the political objectives "completely separate from the security element".[638] Finally, in an interview, the Secretary of Defense proceeding Rumsfeld, Robert Gates, surprised the interviewers when he outlined this division between the State Department and Defense. According to Gates, the State Department's argument "was fundamentally that you cannot transfer [the responsibilities of governance] until security has improved. The military was arguing transfer and then security will improve. But in fact, as they were transferring, security was getting worse".[639] This reflected Rumsfeld's attitude that "if we give too much more to the Iraqis they're not going to stand up and do things for themselves".[640]

Rumsfeld's closest subordinates admit that by 2006 there were strong suspicions that Rumsfeld was following his desired objectives for Iraq, not Bush's. In an interview, Casey recalls a conversation he had with Bush in June 2006, where he felt Bush determined that "Rumsfeld wasn't passing on the direction he was given".[641] Phillip Zelikow, Rice's advisor, captures this perception of Rumsfeld and traces it back to Rumsfeld's objective in the pre-war planning. Additionally, he attempts to project a defence for Rumsfeld by accounting for the administration's incoherent strategy and diverging goals. He stated in an interview,

> …in 90 percent of the literature the way this is written up is, What an idiot Rumsfeld is. He wants this limited force, and you obviously need a much larger force in order to properly occupy the country. So it looks like Rumsfeld is this incredible fool for being so grossly negligent…. Well, maybe he's negligent in some other ways, but of course he had just the force he wanted to do the mission he thought should be carried out. The mission he thought should be carried out is you knock the guy over and then you leave. You do not occupy the country. So of course he's not going to put the force in to occupy the country because he doesn't think we should occupy the country. He's scared to death that if he acts like he might want to occupy the country, someone will tell him to do it. It turns out that even though he didn't prepare to occupy the country, the President ended up telling him to do it anyway.[642]

Nonetheless, this division within the administration, which emerged from the pre-war planning period and after the invasion, continued to plague the administration. As a consequence of

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[637] 'Iraq Reconsidered: Ten Years after the Surge', *Council on Foreign Relations* [website], (2017), https://www.cfr.org/event/iraq-reconsidered-ten-years-after-surge, para. 45, accessed 12 Nov. 2020.
[638] Ibid. para. 35.
[639] 'Robert Gates Oral History' *Miller Center,* p.33
[640] Ibid.
[641] 'George Casey Oral History', *Miller Center,* p.85.
[642] 'Philip Zelikow Oral History Part II', *Miller Center* [website], University of Virginia, 4 Oct. 2010, https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/philip-zelikow-oral-history-part-ii, para. 702, accessed 12 Jan 2020.

this divergent strategy and Rumsfeld's prioritisation of avoiding dependency and withdrawing, there was no coherent strategy to deal with Iraq's leadership that was undermining U.S. objectives. Hence, there were limited attempts by the administration to influence Jaafari and Iraq's leadership to change its destabilising behaviour.

Clear, Hold and Build, October 2005

Violence and instability increased throughout the remainder of 2005 as a result of the insurgency and militia violence. This prompted a change to the administration's strategy. Commentators warned that the increase of sectarian tensions and killings would lead to a civil war. This was exacerbated by the discovery of the Jadriya detention facility in November 2005. Coalition forces discovered a secret bunker run by Badr units from the Interior Ministry with 173 illegally detained prisoners.[643] Most of the prisoners were predominantly Sunni and were tortured and starved.[644] Consequently, Rice realised "she needed to move out of her lane" and into Rumsfeld's, recognising that continuing the status quo of the current policy was unacceptable.[645] In February 2005, Rice sent Phillip Zelikow, her advisor,[646] to Iraq to assess the progress of the administration's objectives in Iraq.[647] Moreover, after he was appointed ambassador to Iraq in June 2005, Zalmay Khalilzad commissioned a review of the U.S. strategy in Iraq.[648] This was undertaken by a team consisting of both civilians and military personnel.[649] The review's findings were bleak. It highlighted that the insurgency was not significantly degraded. Moreover, the training of the police and soldiers was behind schedule, with the quality of training doubted.[650] Yet, the main finding was the coalition was "in danger of strategic failure in Iraq, with the situation degenerating into civil war or even victory for the terrorists".[651] Additionally, it recommended that a new strategy was needed that did not repeat Rumsfeld's "laissez faire approach".[652]

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[643] 'Frontline police of new Iraq are waging secret war of vengeance', *Guardian*, 20 Nov. 2005, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/nov/20/iraq.theobserver, para. 4, accessed 18 June 2020.
[644] Ibid.
[645] Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, p.411.
[646] Zelikow's official title was counsellor to the Secretary of State.
[647] Robin Wright and Glenn Kessler, 'Rice Sends Team to Assess Iraq Transition', *Washington Post*, 15 Feb. 2005, A. 14., in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 20 Aug. 2020 and 'Philip Zelikow Oral History Part II', *Miller Center, University of Virginia,* 4 Oct. 2010.
[648] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.159.
[649] Ibid.
[650] 'Philip Zelikow Oral History Part II', *Miller Center,* and Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.160.
[651] Jonathan Powell, 'Iraq: Strategy' [minute], *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122547/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/195381/2005-09-21-minute-powell-to-prime-minister-iraq-strategy.pdf, p.1, accessed 5 Sep. 2020.
[652] Nigel Sheinwald, 'Iraq: UK strategy' [minute], 19 Sep. 2005 *The National Archives,* https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122227/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/195165/2005-09-19-minute-sheinwald-to-prime-minister-iraq-uk-strategy.pdf, p.3, accessed 15 Aug. 2019.

Zelikow got hold of the report and, after another trip to Iraq in September 2005, summarised his findings to Rice.[653] Both the report and Zelikow's assessment recommended that the administration needed a new strategy as it was failing to reach its goals in Iraq.[654] According to Zelikow, Iraq was "a failed state nearing to a civil war".[655] This convinced Rice that Rumsfeld's avoid-dependency policy was undermining U.S. objectives. She realised that by not engaging with Iraq's leadership to influence its behaviour and policies, there would be further deterioration of U.S. goals. She challenged Rumsfeld's strategy in an interview with Woodward stating, "I think it is true that people will hold on to dependencies as long as they can…but it's also true that if you take the hand off the bicycle and it goes over a ravine that's not a very good thing either".[656] With further consultation with Zelikow and General Ray Odierno, she championed a new strategy that would synthesise the political and military objectives together.[657]

Rice outlined this new strategy in her Senate testimony of October 2005. It was simply defined as clear, hold, build. This entailed meeting the military objectives of "clear[ing] areas from insurgent control [and] to hold them securely" as well as the political goals of building "durable, national Iraqi institutions".[658] Speaking to the Shia bloc, Rice stated that these institutions were not to become "tools of a particular sect or ethnic group".[659] Thus, both political and military goals were to be synchronised. Rice received backlash from Rumsfeld and Casey, who appeared unhappy that Rice "was out of [her] lane".[660] Casey stated, "clear and hold are military functions [and] I don't like the State Department talking about military doctrine".[661] Additionally, Rumsfeld discredited the strategy stating that "clear, we're doing" but "it's up to the Iraqis to hold".[662] He did not support the direction of Rice's policy as he stated to Woodward that it was "grabbing a hold the bicycle seat and holding on for dear life".[663] In a press conference, Rumsfeld hastily responded to a question about the policy and stated,

> Anyone who takes those three words [clear, hold, build] and thinks it means the United States should clear and the United States should hold and the United States should build doesn't understand the situation. It is the Iraqis' country.

[653] 'Philip Zelikow Oral History Part II', *Miller Center.*
[654] Ibid.
[655] Ibid.
[656] Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, p.415.
[657] Rice, *No Higher Honour: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*, pp.370-371.
[658] Condoleezza Rice, 'Iraq and U.S Policy', *Senate Committee on Foreign Relations*, (19 Oct. 2005), https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/RiceTestimony051019.pdf, p.1 and 4, accessed 7 May 2020.
[659] Ibid.
[660] Rice, *No Higher Honour: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*, p.373.
[661] Ibid.
[662] Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, p.422.
[663] Ibid. p.418.

> They've got 28 million people there. They are clearing, they are holding, they are building.[664]

Despite Rumsfeld's protests, Bush was sold on the clear, hold, build strategy and authorised it in the unveiling of the National Strategy for Victory in Iraq.[665] The new strategy would entail more engagement with the Iraq's leadership to overcome the sectarianism as well as the militia problem.[666] According to Woodward, Zelikow told Rice that they should try to "make 2006 a turning point year, setting the new government that will win or lose the war on a positive path".[667] Yet, they would need a new leader who would be compliant with the administration's objectives. Thus, Jaafari had to go.[668] The incident of the Jadriya bunker and the limited response from both Jaafari and Jabr was the tipping point. Although Jaafari said an investigation into the incident would be launched, he downplayed the event.[669] He stated that there were "signs of malnourishment" and "there was some talk that they had been tortured".[670] Moreover, Jabr was equally understated in his response by stating that reporting on the incident was "inaccurate" and "only a handful of prisoners had been beaten".[671]

Seeking a New Leader

Fortunately for the Bush administration, Jaafari's government was only a one-year transitional government with elections in December 2005. Hence, there was an opportunity to remove undesirable characters such as Jaafari and Jabr and install favourable candidates for the administration.[672] If the Bush administration were able to facilitate someone more favourable to the top leadership position, it could possibly reduce the severity of the mutual dependence. A pro-U.S. leader who shared similar objectives to the Bush administration would require fewer influence attempts. Moreover, they might take a stance against the Shia bloc's militias. The

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[664] Stephen B. Dyson, 'George W. Bush, the Surge, and Presidential Leadership', *Political Science Quarterly*, 125/4 (2011), p.563.
[665] Rice, *No Higher Honour: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*, p.304 and Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, p.458.
[666] 'National Strategy for Victory in Iraq', *National Security Council,* Nov. 2005, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/14460/iraq_national_strategy_20051130.pdf, pp.13-15 accessed 15 Jan. 2019.
[667] Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, p.414.
[668] Rice, *No Higher Honour: A Memoir of My Years in Washington,* p.431.
[669] Steve Negus, 'Sunni leaders demand Iraq torture probe', *Financial Times*, 16 Nov. 2005, in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 8 Sep. 2020.
[670] John F. Burns, 'Torture Alleged at Ministry Site Outside Baghdad', *New York Times*, 16 Nov. 2005, https://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/16/world/middleeast/torture-alleged-at-ministry-site-outside-baghdad.html?searchResultPosition=1, para. 10, accessed 10 Oct. 2020.
[671] 'Iraqi minister plays down bunker torture reports', *Guardian*, 18 Nov. 2005, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/nov/17/iraq.usa1, para. 9-10 accessed 3 Sep. 2020 and 'Iraq minister rejects torture claims', *Al-Jazeera*, 17 Nov. 2005, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2005/11/17/iraq-minister-rejects-torture-claims, para. 5-7 accessed 4 Sep. 2020.
[672] Sheinwald, 'Iraq: UK strategy', p.3.

British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, described the elections as a "one off opportunity to deliver" the government the United States desired.[673] This would entail a "strong [and] moderate government" to get the "police training strategy right" and allow for a "draw down" of coalition forces.[674] Furthermore, it was a chance to form a national unity government that would include the Sunni population.[675] According to Gordon and Trainor, some in the State Department wanted to repeat the previous policy of the 2005 January election and conduct a funding campaign for desirable candidates such as Iyad Allawi.[676] Yet, this was not approved by Bush.[677] Echoing Bush's democratic aspirations, Blair and Bush agreed in principle to not influence the selection of a new government.[678] Instead, they ambiguously decided to "shape" how the new government would address specific issues.[679] However, Blair did instruct his cabinet to help the desired candidate, Iyad Allawi, "behind-the-scenes".[680]

Notwithstanding Bush's ambiguous policy, the administration hoped to assist Iyad Allawi to form a governing coalition.[681] Even Blair's cabinet thought Allawi was the only good option and that it should be their policy to "buttress him…in the centre of Iraqi politics" and provide funding and advice for his campaign.[682] This repeated the same strategy it employed in the previous January election. Allawi was the preferred candidate, given he was both Shiite and secular. Moreover, his party was inclusive of both Shiites and Sunnis, including former Baathists.[683] Additionally, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, he held a strong affinity for the United States and, throughout his tenure as interim prime minister, was very supportive of U.S. preferences. Given this affinity and the importance of Sunni representation for the administration, he was undoubtedly the favoured candidate. Allawi established a six-list party, the Iraqi National List, led by his INA to run in the upcoming elections.[684] Also, he attempted to break some parties away from the existing governing United Iraq Alliance to join a coalition

[673] House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), Vol. 9 Section 4, p.537.
[674] Ibid.
[675] Ibid. p 574.
[676] Sheinwald, 'Iraq: UK strategy', p.4 and Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.183.
[677] Notably this was Tom Warrick who was the leading figure in the administration's funding initiative for Allawi's campaign in the previous election, see Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.183.
[678] House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), Vol. 9 Section 3, p.475.
[679] Ibid.
[680] Tony Blair, [note], 2 Oct. 2005, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123123129/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/195185/2005-10-02-note-blair-note.pdf, p.2, accessed 11 Oct. 2020.
[681] Sheinwald, 'Iraq: UK strategy', p.4.
[682] Ibid. p.3 .
[683] House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), Vol. 9 Section 3, p.447.
[684] Kenneth Katzman, 'Iraq: Government Formation and Benchmarks', *Congressional Research Service,* (25 Oct. 2007), https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=713131, p.2, accessed 12 Feb. 2020.

with him.[685] Furthermore, in the lead up to the election, Ambassador Khalilzad convinced the two Kurdish parties, PUK and KDP, to form a governing coalition with Allawi if he could muster enough seats in the parliament.[686]

The results of the December 2005 election, however, were a crushing blow for the Bush administration's plan. The election results were similar to the January election. The United Iraq Alliance (UIA) – mainly consisting of SCIRI, Dawa and the Sadrists – won the most seats, 128. Yet, unlike the previous election, this was not an outright majority that required 138 seats. The UIA lost 12 seats from the previous election. Interestingly, Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani did not endorse the UIA as he did in the last election.[687] Nevertheless, Allawi's election result was dismal. In contrast to the UIA, Allawi's Iraqi National List won 25 seats. He was able to form a bloc with the Tawafuq – a coalition of Sunni political parties – yet this only consisted of 80 seats in total.[688] Thus, there was no prospect for him to secure a governing majority. Furthermore, Jaafari claimed he would remain as prime minister.[689] Hence, given the disastrous outcome for the Bush administration's strategy, it refined its objectives to incorporate Allawi's bloc and the Sunni political parties into a partnership with the dominant Shia UIA coalition.[690] This would meet U.S. goals of getting more Sunni representation in government to remedy the absence that existed since the Sunni boycott of the January 2005 election. Also, if Allawi was in the governing coalition, he might secure a cabinet position such as the Ministry of Interior, which would assist U.S. objectives and be a potential avenue for U.S. influence.[691]

In an attempt to avoid a similar outcome to the previous January 2005 election – a governing coalition dominated by the Shia United Iraq Alliance – Ambassador Khalilzad secured an additional agreement with the Kurdish KDP and PUK parties.[692] They would not support any

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[685] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama, p.*184.
[686] Ibid.
[687] Edward Wong, 'Allawi Tries to Regain Office With a Non-Theocratic Bloc', *New York Times*, 31 Oct. 2005, https://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/31/world/middleeast/allawi-tries-to-regain-office-with-a-nontheocratic-bloc.html, para. 25, accessed 3 Oct. 2020.
[688] Robert Worth, 'Iraqi prime minister to remain in top post Shiite leaders throw support to Jaafari', *New York Times*, 13 Feb. 2006, in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 5 Aug. 2020.
[689] Richard H. Reid, 'Embattled Iraqi vows to seek 2nd term', *Deseret News*, 7 Apr. 2006, A4., in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 5 Sep. 2020.
[690] Zalmay Khalilzad, 'Preliminary Results Point to Big Shia Alliance Victory; Allawi Faring Poorly' [cable], 05BAGHDAD5065_a, 25 Dec. 2005, *WikiLeaks,* https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05BAGHDAD5065_a.html, accessed 12 Oct. 2019.
[691] David Quarrey, 'Iraq' [letter], 23 Dec. 2005, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123123457/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/243901/2005-12-23-note-blair-to-bush-undated-iraq.pdf, p.1, accessed 13 Oct. 2020 and Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* pp.184-185.
[692] Khalilzad, 'Preliminary Results Point to Big Shia Alliance Victory; Allawi Faring Poorly' [cable], para. 4 and 6.

coalition unless there was substantial Sunni representation.[693] This was the administration's attempted leverage over the Shia bloc as they required the KDP and PUK to form a governing coalition akin to the January 2005 election. Additionally, the United Iraqi Alliance needed the support of two-thirds of parliamentary representatives to have the ability to appoint their candidate as prime minister.[694] Thus, they required the support of the Kurdish parties to do this.[695] The KDP and PUK kept this agreement. Throughout 2005, they had developed a distaste for Jaafari. They claimed he did not implement Shia-Kurdish agreements especially on sensitive issues such as the territorial status of Kirkuk.[696] They repeatedly stated that they would not join the coalition unless Jaafari stepped down as prime minister.[697] This sparked a fierce deadlock. Jaafari had become increasingly unpopular with SCIRI, who saw him as too close to their rival, the Sadrists.[698] Interestingly, it is reported that even Iran saw Jaafari as a liability. Although Iran wanted to see the United States bogged down in Iraq, it did not want a civil war on its borders.[699] On the other hand, due to his alliance with Sadr, the Sadrists threw their support behind Jaafari to remain as prime minister.[700] Nonetheless, the United Iraqi Alliance did a ballot vote to nominate the prime minister that Jaafari won by one vote as a result of the Sadrists.[701] Thus, Jaafari remained adamant he would continue to be prime minister. Additionally, a Sadrist spokesperson warned that there would be a civil war amongst the Shia if Jaafari did not remain as prime minister.[702]

Amidst this political deadlock, the bombing of the sacred Shia al-Askari Mosque in Samarra occurred on 22 February 2006, marking the starting point of the civil war in Iraq.[703] The attack, conducted by al-Qaeda in Iraq, sparked an unprecedented wave of killings. Alarmingly, within

[693] Ibid. para. 1 and House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), Vol. 9 Section 4, p.82.
[694] 'Shias win Iraqi election', *Guardian,* 14 Feb. 2005, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/feb/13/iraq, para. 4, accessed 11 Oct. 2020.
[695] Ibid.
[696] Richard H. Reid, 'Breakthrough comes in Iraqi politics: Al-Jaafari says he'll quit post to end impasse', *Charleston Gazette*, 21 Apr. 2006, 2A, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 7 Oct. 2020 and 'More pain, no gain; Iraq', *Economist,* 378/8469 (2006), para. 5-7, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 10 Oct. 2020.
[697] Kenneth Katzman, 'Iraq: Government Formation and Benchmarks', *Congressional Research Service,* (14 Jan. 2008), https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20080114_RS21968_422270c8504c9525d65ebc5a1e9fce29a7f25baa.pdf, p.3, accessed 15 Dec. 2019 *and* 'More pain, no gain; Iraq', *Economist,* 378/8469 (2006), para. 5-7.
[698] Lionel Beehner, 'Q&A: Iraq: What Happens Now in Iraq?', *New York Times*, 21 Dec. 2005, https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/cfr/international/slot1_122105.html?pagewanted=1, para. 4, accessed 12 Oct. 2020.
[699] House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122743/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/the-report/, Vol. 9 Section 5, p.15, accessed 13 Dec. 2020.
[700] 'Iraq: Muqtada Al Sadr' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 16 Mar. 2006, *The National Archives,* https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123123025/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/211413/2006-03-16-jic-assessment-iraq-muqtada-al-sadr.pdf, p.1, accessed 13 Oct. 2020.
[701] Worth, 'Iraqi prime minister to remain in top post Shiite leaders throw support to Jaafari'.
[702] Robert F. Worth and Sabrina Tavernise, 'Radical Cleric Now Wields Unmatched Influence in Iraq', *Pittsburgh Post – Gazette*, 19 Feb. 2006, A-5., available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 5 Nov. 2020.
[703] House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), Vol. 9 Section 4, p.592.

24 hours, nearly 1,000 Iraqis, predominantly Sunni, were killed.[704] The bombing of the mosque and Jaafari's response apparently sealed his fate of not retaining the prime ministership.[705] Similar to his muted response concerning the Jadriya bunker, Jaafari said that the Shia "needed to vent their frustration".[706] Yet, he did condemn the perpetrators of the violence, emphasising they were trying to provoke a civil war.[707] Nonetheless, it was apparent he lost support on all fronts.[708] Al-Qaeda was able to successfully attack the Shia sacred mosque. Now there were further grievances from the Sunni politicians that Jaafari's government could not protect Iraq's Sunni population due to the reprisal killings.[709] Additionally, Condoleezza Rice and UK Foreign Minister Jack Straw flew to Baghdad to convince Jaafari to step down. They told him that he had lost the support of the Bush administration.[710] Also, Khalilzad told the Dawa party that Jaafari had lost the personal backing of Bush himself.[711] Both Jaafari and the Dawa party realised that he could not remain as prime minister. Thus, Jaafari agreed to step down if someone from his party was to assume the role of prime minister.[712] Similar to the January 2005 election, this was intended to maintain the power-sharing arrangement between Sadrists, SCIRI and Dawa.

After Jaafari agreed to step down, jockeying over who should be the next prime minister continued. Dawa proposed Ali al-Adeeb; however, he was unacceptable to the Bush administration who feared his Iranian connection.[713] Additionally, SCIRI rejected him, which presented its own candidate Adel Abdul-Mahdi. Yet, Abdul-Mahdi was unacceptable to Iyad Allawi and the Kurdish KDP party.[714] Moreover, Khalilzad was concerned with Abdul-Mahdi's Iranian connection vis-a-vis SCIRI.[715] Amongst the ongoing deadlock, Khalilzad worked in the

[704] Ellen Knickmeyer, 'Blood on Our Hand', *Foreign Policy* [website], (25 Oct. 2010), https://foreignpolicy.com/2010/10/25/blood-on-our-hands/, para. 28, accessed 11 Jan. 2021.
[705] 'Jeffrey, James-Surge Interview', *Center For Presidential History*, p.21.
[706] Ali Khedery, 'Why we stuck with Maliki -- and lost Iraq', Washington Post, 6 July 2014, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 11 May 2017 and Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *THE U.S ARMY IN THE IRAQ WAR VOLUME 1: Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War, 2003-2006*, p.534.
[707] House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), Vol. 9 Section 4, p.586.
[708] Zalmay Khalilzad, 'Shia Islamist PM Contenders: No Perfect Candidate' [cable], 06BAGHDAD402_a, 10 Feb. 2006, *WikiLeaks,* https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06BAGHDAD402_a.html, para. 8 and 11, accessed 18 Oct. 2020.
[709] Ibid. para. 1 and 12, and 'More pain, no gain; Iraq', *Economist.*
[710] Rice, *No Higher Honour: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*, pp.457-458.
[711] Edward Wong, 'Bush intervenes in Iraq: He 'doesn't accept' Jaafari', *New York Times*, 29 Mar. 2006, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 5 Nov. 2020.
[712]Toby Dodge, 'The politics of Iraq: the exclusive elite bargain and the rise of a new authoritarianism', *Adelphi Series,* 52/434-435 (2012), pp.138-139 and Dexter Filkins, 'What We Left Behind', *New Yorker,* 21 Apr. 2014, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/04/28/what-we-left-behind, para. 27, accessed 18 Mar. 2017.
[713] Sarah Childress, 'Zalmay Khalilzad: Maliki and the "Unmaking of Iraq"', *Frontline* [website], (29 July 2014), https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/zalmay-khalilzad-maliki-and-the-unmaking-of-iraq/, accessed 18 May 2021. and Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.196.
[714] Khalilzad, 'Shia Islamist PM Contenders: No Perfect Candidate' [cable], para. 1.
[715] Ibid. para. 4-5, Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.188 .

background to break the impasse. Khalilzad realised that neither Adeeb nor Abdul-Mahdi would be accepted. Instead, he reached out to another prominent Dawa member, Nouri al-Maliki. According to Filkins, a CIA analyst in Iraq suggested Maliki to Khalilzad.[716] In reviewing Maliki's profile, Khalilzad claimed that there were no major red flags. In a cable to Washington DC, Khalilzad stated that Maliki had "deep concerns about expanding Iranian influence in Iraq" and has been "often in conflict with the Iranian regime".[717] Furthermore, Maliki stated he left Iran – where he had lived in exile with the Dawa party – after refusing to swear allegiance to Khomeini.[718] However, his views on and relationship with Iran are still disputed. However, despite these purported anti-Iranian credentials, Maliki advocated for "a hard fist against the Sunni Arab-dominated insurgency even at the expense of human rights violations" and was "unease[d] about the possibility of another Baathist coup".[719] Nevertheless, Khalilzad outlined that Maliki "cooperated strongly with U.S. diplomats to head off Sadrist efforts to create a Sovereign Committee in the National Assembly that would have called for an immediate MNF-I[720] withdrawal".[721] Hence, Maliki was a candidate with both strengths and risks for the administration. However, emphasising the limited options for the administration – due to the disagreements between SCIRI, Dawa, PUK, KDP and Sadrists – Khalilzad endorsed Maliki. The title of Khalilzad's cable summarised the situation, "Shia Islamist PM Contenders: No Perfect Candidate".

Khalilzad arranged a meeting with Maliki, yet before the session commenced, Khalilzad called the leaders of the KDP and PUK. Both of them signed off on Maliki and the leader of the Sunni Tawafuq bloc, Tariq Hashimi.[722] Khalilzad then met with Maliki and asked if he would be interested in putting his name up for prime minister.[723] Maliki asked if there would be any objections from the Bush administration, to which Khalilzad answered no.[724] Accordingly, Khalilzad said you only need to get the acceptance of the Sunnis, Kurds and the Shia coalition behind you.[725] After the meeting, Maliki informed Jaafari of the arrangement and stated he had the support of the Kurdish parties and the Sunni coalition to become prime minister.[726] Thus,

[716] Dexter Filkins, 'What We Left Behind', para. 28-29.
[717] Khalilzad, 'Shia Islamist PM Contenders: No Perfect Candidate' [cable], para. 18.
[718] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.196.
[719] Ibid.
[720] Multi-National Forces–Iraq
[721] Khalilzad, 'Shia Islamist PM Contenders: No Perfect Candidate' [cable], para. 18.
[722] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.197.
[723] Childress, 'Zalmay Khalilzad: Maliki and the "Unmaking of Iraq', para. 12.
[724] Ibid.
[725] Ibid. para. 14.
[726] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.198.

Jaafari conceded the role to Maliki.[727] Although there was still slight resistance and apprehension from the Sunni Tawafuq bloc as well as the Kurdish factions, they publicly stated their support for Maliki by 19 April.[728] Accordingly, the United Iraq Alliance nominated Maliki as prime minister on 21 April. For SCIRI and Sadr, Maliki would be a weak candidate from the small Dawa party.[729] Moreover, he appeared willing to work with both SCIRI and the Sadrists in contrast to Jaafari's deepening of his alliance with Sadr.[730] On 22 April, the elected President, PUK leader Jalal Talabani, asked Maliki to form a government.[731] Therefore, a governing coalition of the United Iraq Alliance, Sunni Tawafuq bloc, Allawi's party, and Kurdish parties was formed.[732] This was hailed as a national unity government that the Bush administration wanted.[733]

Conclusion

2005 was a disastrous year for the Bush administration. It saw its goals of political reconciliation, stability, and withdrawal regress as a consequence of the militia infiltration of the ISF, sectarian killings, and the insurgency. Despite Iraq's security and economic dependence on the United States and the presence of 130,000 U.S. troops, the Bush administration was unable to influence Jaafari and Iraq's leadership to realise its goals. This was a consequence of several factors. First, Rumsfeld's "hands off the bicycle" approach discouraged any serious effort to engage with the political challenges emerging from Jaafari's government regarding SCIRI, the Sadrists and their militias. However, the most prevalent factors were the mutual dependence of the U.S.-Iraq relationship and the Shia bloc. Jaafari's position as prime minister was conditional on the Shia bloc. Following Moravcsik's theory, the Shia bloc had its own preferences, which it sought to release through Iraq's state institutions. Consequently, echoing Moravcsik and Putnam, Jaafari's preferences were influenced by his Shia bloc constituency and conditioned his interactions with the Bush administration.

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[727] Ibid.
[728] Richard A. Oppel Jr., 'Shiites Settle on Pick for Iraqi Premier', *New York Times*, 22 Apr. 2006, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/22/world/middleeast/shiites-settle-on-pick-for-iraqi-premier.html, para. 2, accessed 15 Nov. 2020.
[729] Lionel Beehner, 'Maliki and Sadr: An Alliance of Convenience', *Council on Foreign Relations* [website], (24 Oct. 2006), https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/maliki-and-sadr-alliance-convenience, accessed 3 May 2019 and Guy Raz, 'Nouri Al-Maliki's Rise to Leadership', *NPR*, 27 July 2006, https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5581690, para. 2-4, accessed 19 May 2019.
[730] Ibid.
[731] Lionel Beehner, 'The New Face of Iraq's Government', *Council on Foreign Relations* [website], (22 Apr. 2006), https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/new-face-iraqs-government, para. 14, accessed 12 Feb. 2019.
[732] Haifa Zangana, 'So this is the 'national unity government'?', *Guardian*, 24 Apr. 2006, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2006/apr/23/thebleaklandscapeofiraqip, accessed 15 Dec. 2020.
[733] Ibid. para. 9.

The Bush administration was dependent on Jaafari to navigate the competing interests of the Shia bloc to support its goals in Iraq. However, Jaafari's preferences contradicted U.S. goals. He would not confront Shia militias and their sectarian activities. In fact, he attempted to shield Sadr and his militia from coalition military activities. This confronting environment appeared to catch the Bush administration by surprise and placed the administration in a state of paralysis. It could not pursue serious influence attempts over Jaafari. Although Jaafari's tenure was only one year, the effect of the Shia bloc on him clearly highlighted the environment the Bush administration was confronted with. It demonstrated the difficulty of influencing any Iraqi leader to be supportive of U.S. preferences over the interests of the Shia bloc. Nonetheless, the Bush administration would attempt to do this with Iraq's new prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki.

The Bush administration was able to use some of its limited influence by using Kurdish factions as leverage against the Shia United Iraq Alliance to establish a "government of unity" that included the Sunni bloc and Allawi's Iraqi alliance.[734] Moreover, the administration was able to replace Jaafari with Maliki, who, it must be emphasised, was its preferred candidate only because of the limited options available to the coalition.[735] Ideally, the administration would have Allawi as prime minister. Furthermore, Khalilzad lobbied to have Allawi assume the cabinet position of Minister of Interior. The administration hoped that a competent and neutral Minister of Interior would indicate "that Shia violence… would not be tolerated".[736] Yet, Allawi was rejected by the United Iraq Alliance.[737] Given these contextual constraints, Maliki's vaunted anti-Iranian credentials provided some measure of reassurance to the administration. Moreover, the administration saw him as a new face for its new synchronised strategy of clear, hold and build. It hoped that Maliki would cooperate and comply with its new strategy against the militias and begin political reconciliation amongst the array of Iraq's religious sects and ethnicities. Hence, the United States would attempt to salvage its objectives in 2006. Blair summarised the strategy as "it is time we started to take risks. We need to put Iraq in a different place and then build out from there… [and]... go all out to get a unity Government in Iraq".[738]

[734] Ibid. para. 5.
[735] Khalilzad, 'Shia Islamist PM Contenders: No Perfect Candidate' [cable].
[736] Tony Blair, 'attaching Note TB' [note], 1 Apr. 2006, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123123728/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/243846/2006-04-01-note-tb-blair-to-bush-note.pdf, p.2, accessed 11 Dec. 2020.
[737] 'Talabani says Allawi must be in cabinet', *Al-Jazeera,* 12 Feb. 2006, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2006/2/12/talabani-says-allawi-must-be-in-cabinet, accessed 10 Dec. 2020 and Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* pp.186 and 197.
[738] Blair, 'attaching Note TB' [note], p.2.

Chapter IV – The Maliki Government, 2006-2007

At the start of Maliki's tenure, there was renewed energy behind the Bush administration's objectives. A perceived national unity government emerged from December's democratic elections, which included a Sunni coalition. Moreover, Ibrahim al-Jaafari was no longer the prime minister. Bush emphasised that this was "progress toward[s] a democracy that can govern itself, defend itself, and sustain itself".[739] Nevertheless, with the synthesised clear, hold and build strategy, the administration sought to continue its stability and eventual withdrawal. Similar to the Jaafari period, these rested on reducing sectarian tensions, curbing militias and deflating the insurgency. Yet, this would require compliance from Iraq's Prime Minister. The administration hoped that Maliki would take a hard line against the militias, which were fanning sectarian tensions and thus the insurgency. After Maliki's first meeting with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, there was an impression that Maliki would support these objectives.

Maliki, however, faced the same challenges that confronted Jaafari. His position as prime minister was conditional on the Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution (SCIRI) and the Sadrist movement. Thus, echoing Moravcsik's and Putnam's theory, Maliki preferences were impacted by these parties, which were pillars of his governing collation. Hence, his preferences would not complement those of the Bush administration. Maliki demonstrated a mixture of compliance and defiance to the Bush administration's objectives. He exhibited substantial defiance by not pursuing the militias that were fostering instability. In fact, he attempted to shield Muqtada al-Sadr and his militia from coalition operations. However, the Bush administration was unable to influence Maliki to conform to its preferences. The administration was dependent on Maliki to navigate and mitigate the competing interests of the Shia bloc. Moreover, the administration was dependent on keeping Maliki aligned to the United States rather than the Shia bloc and, by extension, Iran. Given these dependencies, the Bush administration could not exert influence over Maliki. Nonetheless, by late 2006, the administration devised a new strategy that was intended to dislodge Maliki from the Shia bloc so he would be more supportive of the administration's objectives. This would be the famous Surge of 2007-2008.

[739] 'Bush hails Iraq's political progress', *ABC News*, 30 Apr. 2006, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2006-04-30/bush-hails-iraqs-political-progress/1741990, para. 14, accessed 15 June 2020.

The Honeymoon Period

At the start of his tenure, Rice and Rumsfeld flew to meet Maliki on 26 April 2006. Maliki was very receptive and reassured to Rice and Rumsfeld.[740] According to Woodward, Maliki told them that there needs to be reform of the police to "take back Baghdad" and that "ministers should be ministers for Iraq and not a political party".[741] Moreover, he stated that the security situation would be under control and U.S. troop reduction could begin within 18 months.[742] This statement, especially for Rumsfeld, was pleasing.[743] Additionally, Rumsfeld emphasised that the next step was to have a competent cabinet of ministers.[744] Maliki echoed this theme, stating that the Ministers for Interior and Defence need to be under the control of parties without militias.[745] The bulk of Maliki's cabinet was approved in May and was considered a significant improvement compared to Jaafari's.[746] The UK ambassador William Patey described it as "not quite the technocratic powerhouse we hoped for", but it was a "genuine government of national unity…[with]…a fair number of highly competent individuals in key positions".[747] However, there were only six Sunnis – akin to Jaafari's cabinet – appointed.[748] Moreover, Maliki gave the Sadrists five out of the 31 cabinet positions. This was more than any other party received. It was considered the price Maliki had to pay to maintain Sadr's support.[749] Thus, Sadr's prominence in Maliki's cabinet meant Maliki would be beholden to Sadr to remain as prime minister.[750] Nevertheless, after his cabinet was approved, Maliki made an important declaration that militias would be disarmed.[751] He stated that "weapons should only be in the hands of the government… militias, death squads, terrorism, killings, and

[740]'Rice, Rumsfeld fly in to meet Iraq PM', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 Apr. 2006, https://www.smh.com.au/world/rice-rumsfeld-fly-in-to-meet-iraq-pm-20060426-gdnfjf.html, accessed 17 June 2020.
[741] Bob Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), p.462.
[742] 'Iraqi PM-designate: U.S. could start pullout in 18 months', *CNN,* 24 Apr. 2006, http://edition.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/meast/04/24/iraq.almaliki/, accessed 10 May 2020.
[743] 'Officials: U.S. hopes to pull 30,000 troops', *CNN,* 27 Apr. 2006, https://edition.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/meast/04/26/iraq.main/index.html, accessed 15 May 2020.
[744] 'Rice, Rumsfeld fly in to meet Iraq PM', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 Apr. 2006, para. 12.
[745] Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, p.462.
[746] 'Iraqi parliament approves cabinet', *BBC News*, 20 May 2006, https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-middle-east-16158313, accessed 5 June 2020. The Minister for Interior, Defence and National Security Advisors remained technically vacant until June.
[747] House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122743/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/the-report/, Vol. 9 Section 4, p.608 accessed 13 Dec. 2020.
[748] 'Who's who in Iraq's new cabinet', *BBC News*, 22 May 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/5000750.stm, accessed 12 Mar. 2020.
[749] 'Muqtada Al-Sadr: Keeping His Distance', [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 12 July 2007, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123123755/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/230645/2007-07-12-jic-assessment-muqtada-al-sadr-keeping-his-distance.pdf, pp.2-3, accessed 12 Apr. 2021.
[750] Ibid.
[751] Dan Murphy, 'Iraq's new government aims for peace: Prime Minister Maliki says he will focus on fighting insurgents, disarming party militias', *Christian Science Monitor*, 22 May 2006, https://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0522/p07s02-woiq.html, para. 16. accessed 6 June 2020.

assassinations aren't normal".[752] Speaking to the insurgency, Maliki stated that "we can't confront terrorism by force alone… we need national reconciliation".[753]

There was widespread optimism within the administration from Maliki's initial actions. Rice said, "he was really impressive… he understood his role and the role of the new government to really demonstrate that it's a government of national unity".[754] In her autobiography, Rice states, "Don and I found him a reassuring figure, largely because he seemed to know what he wanted to do…I was more hopeful now then I had been since the bombing [of the al-Askari mosque]".[755] Early signs from Maliki appeared promising. Maliki was able to remove Bayan Jabr from the Minister of Interior, yet could not exclude him from the cabinet altogether due to SCIRI's influence.[756] He was relocated to Minister of Finance.[757] Yet, the position of Minister of Interior remained vacant until June when self-proclaimed independent Jawad al-Bolani was appointed.[758] This was welcomed by the Bush administration despite his previous connections with Muqtada al-Sadr.[759] Additionally, Maliki appointed the technocrat Hussain al-Shahristani as Minister of Oil.[760] These developments led to General George Casey and Rumsfeld stating that they were still on schedule to withdraw U.S. troops.[761]

Amidst this initial optimism, Casey began initiating a new troop withdrawal schedule. In April 2006, Casey stated he aimed to reduce the U.S. troop deployment by 30,000 at the end of the year.[762] This decision was somewhat perplexing given the violence after the bombing of the al-Askari mosque and the increase of violence in 2006. However, Casey maintained that reducing troops and turning responsibility to Iraqis was the best approach in dealing with the insurgency. He and the commander of U.S. Central Command, General John Abizaid, believed that U.S. troops were counterproductive because they generated resentment amongst the population and projected a lingering image of occupation.[763] Moreover, Casey

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[752] Ibid. para. 17.
[753] Ibid. para. 4.
[754] 'Rice and Rumsfeld hail Iraq's PM', *BBC News,* 26 Apr. 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4945180.stm, para. 3 and 7, accessed 5 May 2020
[755] Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honour: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*, (New York: Crown Publishers, 2011), p.460.
[756] 'Iraq's New Administration: End of the Beginning?', *Strategic Comments*, 12/4 (2006), p.2.
[757] Murphy, 'Iraq's new government aims for peace: Prime Minister Maliki says he will focus on fighting insurgents, disarming party militias', para. 7.
[758] Sabrina Tavernise, 'New Interior Minister Faces Unenviable Task: Purging His Forces of Militia Members', *New York Times*, 10 June 2006, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/10/world/new-interior-minister-faces-unenviable-task-purging-his-forces-of.html, para. 1, accessed 4 July 2020.
[759] Kirk Semple and Michael Luo, 'Iraqi Interior Minister to Purge Agency to Stem Killings', *New York Times*, 14 Oct. 2006, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/14/world/middleeast/14iraq.html, para. 11, accessed 6 Apr. 2020
[760] The candidate favoured for interim prime minister by UN Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi in Chapter II.
[761] 'Officials: U.S. hopes to pull 30,000 troops', *CNN,* para. 1-3.
[762] Ibid.
[763] 'Abizaid, John-Surge Interview', *Center For Presidential History,* SMU, (13 Apr. 2016), https://www.smu.edu/-/media/Site/Dedman/Academics/InstitutesCenters/CPH/Collective-Memory-Project/The-Surge/Abizaid-John--FINAL--20199.pdf?la=en, pp.7 and 23 accessed 4 Feb. 2020.

thought that by "doing too much…you'd never be able to hand it off because you haven't trained the people" that were going to replace coalition forces.[764] He further justified this approach stating successful counterinsurgencies "lasted nine years".[765] Thus, it was imperative to transfer responsibility to Iraqi security forces as the "American people were not going to be here for nine years".[766] Casey admits in his book that he epitomised the advice of Lawrence of Arabia of "do not try to do too much with your own hands. Better the Arabs do it tolerably than you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them, not to win it for them".[767] This was the "mindset that [Casey] had concluded… would need to instil in coalition forces if [they] were to be successful in Iraq".[768]

Casey's controversial goal of reducing troops invoked scepticism from Bush on multiple occasions. Bush narrated an account in June 2006 when Casey said to him, "I know I've got work to do to convince you…why winning means getting out".[769] Bush replied, "you do".[770] According to Casey, he believed that the data available to him indicated that the insurgent footprint in Iraq was rapidly shrinking. He stated, "90 percent of the violence is in about a 50-mile radius of Baghdad. The rest of the country… is moving along". Moreover, he claimed that violence after the bombing of the al-Askari mosque had settled.[771] Additionally, U.S. troop casualties were below the highs of 2004-2005.[772] Furthermore, on paper, there were 250,000 operational Iraqi troops and police.[773] However, a U.S. Intelligence Officer, Colonel Derek Harvey, pointed out that the insurgents' presence was not shrinking.[774] Instead, they were consolidating their position around Baghdad rather than maintaining a larger presence across the country.[775] Moreover, despite lower U.S. casualties, insurgent attacks had increased.[776] Casey maintained the rationale that reducing coalition troops would "create a sense of urgency in the new government and its security forces" to pursue reconciliation and develop better governance.[777] Thus, in May, Casey shrank the U.S. troop presence by one brigade.[778]

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[764] 'George Casey Oral History', *Miller Center,* University of Virginia, (25 Sep. 2014), http://web1.millercenter.org/poh/transcripts/casey_george_2014_0925.pdf, p.56, accessed 8 Jan. 2020.
[765] Ibid. p.69.
[766] Ibid.
[767] George W. Casey, Jr., *Strategic Reflections: Operation Iraqi Freedom July 2004–February 2007*, (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2012), p.51.
[768] Ibid.
[769] George W. Bush, *Decision Points*, (New York: Crown Books, 2011), p.367.
[770] Ibid and 'George Casey Oral History', *Miller Center,* pp.77 and 79.
[771] 'George Casey Oral History', *Miller Center,* p.77.
[772] Daniel Bolger, *Why We Lost: A General's Inside Account of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars*, (U.S.A: HMH, 2015), p.232.
[773] Ibid.
[774] Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* pp.209-210.
[775] Ibid.
[776] Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, pp.471-473.
[777] Casey, Jr., *Strategic Reflections: Operation Iraqi Freedom July 2004–February 2007,* p.109.
[778] Ibid p.83. With Rumsfeld's approval Casey cancelled the re-deployment of two brigades to Iraq reducing the number from 17-15. One brigade was re-deployed to Kuwait as a contingency.

Clear, Hold, Build – Clear?

Despite the administration's new clear, hold and build approach, revealed in October 2005, violence substantially increased in 2006 to "unprecedented" levels.[779] This was primarily attributed to the increased activities of militias and the al-Qaeda led Sunni insurgency.[780] Coalition forces still found abuses by units within the Ministry of Interior similar to that of the Jadriya bunker.[781] The Interior Minister, Jawad al Bolani, purged thousands of employees for corruption and sectarian violence in 2006, and even suspended an entire police brigade accused of participating in death squad killings.[782] Yet, despite these initiatives, militia members continued to infiltrate the Interior Ministry continued.[783] A British Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) assessment stated that despite Maliki ordering this purge, those fired from Interior Ministry were mostly re-deployed elsewhere.[784] Furthermore, more militia sectarian killings emerged from the Health Ministry. The Sadrists secured this cabinet position and smuggled Mahdi militia fighters, weapons, and coalition suspects in ambulances.[785] Additionally, they executed Sunni civilians in local hospitals.

Gordon and Trainor provide a statement by General Peter Chiarelli, claiming that "80 percent of the beds in the U.S. military combat support hospitals were devoted to sick and wounded Iraqi troops and police", who were potential targets for the Mahdi Army.[786] Chiarelli believed

[779] 'Iraq: How is the Sunni Insurgency Evolving?' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 10 May 2006, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123123444/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/211441/2006-05-10-jic-assessment-how-is-the-sunni-insurgency-evolving.pdf, accessed 5 Oct. 2020.
[780] Ibid.
[781] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.198. For example, Jamiat Police Station in Basra, see Joel D. Rayburn and Frank K. Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 1: Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War, 2003-2006*, *Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War, 2003-2006*, (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S Army War College Press), pp.501-502.
[782] Semple and Luo, 'Iraqi Interior Minister to Purge Agency to Stem Killings', *New York Times*, para. 12-15.
[783] Jeremy Burke, former advisor to Iraq's Ministry of Interior, recounts his experience in the ministry in 2005-2006. He states that the building had largely be divided up into factions with their own guards guarding ok stairwell and elevators. Burke said that some form of 'balance of power' had been struck between the SCIRI and the Sadrist factions. See Joel Wing, 'From Bad To Worse, How Militias Moved Into The Iraqi Police Force, And The United States Failed At Nation Building. Part Two Of An Interview With Jerry Burke, Former Advisor To The Baghdad Police And Interior Ministry', *Musings on Iraq* [website], (Feb. 2012), http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.com/2012/02/from-bad-to-worse-how-militias-moved.html, accessed 12 Dec. 2019. Additionally, some speculate that Bolani still permitted Sadrist militias members to join the ministry given his former connections with the group, see 'Unity Alliance of Iraq', *Carnegie Endowment*, (27 Nov. 2009), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/d-iq/dv/d-iq20091202_07_/d-iq20091202_07_en.pdf, accessed 25 Sep. 2020.
[784] 'Iraq: Risk of Deepening Sectarian Division' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 15 Nov. 2006, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123123415/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/211333/2006-11-15-jic-assessment-iraq-risk-of-deepening-sectarian-division.pdf, p.3 accessed 1 Oct. 2020.
[785] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.220.
[786] Ibid. p.223. These victims were most likely Badr and Sunni ISF-affiliates.

that “they’ll be shot” if taken to civilian hospitals.[787] Additionally, in Ameriya, the Mahdi Army prevented the Sunni population’s access to essential services, including food distributions, supply of gas, and banking services.[788] In response to this violence, Sunni and al-Qaeda insurgents started to consolidate in these areas surrounding Baghdad and began reprisal killings against Shia civilians and the police.[789] Witnessing the escalation of violence, the UK ambassador William Patey stated that “the prospect of a low intensity civil war and de facto division of Iraq is probably more likely at this stage than a successful and sustained transition to a stable democracy”.[790] Furthermore, with the withdrawal of the U.S. brigade by General Casey, there was limited manpower to prevent and deter this violence around Baghdad.[791]

The new clear, hold, and build approach could not successfully stem this violence as it was fundamentally flawed. Implementing the strategy involved coalition forces clearing areas of militias and insurgents and turning them over to Iraqi police to hold and build. However, Lt. Colonel Jim Danna highlighted the fundamental contradiction of the strategy. The Iraqi police, under the control of the Interior Ministry, still consisted of thousands of militia members. Thus, militia groups were effectively given back control of the recently clear areas.[792] Alarmingly, they established numerous checkpoints in the cleared areas and began arbitrary detention and executions of local Sunni populations. This most notably occurred in Baghdad districts, such as Ameriya, Adhalmiya and Sadr City.[793] Given the limited coalition troop presence and Casey’s reduction of a brigade, there was little oversight of the police and the cleared areas. As Lt. General Chiarelli observed, it would take “another 50,000 troops…to really improve the security in Baghdad alone”.[794] Thus, this increase of violence cascaded into Iraq’s low-grade civil war, which jeopardised the Bush administration’s democratic and stability goals.

[787] Ibid.
[788] Ibid. p.213
[789] Ibid. pp.225-226.
[790] William Patey, ‘Iraq: Valedictory’ [eGram], 20 July 2006, *The National Archives,* https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123123223/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/211493/2006-07-20-egram-31514-06-baghdad-to-fco-london-iraq-valedictory.pdf, p.1, accessed 11 Jan. 2021
[791] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.217.
[792] Ibid. pp.223-224.
[793] Ibid. pp.213-214.
[794] House of Commons, The Report of the Iraq Inquiry (2016), Vol. 9 Section 4, p.608.

Maliki and Compliance: The New Jaafari?

Witnessing this increase in violence, Bush planned a surprise visit to meet Maliki for the first time. Bush was going to make "an assessment of him, but also make a commitment to him that I'm going to work with him and support him" in taming the violence.[795] Bush writes that in phone calls, Maliki, "said the right things. But I wondered if his assurances were real".[796] Yet, Bush appeared sympathetic to Maliki, stating that he had "never been the head of a country before. He's going to have to learn".[797] In his autobiography, Bush portrays a nurturing approach to Maliki to eventually earn Maliki's trust and allow Bush "to help him make the tough decisions".[798] Furthermore, he believed Maliki's intentions were "sincere, but he was a political novice" entrapped in a complex web of domestic politics.[799] Coinciding with Bush's first visit to Maliki on 13 June 2006, Maliki launched Operation Together Forward and a security plan to tackle the increase of violence.[800] Moreover, a week after Bush's visit, Maliki addressed Iraq's parliament about national reconciliation and healing sectarian division.[801] Maliki revealed an amnesty offer to insurgents requiring no applications, and he expressed his intention to reform the de-Baathifcation laws.[802] The Bush administration publicly praised these initiatives to showcase progress to Congress and the American population.[803] Bush returned from his trip promoting optimism, stating that he "was inspired to be able to visit the capital of free and democratic Iraq".[804] He praised Maliki and said he "saw firsthand the strength of his character and his deep determination to succeed".[805] However, this optimism was short-lived. Maliki's Operation Together Forward lacked substance and commitment to confront the militia problem. Instead, it focused on the al-Qaeda led Sunni insurgency.[806] Lt. General Bolger

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[795] Bob Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History 2006-2008*, (U.S.A: Simon and Schuster, 2008), p.9, and 'Hadley, Stephen- Surge Interview', *Center For Presidential History*, SMU, (2 June 2015), https://www.smu.edu/-/media/Site/Dedman/Academics/InstitutesCenters/CPH/Collective-Memory-Project/The-Surge/Hadley-Stephen--FINAL--20199.pdf?la=en, p.9, accessed 4 Feb. 2020.

[796] Bush, *Decision Points*, p.366

[797] Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History 2006-2008*, p.9.

[798] Bush, *Decision Points*, p.362.

[799] Ibid.

[800] Rice, *No Higher Honour: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*, pp.511-512 and Michael Abramowitz and Andy Mosher, 'Iraqi Leader to Visit Bush', *Washington Post*, 23 July 2006, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2006/07/23/iraqi-leader-to-visit-bush/f08f95b9-6265-4216-a53e-17f4d8f9cd99/, para. 1, accessed 10 May 2021.

[801] Rice, *No Higher Honour: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*, p.511 and Sabrina Tavernise,'Iraqi Leader Offers Reconciliation Plan, but No Amnesty', *New York Times*, 25 June 2006, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/25/world/middleeast/25cnd-iraq.html, accessed 19 July 2020.

[802] 'Iraq: Insurgency, Sectarianism and Violence' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 19 July 2006, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123123125/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/211241/2006-07-19-jic-assessment-iraq-insurgency-sectarianism-and-violence.pdf, p.2, accessed 3 Sep. 2020.

[803] Abramowitz and Mosher, 'Iraqi Leader to Visit Bush', para. 14.

[804] 'Bush urges patience after visit', *New York Times*, 14 June 2006, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/14/world/americas/14iht-web.0614prexy.1971463.html, para. 12, accessed 8 Aug. 2020.

[805] Ibid. para. 13.

[806] Bolger, *Why We Lost: A General's Inside Account of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars*, p.230.

recounts that Maliki "preferred to chase Baathists, the various Sunni rejectionists, and the al-Qaeda insurgency rather than go against the Shia side".[807] Furthermore, when Maliki was confronted with reports of the increase of sectarian killings throughout the security operation, he bluntly stated to a coalition general that it was worse under Saddam.[808]

By July 2006, it was clear that the Maliki was not delivering on his promises. Maliki was not taking the hard-line stance on militias he had alluded to in his first meeting with Rice and Rumsfeld. Moreover, the increase of violence put the administration into another crisis as it saw further erosion to its goals of withdrawal and a stable democracy. Violence had increased by 98% since April.[809] Although it did not technically meet the criteria, it was viewed as a low-grade civil war.[810] A JIC assessment defined the scenario as,

> …the security situation is growing in complexity. In addition to insurgents, local struggles for political and economic power, sectarian extremists and criminals are all exploiting declining security. Spiralling sectarian violence is the most immediate threat to Iraq's progress. Deteriorating security is outpacing the government's ability to respond: violence is at the highest sustained level since April 2003.[811]

UK ambassador Patey summarised, "even the lower expectations of President Bush for Iraq [as] a government that can sustain itself, defend itself, and govern itself and is an ally on the war on terror must remain in doubt".[812]

Drawing on Moravcsik and Putnam, Maliki's non-compliance can be attributed to Iraq's domestic political groups in Maliki's governing coalition. Given Maliki's dependence on Sadr to remain as prime minister, it was unlikely that he would take a hard stance against him. Moreover, SCIRI's prominence in Maliki's coalition, as a result of holding the most seats in the Shia alliance, would dissuade Maliki from implementing policies against their interests. Hence, similar to Jaafari, Maliki did not challenge Sadr's Mahdi Army or SCIRI's Badr militia. For example, Casey showed Maliki drone footage of Mahdi fighters carrying out "extrajudicial killings", yet Maliki told Casey not to conduct any raids against the compound or release the

[807] Ibid. p.230 and Casey, Jr., *Strategic Reflections: Operation Iraqi Freedom July 2004–February 2007*, pp.112-113.
[808] Thomas E. Ricks, *The Gamble: General Petraeus and the Untold Story of the American Surge in Iraq, 2006 – 2008*, (U.S.A: Penguin Press, 2009), p.53.
[809] House of Commons, The Report of the Iraq Inquiry (2016), https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122743/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/the-report/, Vol. 9 Section 5 p.16, accessed 13 Dec. 2020.
[810] Ibid.
[811] 'Iraq: Insurgency, Sectarianism and Violence', Joint Intelligence Committee, p.1.
[812] Patey, 'Iraq: Valedictory' [eGram], p.1.

footage.[813] Casey reported to Rumsfeld that "the government is not enforcing the law against the militias".[814] Additionally, Rumsfeld claimed that Maliki allowed more sectarian militias into Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and alarmingly gave tacit support to Shia death squads.[815] Furthermore, Maliki lobbied the coalition to have captured lieutenants of Sadr's Mahdi Army, who were part of the death squads, to be released from U.S. custody.[816] Moreover, he condemned coalition raids against Mahdi Army safe houses. For example, in August, he publicly denounced a raid and promised compensation to families of killed Mahdi fighters.[817] Lieutenant General Bolger recounts from his experience that Maliki consistently frustrated coalition efforts to go into Sadr City to confront the Mahdi Army, which continued its attacks against coalition forces. Bolger narrates an alarming incident when a coalition soldier was kidnapped outside a U.S. compound in Baghdad. Coalition forces quickly established checkpoints in Baghdad and around Sadr City to locate the soldier, yet Maliki told Casey to remove them.[818] According to the U.S. Army's official account, Maliki was under substantial pressure from the Sadrists and was concerned Sadr would call for a nationwide strike against the government if the checkpoints remained.[819] Casey tried to convince Maliki to allow the checkpoints to remain, but he refused, and Casey ordered them to be taken down.[820] The soldier was found dead in 2012.[821]

Maliki's hindrance to U.S. objectives on Shia militias exemplified how the Shia bloc influenced Maliki's preferences. Maliki remained dependent on both the Sadrists and SCIRI to stay in power. Hence, he would not act against their militias. A JIC assessment captured Maliki's predicament stating,

> Maliki genuinely wants to reduce violence. He accepts that some limited action against [Sadr's] JAM[822] is necessary. But despite recent assurances to the US and robust public comments, he will not support the sort of sustained military campaign

[813] Casey, Jr., *Strategic Reflections: Operation Iraqi Freedom July 2004–February 2007*, p.101 and Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 1: Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War, 2003-2006*, *Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War, 2003-2006*, p.571.
[814] Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir*, (U.S.A.: Penguin Group, 2011), p.697.
[815] Ibid.
[816] Ibid.
[817] Edward Wong, 'Doubts grow over Iraqi prime minister's effectiveness', *New York Times*, 20 Sep. 2006, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/20/world/africa/20iht-maliki.2875639.html, para. 28, accessed 3 Aug. 2020.
[818] Ricks, *The Gamble: General Petraeus and the Untold Story of the American Surge in Iraq, 2006 – 2008*, p.56 and Bolger, *Why We Lost: A General's Inside Account of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars*, p.230.
[819] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 1: Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War, 2003-2006*, *Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War, 2003-2006*, pp.643-644.
[820] Bolger, *Why We Lost: A General's Inside Account of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars*, p.231 and Ricks, *The Gamble: General Petraeus and the Untold Story of the American Surge in Iraq, 2006 – 2008*, pp.56-57.
[821] Bolger, *Why We Lost: A General's Inside Account of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars*, p.231.
[822] The Mahdi Army.

needed to remove JAM's ability to keep parts of Baghdad outside government control.[823]

Another JIC report in July 2006, pertaining to Operation Together Forward, noted that it would be unlikely that Maliki would be able to act against Sadr's Mahdi Army unless he had "unequivocal public support from his key government ministers and other senior Shia figures".[824] Yet, given these mainly were SCIRI and Sadrist members, this was unlikely to transpire. Furthermore, Wong detailed the U.S. embassy staff's observations of Maliki in this period. They defined Maliki as paralysed between these factions and "placating everyone", and he "never makes any decisions"' as he has '"to negotiate as he goes".[825] Moreover, the array of political parties in the governing coalition undermined "Maliki's ability to build consensus".[826] For instance, the embassy staff, noted that Maliki was unable to offer amnesty agreements to Sunni insurgents as a result of the Shia bloc in the coalition.[827] Wong draws on a statement from another Iraqi legislator. The legislator claimed he said to Maliki, "you were one of the hawks, now you're one of the doves", to which Maliki replied, "no, I'm still one of the hawks…I just need time".[828] Nonetheless, Bolger summarised the situation the Bush administration found itself in; Maliki was a "pawn" of this domestic political struggle, not a "king" as what "Maliki's last name meant" in Arabic.[829] Therefore, due to the political constraints, Nouri al-Maliki did not fulfil the administration's hopes that he would be compliant and support its goals.

The Bush administration appeared caught off guard with Maliki's position. Maliki was chosen as prime minister because the administration believed he shared the same priorities. Thus, consequently, the administration did not have a strategy to overcome Maliki's defiance. Rumsfeld berated Casey over the situation the administration found itself in. He complained to Casey that "Sadr exercised more influence over Maliki than the coalition".[830] Rumsfeld was adamant that Casey must try to exercise influence over Maliki, stating that "Maliki is responding to Sadr's pressure [;] it's because no pressure is being applied from the other

[823] 'Iraq: Tackling Shia Militias' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 24 Jan. 2007, *The National Archives,* https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122912/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/233340/2007-01-24-jic-assessment-iraq-tackling-shia-militias.pdf, p.1, accessed 10 Feb. 2021.
[824] 'Iraq: How Will Jaysh Al Mahdi React To Pressure?' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 26 July 2006, *The National Archives,*https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122912/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/211249/2006-07-26-jic-assessment-iraq-how-will-jaysh-al-mahdi-react-to-pressure.pdf,p.3, accessed 19 Dec. 2020.
[825] Wong, 'Doubts grow over Iraqi prime minister's effectiveness', para. 8, 10 and 12.
[826] Ibid. para. 12.
[827]Ricks, *The Gamble: General Petraeus and the Untold Story of the American Surge in Iraq, 2006 – 2008*, p.68.
[828] Wong, 'Doubts grow over Iraqi prime minister's effectiveness', para. 20-22.
[829] Bolger, *Why We Lost: A General's Inside Account of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars*, p.230.
[830] Joel D. Rayburn and Frank K. Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S Army War College Press, 2019), p.5.

side".[831] Moreover, Rumsfeld argued that Maliki must understand that "actions taken contrary to expressed U.S. interests [have] consequences".[832] However, Rumsfeld appeared to struggle in defining ways to achieve this. He emphasised to Casey that he should threaten to withdraw U.S. troops or send a brigade "after the Iranians" in Iraq.[833] However, Casey and his team believed that these options were not feasible. They recognised that "pushing Maliki too firmly would make him more reliant on domestic political support", such as the Sadrists and SCIRI.[834] Moreover, Casey admitted there was no alternative to Maliki.[835] If there were a new prime minister or government, the coalition would have to restart and reformulate its withdrawal plans while risking instability.[836] Thus, witnessing the regression of its goals, the administration appeared hamstrung in determining what to do with Maliki's non-compliance.

Operation Together Forward II

The escalation of violence in and around Baghdad in July and the failure of Maliki's Operation Together Forward led Casey to recommend an increase of troops in Iraq.[837] This was a stark decision given that Casey previously remained fixated, as did Rumsfeld, on withdrawing troops from Iraq. In fact, in June, Casey believed they could further reduce U.S. troops despite increasing violence.[838] Nonetheless, Rumsfeld reluctantly granted Casey's request and extended the deployment of a division scheduled to return to America and repositioned them in Baghdad.[839] This was to be announced at Maliki's first visit to Washington DC in July. Bush was dismayed at this development. Rumsfeld narrates Bush's frustration with Maliki and quotes him saying, "last week Maliki was claiming that he wanted to crack down but that U.S. military forces wouldn't let him. If Maliki tries to lay this off on us, it will be an unpleasant visit for him".[840]

[831] Ibid.
[832] Ibid.
[833] Ibid.
[834] Ibid. p.6
[835] Ibid. pp.6 and 48.
[836] Peter R. Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, p.271.
[837] Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir*, p.698 and Casey, Jr., *Strategic Reflections: Operation Iraqi Freedom July 2004–February 2007*, p.114.
[838] Casey, Jr., *Strategic Reflections: Operation Iraqi Freedom July 2004–February 2007*, p.114.
[839] Ibid. and Edward Wong, 'Pentagon Extends Tour for 4,000 Troops, Increasing Number in Iraq', *New York Times*, 30 July 2006, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/30/world/middleeast/30iraq.html, accessed 6 Sep. 2020.
[840] Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir*, p.697.

Despite his frustration, Bush would give Maliki an opportunity "to pull [his] socks up"[841] and "get his legs"[842] to take a firm stance against the militias and sectarian violence. Maliki's visit on the 26 July, however, was mostly overshadowed by the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel. Rather than focusing on Iraq, there was great fanfare towards Maliki's position on Hezbollah and his refusal to condemn the attacks on Israeli forces.[843] Nonetheless, Maliki appeared to pay lip service to Bush by addressing Congress to garner support for Bush's Iraq project. It was rumoured that Bush's scriptwriters wrote the speech for Maliki.[844] Maliki reiterated that Iraq was an important U.S. ally in the war on terror, and it was "your duty and our duty to defeat this terror".[845] Nonetheless, Bush outlined that a revised security strategy would emerge, involving the redeployment of additional U.S. troops and greater coordination between U.S. and Iraqi forces.[846] Maliki emphasised that the new plan would confront the growing sectarian conflict and militias.[847] Additionally, he announced his "national reconciliation plan", which included inviting insurgents to turn to the political process.[848]

Maliki announced Operation Together Forward II on 6 August, which would concentrate on the surrounding suburbs of Baghdad and implement the clear, hold, and build doctrine.[849] The operation would consist of both U.S. and Iraqi forces. However, this initiative was fraught from the beginning. Only two out of the six Iraqi army battalions that the United States asked for were provided.[850] This meant that coalition forces would have to continue using the police from the Interior Ministry.[851] The operation consisted of 15,600 U.S. soldiers, 9,600 Iraqi soldiers and over 30,000 Iraqi police.[852] Notably, this time, U.S. military police would integrate and

[841] Donald Rumsfeld, 'Iraq? Illustrative New Courses of Action' [memo], 3 Dec. 2006, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/03/world/middleeast/03mtext.html, para. 14, accessed 15 Aug. 2020.
[842]Robert Zelnick, 'A reality check on the Iraq Study Group report', *Christian Science Monitor,* 8 Dec. 2006, https://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1208/p09s02-coop.html, para. 5, accessed 27 Aug. 2020.
[843] Howard LaFranchi, 'Maliki's mission in the US', *Christian Science Monitor*, 26 July 2006, https://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0726/p01s02-usfp.html, accessed 1 Oct. 2020 and
Jim Rutenberg, 'Baghdad Chaos Pushes Bush to Shift U.S. Troops', *New York Times*, 26 July 2006, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/26/washington/26prexy.html, para. 9-10, accessed 30 July 2020.
[844] Fred Kaplan, 'False Consciousness About Iraq: Did the White House write Maliki's speech to Congress?', *Slate* [website], (26 July 2006), https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2006/07/maliki-s-cynical-speech-to-congress.html, accessed 15 Sep. 2020.
[845] David Stout, 'Maliki Expresses Thanks in Address to Congress', *New York Times*, 26 July 2006, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/26/world/middleeast/26cnd-maliki.html, para. 2, accessed 8 Sep. 2020.
[846] 'President Bush and Prime Minister Maliki of Iraq Participate in Press Availability', *Office of the Press Secretary*, 25 July 2006, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2006/07/20060725.html, para. 3-5, accessed 1 Sep. 2020.
[847] Julian Borger, 'Bush promises more troops to curb sectarian killing in Baghdad', *Guardian*, 26 July 2006, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/jul/26/usa.iraq1, para. 7, accessed 7 Sep. 2020.
[848] President Bush and Prime Minister Maliki of Iraq Participate in Press Availability', Office of the Press Secretary, para. 26.
[849] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.218.
[850] James A. Baker III and Lee H. Hamilton (eds), *The Iraq Study Group Report*, (U.S.A: Vintage Books, 2006).
[851] George W. Casey, Jr., *Strategic Reflections: Operation Iraqi Freedom July 2004–February 2007,* p.131.
[852] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.233.

shadow Iraq's police to prevent the sectarian killings.[853] However, the contradiction that arose in the previous operation resurfaced; once cleared areas were handed over to Iraqi police, militias would re-emerge, and acts of ethnic cleansing would transpire.[854] Casey summarised this in his interview, "the cycle was: we'd go in, we'd be successful with the military operations, we'd clear the bad guys out of an area, we'd put the Iraqis back in…within a week or two, and the area would go back to the way it was".[855]

Despite attempts to shadow the Iraqi police, U.S. forces' influence over the police, already limited, further dissipated. For example, the police required permission from the Interior Ministry to conduct raids. Accordingly, this information would be shared with U.S. advisors and passed to local U.S. commanders in the areas.[856] However, after many U.S. commanders began vetoing the operations, given the lack of evidence and bias against Sunni targets, the police units conducted raids without applying for permission from the ministry.[857] Furthermore, U.S. commanders lobbied to have certain police units, holding cleared areas, replaced by Iraqi army units.[858] Yet, this was a rarity, and the sectarian violence as well as ethnic cleansing continued to escalate which provoked further retaliation from Sunni insurgents and al-Qaeda. Adding further insult to the grievance, in January, Casey championed 2006 as the "year of the police".[859] It was intended that the Interior Ministry's security forces would play a leading role in security and counter-insurgency by June.[860] Nevertheless, the "low-grade stage of [the] civil war" was accelerating.[861] Since July 2006, violence further increased by 43%, with an average of over 100 Iraqi casualties each day.[862] In fact, 2006 was the year with most civilian deaths of 29,517.[863] This period was crippling U.S. goals of stability and withdrawal.

A New Strategy?

[853]George W. Casey, Jr., *Strategic Reflections: Operation Iraqi Freedom July 2004–February 2007,* 131 and Borger, 'Bush promises more troops to curb sectarian killing in Baghdad'.
[854] Baker III and Hamilton (eds), *The Iraq Study Group Report*, p.12.
[855]'George Casey Oral History', *Miller Center*, p.80.
[856] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.224.
[857] Ibid. pp.224-225.
[858] Ibid. p.226.
[859] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 1: Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War, 2003-2006*, *Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War, 2003-2006*, p.545.
[860] Ibid.
[861] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* pp.226-228.
[862] Edward Wong and Damien Cave, 'Iraqi Death Toll Rose Above 3,400 in July', *New York Times*, 15 Aug. 2006, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/15/world/middleeast/15cnd-iraq.html, para. 2, accessed 15 Sep. 2020 and Baker III and Hamilton (eds), *The Iraq Study Group Report*, p.12.
[863] 'Number of documented civilian deaths in the Iraq war from 2003 to May 2021', *Statista,* 10 June 2020, https://www.statista.com/statistics/269729/documented-civilian-deaths-in-iraq-war-since-2003/, accessed 18 Aug.2020.

The dismal progress of Operation Together Forward II and the increase of violence pushed the Bush administration into reviewing its strategy. Bush was becoming frequently frustrated with the current approach. He felt that he was receiving contradicting reports of developments in Iraq.[864] From as early as June 2006, the Deputy National Security Advisor for Afghanistan and Iraq, Meghan O'Sullivan, was briefing Bush regularly on the situation in Iraq. She continued to emphasise its rapid deterioration. O'Sullivan stated that after National Security Meetings, Bush and his National Security Advisor, Stephen Hadley, would ask for her views on the current conditions in Iraq.[865] She noted that her briefings would frequently contradict those emerging from the coalition leadership and the ambassador in Iraq.[866] She stressed that she did not want to "sugarcoat anything" as the "president wasn't getting unvarnished views".[867] Hadley claims this prompted Bush to realise that "we need[ed] a new strategy".[868] Thus, Bush authorised Hadley to commission a review of the administration's current strategy.[869] Hadley proposed that he ask Casey and Abizaid an array of critical questions about the current approach.[870] On 22 July, there was a meeting with Hadley, O'Sullivan, Casey, Abizaid and Rumsfeld, as well as Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad.[871] According to Woodward's account, which Hadley referred to and did not dispute in his own interview,[872] the questions were hard-hitting. Who is responsible for the sectarianism? How is Maliki responding to it? How are the security forces confronting it as well as militias vis-à-vis the clear, hold, build doctrine?[873] Woodward claims that Casey stated he didn't trust ISF and that Maliki was largely "standing on the sidelines with his arms folded, offering criticism but not accepting responsibility of the situation".[874] Casey also highlighted the predicament of turning cleared areas back to militia members and estimated it could take another two years to de-mobilise militias.[875] Casey's answers confirmed the paralysis the administration was in.

Hadley summarised the findings to Bush and essentially said there is no strategy to address the current problems identified.[876] Bush summarised the situation to Woodward, saying there

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[864] 'O'Sullivan, Meghan - Surge Interview', *Center For Presidential History*, SMU, (12 May 2016), https://www.smu.edu/-/media/Site/Dedman/Academics/InstitutesCenters/CPH/Collective-Memory-Project/The-Surge/OSullivan-Meghan--FINAL--20199.pdf?la=en, p.11, accessed 10 Feb. 2020

[865] Ibid. pp.11-12.

[866] Ibid. and Bush, *Decision Points*, p364.

[867] 'O'Sullivan, Meghan - Surge Interview', *Center For Presidential History*, p.11.

[868] ''Hadley, Stephen- Surge Interview', *Center For Presidential History*, p.4.

[869] 'Interview with Stephen J. Hadley', *Miller Center*, University of Virginia, (1 Nov. 2011), http://web1.millercenter.org/poh/transcripts/hadley_stephen_2011_1031.pdf, p.45, accessed 17 Jan. 2020.

[870] Ibid.

[871] Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History 2006-2008*, p.72.

[872] Hadley refers to Woodward's account of the meeting and doesn't raise any objections. Yet, other parts of Woodward books Hadley does dispute. See 'Hadley, Stephen- Surge Interview', *Center For Presidential History*, p.56.

[873] Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History 2006-2008*, pp.72-74.

[874] Ibid. p.74.

[875] Ibid. p.75.

[876] Ibid. p.78.

was “clear, and no build and no hold” and “we need to adjust. And that’s what Steve’s [Hadley] policy was doing”.[877] On 17 August, Bush gathered his war council to discuss the Iraq strategy. Bush emphasised that the situation was “deteriorating”, and a modification to the current approach was needed.[878] Yet, according to Woodward, Abizaid and Rumsfeld reinforced the bicycle analogy and stated, “we need to help them help themselves”.[879] Hadley claims that Bush responded by saying, “OK, Don, I’m prepared to take my hands off the seat of the bicycle, but if the bicycle starts to fall you’ve got to grab it because we can’t afford for the bicycle to fail”.[880] Woodward’s account of the meeting depicts a scene of airing the current problems on the table with open-ended questions about the current approach to solving them.[881] One of Bush’s frequent questions at this meeting was, “can we succeed?”.[882] Consequently, no new direction emerged. At the end of the session, Bush reinforced the need to be critical of the current strategy yet appeared to trust Casey, Abizaid and Rumsfeld to manage the existing approach to Iraq.[883]

There was no substantial change to the administration’s strategy after this August meeting. However, there were consistent reviews undertaken by the State Department’s Iraq policy coordinator, James Jeffrey and Rice’s advisor, Phillip Zelikow as well as Hadley and Rice.[884] Rice and Hadley seemed frustrated with the current strategy. For Rice, Abizaid and Casey were not correctly implementing the clear, hold, and build. For instance, in August, they received a briefing from Casey stating that 33,000 buildings had been cleared by U.S. troops, not Iraqi ones, yet there were only 70 detainees.[885] According to Rice and Hadley, it reinforced the notion that insurgents and militia members would vacate before the operations and re-emerge afterwards.[886] In addition to this, Bush was receiving criticism of the administration’s approach from both Democrats and Republicans, with the latter concerned about the impact of Iraq on the upcoming congressional elections. At the start of August, a letter was sent to the White House from the top Democrat representatives calling for a phased withdrawal at the end of 2006. The letter was scathing in its assessment and stated,

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[877] Ibid. pp.78-79.
[878] Ibid. p.88.
[879] Ibid. p.90.
[880] ‘Interview with Stephen J. Hadley’, *Miller Center*, University of Virginia, p.58.
[881] Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History 2006-2008*, pp.89-93.
[882] Ibid.
[883] Ibid. pp.94-95.
[884] ‘Interview with Stephen J. Hadley’, *Miller Center*, University of Virginia, p.54.
[885] Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History 2006-2008*, pp.105-106.
[886] ‘Hadley, Stephen- Surge Interview’, *Center For Presidential History*, p.16 and ‘Rice, Condoleezza- Surge Interview’, *Center For Presidential History*, SMU, (20 July 2015), https://www.smu.edu/-/media/Site/Dedman/Academics/InstitutesCenters/CPH/Collective-Memory-Project/The-Surge/Rice-Condoleezza--FINAL--20199.pdf?la=en, p.5, 16 and 30, accessed 11 Feb. 2020.

> …despite the latest evidence that your administration lacks a coherent strategy to stabilise Iraq and achieve victory, there has been virtually no diplomatic effort to resolve sectarian differences, no regional effort to establish a broader security framework, and no attempt to revive a struggling reconstruction effort.[887]

It also stated that "simply staying the course in Iraq is not working… we need to take a new direction".[888] Senior Republicans also questioned the strategy and the effect of the dismal progress on the upcoming 2006 November elections. Bush narrates an encounter with Senator Mitch McConnell where he informed Bush that "your unpopularity is going to cost us control of the Congress" and "bring[ing] some troops home for Iraq" is a way to mitigate this.[889] Also, on 20 August, Republican Senator John McCain was asked on NBC if the administration was "winning in Iraq?".[890] McCain replied, "I don't think so", though he insisted, "we've got to win".[891]

In September 2006, however, the internal reviews of the administration's strategy started to gain momentum. Rumsfeld received a report detailing that Iraq was on the brink of a civil war.[892] Rumsfeld held a meeting about the Iraq policy with retired General Jack Keane, former Chief of Staff of the army, and the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Peter Pace.[893] Keane outlined all his reasoning for why the current approach was "fundamentally flawed", emphasising that the United States is not "protect[ing] the people".[894] Moreover, he argued that sending more troops with the same policy will "doom us to failure".[895] Only "changing strategy with more troops has the opportunity to succeed".[896] Keane states that Rumsfeld conceded and accepted Keane's reasoning for the unsuccess of the Pentagon's Iraq policy.[897] After the meeting, Keane spoke to Pace again and outlined the same points, emphasising that "you've got to get your head in this war".[898] According to Keane, he suggested Pace form a study group to analyse Iraq and the administration's strategy and objectives.[899] Keane claims

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[887] 'Key Democrats united on Iraq pullout: Letter to Bush calls for start of withdrawal by year's end', *CNN*, 1 Aug. 2006, https://edition.cnn.com/2006/POLITICS/07/31/democrats.iraq/index.html, para. 10, accessed 16 Feb. 2020.
[888] Ibid. para. 18.
[889] Bush, *Decision Points*, p.355.
[890] 'Transcript for Aug. 20: John McCain, Barry McCaffrey, Vali Nasr, John Harwood', *NBC News*, 21 Aug. 2006, https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna14390980, para. 9, accessed 28 May 2020.
[891] Ibid. para. 10.
[892] Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History 2006-2008*, p.142.
[893] 'Keane, Jack- Surge Interview', *Center For Presidential History*, SMU, (18 Aug. 2015), https://www.smu.edu/-/media/Site/Dedman/Academics/InstitutesCenters/CPH/Collective-Memory-Project/The-Surge/Keane-Jack--FINAL--20199.pdf?la=en, p.16, accessed 10 Feb. 2020 and Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir*, pp.701-702s.
[894] Ibid.
[895] 'Keane, Jack- Surge Interview', *Center For Presidential History*, SMU, p.21.
[896] Ibid.
[897] Ibid. p.20.
[898] Ibid. p.23.
[899] Ibid. p.24.

that Pace agreed to this, and Rumsfeld authorised Pace to form a study group.[900] This group, dubbed Council of the Colonels, included notables such as General David Petraeus, General Raymond Odierno and General H. R. McMaster. They would be critical to implementing the administration's new approach.[901] Nonetheless, the Secretary of Defense and the Pentagon's leadership were now on board with a strategy review. This was significant given the fixation on withdrawing troops and avoiding the so-called dependency syndrome that had persisted since the pre-war planning. Interestingly Casey admits that he wasn't aware of any substantial review of the administration's Iraq policy until after Rumsfeld's resignation in November 2006.[902]

Judging Maliki

Amidst this strategic review, the effects of the domestic political constraints on Maliki continued to undermine the Bush administration's objectives. Furthermore, it led the administration to question its choice of Maliki. It could not ascertain if Maliki was the right person to be prime minister if he continued to allow his preferences to be informed by the Shia bloc. Determining the answer to this conundrum would underpin the administration's strategy review. Nonetheless, Maliki continued to prevent U.S.-military action against Sadr and other Shia death squads. In August and October, Maliki publicly denounced raids on Sadr City, stipulating he had not authorised them and apologised to the population, stating that "it won't happen again".[903] Furthermore, in October, Ambassador Khalilzad announced that the Iraqi government and the Bush administration agreed on a series of goals and benchmarks with a timetable for disarming militias and degrading death squads to improve governance and security.[904] Remarkably, however, when questioned on this agreement, Maliki declared, "I affirm that this government represents the will of the people, and no one has the right to impose a timetable on it… the Americans have the right to review their policies, but we do not believe in a timetable".[905] Bush later declared that the schedule was agreed on; however, benchmarks were not finalised.[906]

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[900] Ibid and 'Interview with Stephen J. Hadley', *Miller Center*, University of Virginia, p.56.
[901] 'Keane, Jack- Surge Interview', *Center For Presidential History*, SMU, p.25.
[902] Casey, Jr., *Strategic Reflections: Operation Iraqi Freedom July 2004–February 2007*, 135.
[903] 'Troops Raid Sadr City; Maliki Disavows Timeline', *NPR,* 25 Oct. 2006, https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6383365, para. 1, accessed 10 June 2020 and Tom Regan, 'US, Iraqi PM Disagree Over Baghdad Raids', *Global Policy Forum* [website], (8 Aug. 2006), https://archive.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/167-attack/35878.html, para. 1, accessed 6 June 2020.
[904] Walter Pincus, 'Timetables? Depends on Who's Talking', *Washington Post*, 29 Oct. 2006, A.8. in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 12 June 2020.
[905] Ibid.
[906] Ibid.

Frustrated with witnessing the same paralysis from the Jaafari period, Rice flew to Baghdad to have "a first hand look" on 5 October 2006.[907] She spoke to Maliki who read a "list of accusations against the Sunnis", which created the impression that he "seemed to have lost all concept of his responsibility to bring his people together".[908] Accordingly, Rice berated Maliki stating, "you have got to get a hold of the army and the police…this can't last. Your words don't match your actions, and the United States will not stay here if you don't fix this…If this situation doesn't improve, in six months you'll all be swinging from lampposts".[909] Additionally, Rice spoke to the Sunni Tawafuq bloc's leadership and dealt them the same threat of "swinging from lampposts" if they don't take a firm stance against the Sunni insurgency.[910] Rice returned to Washington and spoke to Bush about her findings and narrates the encounter in her book. Rice said, "Mr. President, what we are doing is not working — really not working…it's failing".[911] Bush responded asking, "What would you do? … how can we make this work?". Rice replied, "I don't know…let me go and think".[912] Rice's account illustrates the paralysis the administration was in and indicates the absence of influence it had in Iraq and over its leader, Nouri al-Maliki.

Coinciding with Rice's visit, Hadley went to Iraq to undertake the strategy review.[913] He summarised his findings in a memorandum which was sent to all the principals of the National Security Council. The content on Maliki is revealing. It raised the question of whether Maliki was the right leader and "share[d] the same vision for Iraq" as the Bush administration.[914] Additionally, it raised another question that continues to permeate Maliki's legacy: was he willingly complicit in the sectarian policies of his government, or was this a consequence of being a pawn between SCIRI and the Sadrists?[915] Hadley reflects on this question, writing that,

> …his intentions seem good when he talks with Americans, and sensitive reporting suggests he is trying to stand up to the Shia hierarchy and force positive change. But the reality on the streets of Baghdad suggest Maliki is either ignorant of what is going on, misrepresenting his intentions, or that his capabilities are not yet sufficient to turn his good intentions in action.[916]

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[907] 'Rice, Condoleezza- Surge Interview', *Center For Presidential History*, p.18 and Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History 2006-2008,* p.162.
[908] Rice, *No Higher Honour: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*, p.511.
[909] Ibid. p.513.
[910] Ibid.
[911] Ibid. p.515.
[912] Ibid.
[913] 'Interview with Stephen J. Hadley', *Miller Center*, University of Virginia, p.63.
[914] Stephen J. Hadley, 'Text of U.S. Security Adviser's Iraq Memo', *New York Times,* 29 Nov. 2006, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/29/world/middleeast/29mtext.html, para. 2, accessed 3 Oct. 2020.
[915] Ibid. para. 5.
[916] Ibid.

According to Hadley, Maliki "reiterated a vision of Shia, Sunni and Kurdish partnership" yet he seemed to have "difficulty figuring out how to do so".[917] Moreover, Maliki stated that he was trying to show "strength by standing up to the coalition. Hence the public spats with us over benchmarks and the Sadr city roadblocks".[918]

Therefore, the Bush administration was uncertain whether Maliki was telling them what they wanted to hear or whether Maliki was trapped in placating the two dominant parties, SCIRI and the Sadrists. If it was the latter, then accordingly, Maliki's preferences would not support those of the United States in dismantling the militia groups and overcoming the sectarian nature of the government. The new UK ambassador Dominic Asquith captured the sentiment in a cable sent to London. It stated, "Maliki's true intentions [are] an enigma even to those in his government: sectarian going through the motions of reconciliation, or genuine power sharer constrained by Shia supremacists? It is still reasonable to give him the benefit of the doubt that he is the latter".[919] Furthermore, British intelligence added further uncertainty about Maliki's intentions. A JIC assessment stated that, "violence in Iraq is part of a vicious circle: deteriorating security has led to a proliferation of militias, in turn fuelling further violence. Prime Minister Maliki is […] unable to confront the militias, fearing a violent backlash that would threaten the break-up of the Shia political coalition (the UIA)".[920] The JIC assessment further claimed that "Maliki's approach remains governed by his critical need to retain Shia support within the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA), particularly from the Sadrists …This precludes strong action against either sectional Shia or Kurdish interests that risk destabilising his position".[921]

By October 2006, the United States found itself in a similar position to that of the Jaafari period; Maliki was non-compliant with U.S. objectives. Although Maliki was more receptive to the Bush administration, he appeared as powerless as Jaafari in dealing with militias and sectarianism. The Bush administration expected too much from Maliki at the start of his tenure. Despite Maliki's promises to confront militias and pursue national reconciliation, the reality of the political arrangement of the governing United Iraqi Alliance paralysed Maliki.[922] Furthermore,

[917] Ibid. para. 3
[918] Ibid.
[919]Dominic Asquith, 'Iraq: First Impressions' [letter], 12 Sep. 2006, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123123924/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/211285/2006-09-12-letter-asquith-to-sawers-iraq-first-impressions.pdf, p.3 accessed 12 Nov. 2020
[920] 'Iraq: The Problem With Militias' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 23 Aug. 2006, *The National Archives,* https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123123303/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/211265/2006-08-23-jic-assessment-iraq-the-problem-with-militias.pdf, p.1, accessed 12 Nov. 2020.
[921] 'Iraq: Risk of Deepening Sectarian Division' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, p.3, accessed 1 Oct. 2020 and 'Iraq: The Problem With Militias' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, p.1 and 4.
[922] Asquith, 'Iraq: First Impressions', p.3.

the administration was unable to influence Maliki due to its dependency on him. The administration was dependent on Maliki to mitigate the Shia bloc's interests which were damaging its objectives. Moreover, it needed to keep Maliki closely aligned to the United States; if Maliki became further embroiled in the Shia bloc, U.S. interests would be further impaired. This dependency limited U.S. influence and options. Any pressure or coercive influence attempts were discarded as it risked pushing Maliki closer to the Shia bloc and, by extension, Iran. Hence, the administration's response included verbal protests and persuasion in an attempt to influence Maliki to be supportive of its preferences. Yet, these influence attempts did not produce any change to Maliki's preferences and behaviour. The Bush administration appeared hamstrung in overcoming this barrier to influence. Hadley's memorandum suggested that "Maliki [should bring] his political strategy with Moktada al-Sadr to closure" and "shake up his cabinet by appointing nonsectarian capable technocrats in key service (and security) ministries".[923] Additionally, Maliki should "inject momentum back into the reconciliation process" as well as "declare an immediate suspension of suspect Iraqi police units".[924] Yet, given Maliki's political environment vis-à-vis SCIRI and the Sadrists, there was a slim chance this would transpire. A new approach was needed.

Planning for the Surge

Towards late November 2006, the Bush administration began formalising a new Iraq strategy, culminating in the famous Surge.[925] This was to replace Operation Together Forward II, which was cancelled in November.[926] This new doctrine was intended to counter the growing violence in Baghdad. The new posturing was assisted by Rumsfeld's resignation after the November election and the release of the Baker-Hamilton report in December. Rumsfeld resigned as Secretary of Defense a day after the November 2006 elections, which produced a disastrous outcome for the Republican party.[927] It was viewed as a referendum on the administration's Iraq policy.[928] Rumsfeld released an outgoing memorandum that spoke to changing strategy in Iraq but still maintained the posture that the administration should "begin modest withdrawals of U.S. and Coalition forces (start "taking our hand off the bicycle seat"), so Iraqis know they have to pull up their socks, step up and take responsibility for their

[923] Hadley, 'Text of U.S. Security Adviser's Iraq Memo', para.10-11.
[924] Ibid. para.15 and 17.
[925] 'Interview with Stephen J. Hadley', *Miller Center*, University of Virginia, p.56.
[926] 'Operation Together Forward II', *Institute for the Study of War* [website], http://www.understandingwar.org/operation/operation-together-forward-ii, para. 5, accessed 2 Nov. 2020.
[927] Sheryl Gay Stolberg and Jim Rutenberg, 'Rumsfeld Resigns as Defense Secretary After Big Election Gains for Democrats', *New York Times*, 8 Nov. 2006, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/08/us/politics/09BUSHCND.html, para. 1-2, accessed 1 Oct. 2020.
[928] Ibid.

country".[929] Thus, with Rumsfeld gone, there was one less barrier to refreshing the administration's tactics; the notion of avoiding dependency and hands off the bicycle was sidelined. The Baker-Hamilton report was a product of the Iraq Study Group, a bipartisan group of 10 former government officials. It was commissioned in March 2006 based on a recommendation from both Republican and Democrat lawmakers to have "fresh eyes" on the administration's strategy and progress in Iraq.[930] The final report was released on 6 December 2006. It identified the major problems that have been discussed in this chapter and stated that, in essence, the "sectarian conflict is the principal challenge to stability".[931] Throughout its investigation, the Iraq Study Group frequently engaged with the Bush administration to stimulate analysis on the administration's approach to Iraq. Therefore, there was some overlap of ideas that emerged from the Bush administration's Surge strategy and the Baker-Hamilton report. Nonetheless, the report was a bi-partisan opportunity to allow the administration to undertake a new policy.[932]

The Baker-Hamilton report's executive summary stated that "the situation in Iraq is grave and deteriorating. There is no path that can guarantee success, but the prospects can be improved".[933] Accordingly, the deterioration was attributed to the increase of violence "fed by a Sunni Arab insurgency, Shiite militias and death squads, al Qaeda and widespread criminality".[934] Moreover, the democratically elected government was "not adequately advancing" any initiatives to rectify these issues.[935] The report recommended that "the United States should work closely with Iraq's leaders" to achieve "specific objectives – or milestones – on national reconciliation, security and governance".[936] Yet, it pessimistically stated that "miracles cannot be expected".[937] Furthermore, the prime minister had to prove to "the citizens of the United States… that it deserves continued support" from the United States by meeting these set milestones. Thus, "it should be unambiguous that continued U.S. political, military, and economic support for Iraq depends on the Iraqi government's demonstrating political will and making substantial progress toward the achievement of milestones".[938] Hence, it advocated for greater engagement and "frequent contact with the Iraqi leadership" to "convey a clear message: there must be action by the Iraqi government to make substantial progress

[929] Rumsfeld, 'Iraq? Illustrative New Courses of Action', para. 15.
[930] 'Iraq Study Group Fact Sheet', *United States Institute of Peace* [website], (20 Dec. 2006), https://www.usip.org/publications/2006/12/iraq-study-group-fact-sheet, para. 1, accessed 1 Nov. 2020.
[931] Baker III and Hamilton (eds), *The Iraq Study Group Report*, (U.S.A: Vintage Books, 2006), p.xiii.
[932] Ibid. p.40 and House of Commons, The Report of the Iraq Inquiry (2016), Vol. 9 Section 5, p.50.
[933] Baker III and Hamilton (eds), *The Iraq Study Group Report*, p.xiii.
[934] Ibid.
[935] Ibid.
[936] Ibid. p.xvii.
[937] Ibid.
[938] Ibid. p.60.

toward the achievement of milestones".[939] Alternatively, if the government does not demonstrate this progress then, "the United States should reduce its political, military, or economic support for the Iraqi government".[940] The report's suggestion was a fundamental influence strategy to use such aid as leverage to induce compliance from Maliki and his government.

Pertaining to the role of U.S. troops, the report recommended a short influx of troop numbers while conducting more training of Iraqi army units who should take on the responsibilities of security in 2008.[941] Also, the additional U.S. troops would help with the reconciliation process by being somewhat of a security guarantee for militia and insurgent groups who disarm and turn to politics.[942] The report also advised that the national police be placed under the Ministry of Defence, where it would be under greater and "more rigorous Iraqi and U.S. supervision".[943] Moreover, it recommended substantial and "organizational transformation" of the Interior Ministry.[944] The views of the study group were widely conveyed to the Bush administration in November and December. Some of the report's suggestions were also emerging from the administration's ongoing strategic review.

Throughout November, Casey and Khalilzad appeared to maintain that transferring responsibility and drawing down U.S. troops was the best policy.[945] Nonetheless, Rice and Hadley were corresponding with Zelikow as well as Pace and the Council of Colonels to discuss its findings and present Bush with a full selection of options to pursue.[946] According to Hadley, Bush realised that the current levels of violence in Baghdad would prevent any political reconciliation and improvement of governance from transpiring.[947] Although the administration accepted that reconciliation amongst Iraq's sects could only be solved politically, the violence in late 2006 was too great for any sort of reconciliation to emerge. Hence, Bush was prepared to deploy additional troops to provide temporary stability to allow such a process to occur. Hadley summarised it as, "in order to get where you want to go you need to have a surge and a new strategy that gets the violence down, gets people feeling more secure, and that will provoke the kind of political process that in the end is the route to get the violence down and

[939] Ibid. p.xvii.
[940] Ibid.
[941] Ibid. pp.38-39.
[942] Ibid. p.41.
[943] Ibid. p.78.
[944] Ibid.
[945] 'Rice, Condoleezza- Surge Interview', *Center For Presidential History*, p.9.
[946] 'Hadley, Stephen- Surge Interview', *Center For Presidential History*, pp.48-51. For more detail on the process, discussions and disagreements pertaining to the development of the Surge see Chapter 28 of Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History 2006-2008* and Ricks, *The Gamble: General Petraeus and the Untold Story of the American Surge in Iraq, 2006 – 2008*, pp.74-124.
[947]'Hadley, Stephen- Surge Interview', *Center For Presidential History*, pp.38-39.

to stabilise the situation".[948] However, there was fear within the administration that simply adding troops would not produce the desired outcome if it did not address the predominant issue: militias and sectarian government policies.[949] Therefore, echoing the Baker-Hamilton report, if more troops were sent, the administration would need to be prepared to target these fundamental problems and ensure cooperation from Iraq's leader, Nouri al-Maliki.

Betting On Maliki

Before the Bush administration could commit to a new strategic approach, it had to ensure that it had the right leader. Executing the Surge would require the compliance of Iraq's prime minister. Notwithstanding his defiance throughout 2006, the Bush administration and Tony Blair's government calculated that Maliki was the right leader. They all portrayed a generous assessment of Maliki, stating that he "means business"[950] and "is more engaged than its predecessor in addressing security problems, particularly in the vital ground of Baghdad".[951] Yet, it was the Shia bloc that "constrained" Maliki and prevented him from supporting the U.S. objectives.[952] Any other leader "in Maliki's position…would face similar pressures and behave in much the same way".[953] Blair noted that Maliki was "constrained and dependent on Sadrists' as he had 'no base on his own".[954] Moreover, the UK ambassador William Patey stated, "Maliki knows he must reduce and eliminate the power of militias but does not feel he has sufficient forces at his disposal or cover within his own political circles to do so".[955] In his book, Bush makes favourable assessments of Maliki in this period despite the non-compliance emerging in 2006. He writes,

> …the Iraqi prime minister's leadership had frustrated us at times. He had not always deployed Iraqi troops when he said he would. Some in his government had suspicious ties to Iran. He hadn't done enough to go after Shia extremists. General Casey was rightly upset that sectarian officials close to Maliki had blocked our troops from going into Shia neighborhoods. Yet over his six months in power, Maliki had matured as a leader. He had endured death threats, potential coups, and numerous congressional delegations traveling to Iraq to berate him. A few days before our scheduled summit in Jordan, radical Shia leader Moqtada al Sadr

[948] 'Interview with Stephen J. Hadley', *Miller Center*, University of Virginia, p.58.
[949] 'Hadley, Stephen- Surge Interview', *Center For Presidential History*, p.39.
[950] Robert Fry, 'SBMR-I End of Tour Report' [minute], 28 Aug. 2006, *The National Archives,* https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123123940/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/211561/2006-08-28-minute-fry-to-pso-cds-sbmr-i-end-of-tour-report.pdf, p.4 accessed 3 Feb. 2021.
[951] 'Al Maliki's Government: Interim Progress Report' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 5 Oct. 2006, *The National Archives,* https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123124104/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/211301/2006-10-05-jic-assessment-al-malikis-government-interim-progress-report.pdf, p.2, accessed 13 Feb. 2021.
[952] Ibid.
[953] 'Iraq: Tackling Shia Militias' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, p.2.
[954] Nick Banner, 'Iraq' [letter], 8 Nov. 2006, *The National Archives,* https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122757/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/243516/2006-11-08-letter-banner-to-siddiq-iraq.pdf, p.2, accessed 20 Dec. 2020.
[955] Patey, 'Iraq: Valedictory' [eGram], p.2.

> threatened to withdraw his supporters from the government if the prime minister met with me. Maliki came anyway.[956]

Moreover, Maliki's history appealed to Bush and his freedom agenda. Bush wrote,

> the prime minister had a gentle manner and a quiet voice, but I sensed an inner toughness. Saddam Hussein had executed multiple members of Maliki's family, yet he had refused to renounce his role in the opposition party. His personal courage was a seed that I hoped to nurture, so he could grow into the strong leader the Iraqis needed.[957]

There was scepticism from others concerning Maliki and the feasibility of sticking with him while implementing the new Surge doctrine. However, Bush remained committed. Woodward narrates an account between Bush and the chairs of the Iraq Study Group, James Baker and Lee Hamilton. Bush declared his support for Maliki by stating, "we ought to do everything we can to strengthen Maliki… we've got to help and sustain him. We need to strengthen Maliki, not undermine him".[958] Yet, according to Woodward, Baker questioned the logic of betting on Maliki. Woodward narrates the encounter with Baker asking Bush, "how do we get the Maliki government to do the things we know they need to?" and what if the government does not meet the milestones?[959] Bush replied, "there's a temptation to say, you must do this or else… we are concerned this will be viewed as an imposition. And Maliki is more likely to respond if he is with us… we can strengthen him by giving more authority over his security forces".[960] Hamilton then challenged Bush by asking, "how much patience do we have?…the fact remains Prime Minister Maliki has not taken the hard steps. How long can we go down this road at the cost of $2 billion a week, losing men every day?".[961] Bush's response was, "Maliki actually is staking steps….he is working to isolate Shia militias from al-Sadr… we have lots of intelligence on Maliki going after death squads, and it is not fair to say the he is a catalyst for sectarian violence".[962] Bush's response, albeit questionable, indicates that he accepted that Maliki genuinely wanted to pursue the goals they both outlined at the start of 2006. Yet he was hamstrung with his domestic situation. Hence, Bush appeared prepared to bet on Maliki to cooperate with the Bush administration's goals as he believed Maliki shared the same long-term preferences. Yet, according to Bush, they needed to give "him the tools necessary" to remove the constraints preventing his cooperation.[963]

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[956] Bush, *Decision Points*, pp.373-374.
[957] Ibid. p.367.
[958] Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History 2006-2008*, p.210.
[959] Ibid. p.210.
[960] Ibid. p.211
[961] Ibid.
[962] Ibid. p.212.
[963] Weekly Comp. Pres. Docs., 2006 WCPD No. 00048, p.2109 available at Compilation of Presidential Documents, https://www.govinfo.gov/help/cpd, accessed 30 July 2020.

Unveiling the Surge

Bush spoke to Maliki about the new strategy in Jordan on 29 November 2006. Bush stated he was willing to put in "tens of thousands of additional forces" given that the government had lost control of the capital.[964] At the meeting, Maliki brought Bush a new plan to replace Operation Together Forward II.[965] It was also a type of Surge strategy to bring down the violence.[966] According to Hadley, Bush privately asked Pace and Casey if the Iraqi forces could implement the plan, which they answered no.[967] Thus, Bush said to Maliki, "I agree with your strategy. Let us work with you on the fine points. But, you don't have the troops to do it. Let me lend you my troops".[968] Hadley describes Bush's approach to Maliki as getting him comfortable; that he will have the resources and a position of strength to pursue the objectives of dismantling militias and reducing sectarianism.[969] Yet, Bush tried to lock Maliki into making a commitment on these key issues.[970]

Bush told Maliki, "Americans want to know whether your plan allows us to go against both Sunni and Shia killers".[971] Maliki agreed to this.[972] Additionally, there had to be a non-sectarian commander to oversee the Iraqi brigades contributing to the operation. Also, there had to be "no no-go areas like Sadr city" and "if we pick up a Shia terrorist, we won't get a phone call from the prime minister's office to let him go".[973] Moreover, Maliki "would have to confront the Shia militias, including Sadr's army. And as security improved, he had to make progress on political reconciliation".[974] According to Bush, Maliki agreed to these conditions[975]; as such, Bush compelled Maliki to give two public speeches to reinforce the conditions he agreed on.[976] For Bush, the upcoming Surge operation would test Maliki and assess whether he was the right leader and genuinely supported the administration's goals.[977] If he reneged on the commitments, it would be clear that Maliki was wilfully uncompliant. However, Bush writes, "after seeing Maliki, I believed we could count on his support. The surge was our best chance,

[964] Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History 2006-2008*, p.256.
[965] 'Hadley, Stephen- Surge Interview', *Center For Presidential History*, p.41 and 'Operation Together Forward II', *Institute for the Study of War*.
[966] 'Hadley, Stephen- Surge Interview', *Center For Presidential History*, p.41.
[967] Ibid.
[968] Ibid.
[969] Ibid.
[970] Bush, *Decision Points*, pp.374-375.
[971] Ibid. p.374.
[972] Ibid.
[973] 'Hadley, Stephen- Surge Interview', *Center For Presidential History*, p.42.
[974] Bush, *Decision Points*, p.374.
[975] Ibid.
[976] 'Hadley, Stephen- Surge Interview', *Center For Presidential History*, p.42 and Weekly Comp. Pres. Docs., 2006 WCPD No. 00048, p.2112.
[977] 'Hadley, Stephen- Surge Interview', *Center For Presidential History*, pp.27-28.

maybe our last chance, to accomplish our objectives in Iraq".[978] Thus, Bush calculated that Maliki would be compliant.[979]

Bush officially announced the Surge strategy to the public. It would entail an additional five brigades consisting of 20,000 troops working with the Iraqi army and police to secure Baghdad.[980] The U.S. troop mission was "to help Iraqis clear and secure neighborhoods, to help protect the local population, and to help ensure that the Iraqi forces left behind are capable of providing the security that Baghdad needs".[981] Behind the official aims of the Surge was the overall objective of disrupting the domestic political configuration Maliki was in, the "political Shia bloc".[982] Simply deploying more troops to shadow ISF would not address the overall problem that frustrated the administration since 2005. The administration needed to remove the constraints on Maliki by disrupting the Shia bloc's influence over him. Thus, the influx of troops and support for Maliki was intended to give him "the breathing space he needs to go after Sadr and other militias".[983]

The new military strategy would also include an "increase [of] the embedding of American advisors in Iraqi Army units and partner a coalition brigade with every Iraqi Army division".[984] Also, there would be an additional 4,000 troops sent to Anbar Province to work with Sunni tribal forces and Iraqi troops to disrupt al-Qaeda's operations and network.[985] This was building on the Anbar Awakening that started to occur in mid-2005. Finally, Maliki would undertake reforms of the de-Baathification laws, which intensified under Jaafari and had a polarising effect on the Sunni population.[986] Lieutenant General David Petraeus would lead the Surge and replace Casey.[987] Casey wasn't supportive of the notion of deploying more troops and said he would only use two brigades.[988] He stated, "it was clear that Washington was looking for something different from what I was recommending them".[989] Furthermore, Abizaid was to

[978] Bush, *Decision Points*, p.375.
[979] Ibid.
[980] 'President's Address to the Nation', *Office of the Press Secretary*, 10 Jan. 2007, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2007/01/20070110-7.html, para. 11, accessed 3 Dec. 2020.
[981] Ibid. para. 10
[982] 'Iraq Reconsidered: Ten Years after the Surge', *Council on Foreign Relations* [website], (2017), https://www.cfr.org/event/iraq-reconsidered-ten-years-after-surge, para. 54, accessed 12 Nov. 2020
[983] House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), Vol. 9 Section 5, p.66.
[984] 'President's Address to the Nation', *Office of the Press Secretary*, para. 16.
[985] Ibid. para. 18.
[986]. Baker III and Hamilton (eds), *The Iraq Study Group Report*, p.18 and Miranda Sissons and Abdulrazzaq Al-Saiedi, 'A Bitter Legacy: Lessons of De-Baathification in Iraq', *International Center for Transitional Justice*, (Mar. 2013), https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Report-Iraq-De-Baathification-2013-ENG.pdf, pp.14-15, accessed 1 Aug. 2020.
[987] Michael R. Gordon and Thom Shanker, 'Bush to Name a New General to Oversee Iraq', *New York Times,* 5 Jan. 2007, https://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/05/world/middleeast/05military.html, accessed 18 June 2020.
[988] 'Hadley, Stephen- Surge Interview', *Center For Presidential History*, p.46.
[989] Casey, Jr., *Strategic Reflections: Operation Iraqi Freedom July 2004–February 2007*, p.143.

be replaced by Admiral William Fallon, and Khalilzad would be replaced with Ryan Crocker.[990] Moreover, the new Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, would preside over Bush's strategy. This was intended to implement a new team for the new strategy.[991] Accordingly, on 7 January, Maliki announced the Baghdad Security Strategy and stated that the strategy "will not be a shelter to the outlaws regardless of their political or religious affiliation, and we shall punish anyone who thwarts the strategy or presses their sectarian partisan agenda".[992] Also, Maliki called for parliament to address corruption and the de-Baathification.[993]

Conclusion

The first year of Maliki's government witnessed further regression of the Bush administration goals. This was a consequence of Maliki not confronting the Shia militias and preventing the U.S. military from conducting operations against Sadr's Mahdi Army. Hence, sectarian militia activities continued, stoking Iraq's low-grade civil war. Maliki's actions epitomise Moravcsik's and Putnam's theory on domestic interest groups determining a stateman's preferences. Maliki was dependent on actors within the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) to remain as prime minister. Thus, Maliki appeared to prioritise maintaining his position as prime minister. Additionally, the intelligence assessments interpreted that Maliki prioritised keeping the UIA government intact given the competing rivalries amongst the alliance, such as the one between SCIRI and the Sadrists. Therefore, despite Maliki stating he supported the Bush administration's stability goals vis-à-vis dismantling militias and reducing sectarian tensions, Maliki did not act against the Shia bloc's interests. This exemplifies Putnam's two-level game concept of win-sets. It was clear that Maliki's win-set, conditioned by the UIA, was restricted and minimally overlapped with the U.S. win-set. Hence, Maliki's and the U.S. preferences were not aligned, leading to his non-compliance with U.S. objectives.

Notwithstanding Iraq's dependence on U.S. military and economic aid and the presence of 140,000 U.S. troops and advisors in Iraq's ministries, the Bush administration had limited influence over Maliki. This speaks to Emerson's mutual dependence. Despite Iraq's dependence on the United States, the Bush administration was dependent on Maliki. It was dependent on him to mitigate the Shia bloc's contradicting interests, which were damaging U.S. objectives. Moreover, the administration was dependent on Maliki wanting to maintain

[990] Michael R. Gordon and Thom Shanker, 'U.S. team in charge of Iraq is reshuffled Bush discusses plan to bolster forces in Baghdad with Maliki', *New York Times*, 6 Jan. 2007, para. 2-3, in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 14 June 2020.
[991] Ibid. para. 4.
[992] Solomon Moore, 'Iraq unveils new security effort; Al-Maliki says plan centers on Baghdad', *Chicago Tribune*, 7 Jan. 2007, para. 7, in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 21 June 2020.
[993] Ibid. para. 16.

his relationship with the Bush administration. It calculated that there was a risk that Maliki could be encouraged to deepen his relationship with the Shia bloc and Iran if he did not remain supportive of the U.S.-Iraq relationship. As a result of this dependency, the Bush administration had limited ability to influence Maliki. It did not employ common statecraft tactics such as coercion through leveraging the economic and security aid that the United States was providing. In fact, Bush rejected the Baker-Hamilton report's suggestion to make U.S. aid conditional on Iraq's government meeting desired milestones to induce compliance.[994] Instead, similar to the Jaafari period, the administration resorted to verbal protests and confrontations with Maliki to persuade him to change his behaviour. The absence of change in Maliki's behaviour demonstrates that these U.S. influence attempts were unsuccessful and illustrates how mutual dependence can limit the influence of a stronger actor in an asymmetrical-dyadic relationship. Consequently, the administration was forced to accept Maliki's non-compliance.

Recognising the severity of this environment, the Bush administration devised a new strategy that was intended to remove the Shia bloc's influence on Maliki. This strategy was underpinned by the benign assumption that Maliki intrinsically shared the Bush administration's stability goals. Hence, the Surge would give Maliki the space and tools to defy the constraints of the Shia bloc to pursue militias and promote the political reconciliation the Bush administration desired. Nonetheless, the prospect of achieving Bush's democratic goals with this new strategy was severely doubted. Blair's cabinet agreed that,

> …our existing goal for Iraq defined as a democratic, stable, united and law-abiding Iraq…providing effective representative and inclusive government for all its people is unlikely to be achieved. The best outcome that is likely to be achievable would be an Iraq which can govern and sustain itself…and where sectarian and other violence is contained short of the point where it would overwhelm Iraq's institutions and precipitate chaos and/or civil war.[995]

Bush himself appeared to lower his democratic expectations by stating that "winning means a government that can sustain itself, defend itself and govern itself, and an ally in the war on terror".[996] This was defined as the "ultimate victory".[997] Interestingly, compared to the start of

[994] Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History 2006-2008*, p.210.
[995] 'Iraq: Medium Term Prospects and Implications' [paper], Ministerial Committee on Defence and Overseas Policy: Sub-Committee on Iraq, 10 Oct. 2006, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122624/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/236866/2006-10-10-paper-officials-iraq-medium-term-prospects-and-implications.pdf, p.2, accessed 11 Dec. 2020.
[996] Guy Dinmore and Roula Khalaf, 'Bush tries to lower expectations over Iraq', *Financial Times*, 14 June 2006, https://www.ft.com/content/c8f51200-fbd9-11da-b1a1-0000779e2340, para. 3, accessed 12 Nov. 2020.
[997] 'Transcript: President Bush on Iraq', *New York Times,* 25 Oct. 2006, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/25/world/americas/25iht-web.1025bush.text.3284498.html, para. 79, accessed 12 Nov. 2020.

2006, the term democratic was absent before the word government. This absence was more pronounced when contrasted with Bush's previous statements in 2004 and 2005 on democracy and Iraq becoming a "constitutional democracy at the heart of the Middle East".[998] Observing the worsening conditions in Iraq, even after the disastrous Jaafari year, appeared to curtail Bush's aspiration.

[998] 'Transcript of Bush speech', *CNN,* 19 Dec. 2005, https://edition.cnn.com/2005/POLITICS/12/18/bush.transcript/, para. 2, accessed 5 Aug. 2020.

Chapter V–The Surge, 2007-2008

The Surge commenced in 2007 and was a critical milestone in the U.S.-Iraq relationship. It significantly departed from the previous strategy that dominated U.S. policy under Rumsfeld. Instead of attempting to stabilise Iraq while transferring responsibility to Iraqis, the U.S. core focus would be stability first, then transfer and eventual withdrawal. To achieve these outcomes, the Bush administration intended to pursue the fundamental factors that it saw as undermining stability: militias; the al-Qaeda led Sunni insurgency; and the police. These were fuelling sectarian tensions and preventing the administration's larger goals of political reconciliation amongst Iraq's sectarian groups. However, these stated objectives required Maliki's compliance. Therefore, the Surge attempted to prevent the reoccurrence of non-compliance exhibited by Maliki in 2006. This entailed breaking up the "political Shia bloc" of Maliki's governing coalition, which was perceived as constraining Maliki from supporting U.S. goals.[999] Yet, this did not fully transpire. The U.S.-led coalition pursued an opportunity that led to the fracturing of the Sadr-Maliki relationship. This allowed the coalition to confront and significantly degrade Sadr's Mahdi Army. However, the coalition did not pursue any significant initiatives towards the other dominant party, SCIRI and its Badr militia. Thus, Maliki remained affected by the continued presence of SCIRI. Reflecting Moravcsik's and Putnam's theoretical logic, this political environment continued to influence Maliki's preferences towards U.S. objectives. Consequently, it skewed Maliki's political calculations to the disadvantage of the coalition.

The inability to dismantle the Shia bloc undermined the Bush administration's priorities towards the al-Qaeda led Sunni insurgency and its desire for political reconciliation. Also, it affected the administration's goal of securing a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) in 2008. SCIRI, the Sadrists and other Shia factions of Maliki's governing coalition opposed the Bush administration's attempt to build on the so-called Anbar Awakening. Given the unpopularity of this initiative amongst the Shia bloc, Maliki's appetite for this initiative and reconciliation was limited. The same constraints emerged with the SOFA negotiations. The Bush administration desired a SOFA to maintain its troops' presence in Iraq and preserve the security gains of the Surge. However, Maliki's priority in these negotiations was to limit the potential political repercussions of such an agreement to remain as prime minister and protect the prospects of his Dawa party in the 2009 provincial elections.

[999] 'Iraq Reconsidered: Ten Years after the Surge', *Council on Foreign Relations* [website], (2017), https://www.cfr.org/event/iraq-reconsidered-ten-years-after-surge, para. 54, accessed 12 November 2020.

Exacerbating this environment, Maliki pursued additional objectives that impeded U.S. interests. These appeared to be motivated by Maliki himself and not the Shia bloc. Maliki began exhibiting authoritarian tendencies in 2007 and 2008. This included consolidating power in his own centralised Office of Commander in Chief. Additionally, he attempted to expand his control over Iraq's military. It is difficult to confidently state if these objectives emerged from endogenous factors resulting from Maliki's agency and subjectivity. However, it is noteworthy that U.S. assessments of Maliki connect this authoritarian turn to what was observed as habits of insecurity, distrust, and susceptibility to conspiracies. Maliki constantly thought that there were plots to remove him and his government. Thus, consolidating his control over the military was one attempt to mitigate this. Pollack elegantly stated that Maliki had an unintentional goal of being a dictator.[1000] Nonetheless, these same attributes affected the Bush administration's objectives with the Anbar Awakening and political reconciliation. Maliki viewed the arming and recruiting of former Sunni insurgents into the security forces as a potential threat that would only grow. Hence, in addition to the unpopularity of the initiative within Maliki's Shia government, Maliki was personally reluctant to engage with the Anbar Awakening. Thus, in 2008, he began to undermine it with military force. The administration struggled to overcome this aspect of Maliki. It attempted to provide confidence and reassurance to him. It tried to warn him that this was the last opportunity to pursue reconciliation and achieve stability in Iraq with U.S. troops. However, these attempts were unsuccessful, which left the administration hamstrung. This authoritarian shift in Maliki perpetuated and would lead to instability in Iraq during the Obama period.

The Year of Police Reform

The administration's immediate priority of the Surge was to stem the violence in Baghdad that had heavily increased in 2006. It was envisioned that this would foster a stable environment to permit the political reconciliation that the coalition desired. Re-implementing, the clear, hold, build strategy, the influx of coalition forces partnered with Iraqi army and police units to clear the most violent suburbs around Baghdad. However, additional steps were taken to avoid relapse to the issues that plagued the clear, hold and build approach in 2006. Each Iraqi police and army unit deployed had a coalition counterpart unit assigned to curtail the sectarian behaviour witnessed in Operation Together Forward I and II.[1001] Thus, once areas were cleared, they were to be held by Iraqi police and coalition soldiers. Moreover, the Minister of Defence, Abdul Qader al-Obeidi, proposed that coalition and Iraqi forces establish joint police

[1000] Kenneth M. Pollack, 'The Battle for Baghdad', *The National Interest*, 103 (2009), p.12

[1001] Joel D. Rayburn and Frank K. Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S Army War College Press, 2019), pp.50-51.

stations in the cleared areas to prevent sectarian activities emerging from militia elements of Iraq Security Forces (ISF).[1002] Moreover, the coalition built numerous outposts within contested suburbs for personnel to live amongst the local population as well to maintain oversight over the Iraqi police.[1003] Additionally, an array of concrete barriers were erected throughout Baghdad's surrounding suburbs, transforming the cleared areas into "gated communities".[1004] This created separate Sunni and Shia enclaves that were intended to prevent sectarian militias infiltrating and regular al-Qaeda car bomb attacks.[1005] The influx of coalition troops and its outlined mission provoked substantial violent retaliation from al-Qaeda and Shia militias. They recognised the danger of the Surge to their interests.[1006]

The coalition encouraged Maliki and the Minister of Interior, Jawad Bolani, to undertake police reforms due to many units' persisting sectarian nature and corruption. This area was somewhat of a success for the administration, given the compliance that emerged from Maliki and Bolani. Maliki personally oversaw the replacement of police division commanders against whom General David Petraeus, the new Multinational Force-Iraq (MNF-I) Commander, brought evidence of sectarian and corrupt practices.[1007] Maliki publicly directed his security committee to "crush the police death squads".[1008] Additionally, Bolani oversaw initiatives in coordination with the coalition, such as the "re-bluing" program, which sidelined police units for more training and education in human rights, the rule of law and ethics of policing.[1009] Iraqi army units from calmer areas of Iraq were deployed closer to Baghdad to replace police units who were pulled away to undergo this retraining and re-vetting. Also, by May 2007, Bolani oversaw the dismissal of 3400 police and reassigned up to 10,000 staff in the Interior Ministry based on corruption and sectarian behaviour.[1010] Finally, the commanders of the notorious police Wolf Brigade, which predominantly consisted of Badr militia members, were removed.[1011]

[1002] Peter R. Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, (U.S.A: Yale University Press, 2013), p.71 and Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.99.
[1003] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.99.
[1004] Ibid. pp.100-110 and Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, p.92.
[1005] Ibid.
[1006] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.101.
[1007] Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, p.170.
[1008] House of Commons, *The Report of the National Archives* (2016), https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122743/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/the-report/, Vol. 9 Section 5 p.67, accessed 13 Dec. 2020.
[1009] United States Senate Committee on Armed Services, *Stand Up and Be Counted: The Continuing Challenge of Building the Iraqi Security Forces* (2007), https://armedservices.house.gov/_cache/files/2/b/2bfb0934-1745-4c80-8e21-205915e97cfb/772F199ECD13FDE175B0AF7877E6AA92.challenge-of-isf-06-25-07-vf.pdf, pp.83-84,accessed 12 Mar. 2021.
[1010] Ibid. p.85.
[1011] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.285.

The administration observed that with support from Maliki and Bolani and coalition forces, more competent and nationalist commanders in the police began to take more proactive measures to dismantle corruption and sectarianism.[1012] Despite this progress, however, the police were still plagued by the existing sectarian nature and infiltration of militia members. In July 2007, a Congress mandated commission to assess the ISF released its final report. The report's findings recommended that the police be disbanded as it was "weak and ineffective".[1013] Moreover, it stated that the Interior Ministry was "a ministry in name only" and was "dysfunctional and sectarian".[1014] This assessment was also echoed by Joseph A. Christoff of the U.S. Government Accountability Office, who added that "half of them don't show up for work each day".[1015] Coalition commanders used the Congress report as leverage against Maliki and Bolani to encourage them to continue their compliance with the coalition objectives of reforming the police. They stressed that U.S. funding for the Interior Ministry would cease if no progress were made with the reforms after this report.[1016] Nonetheless, Maliki's firm actions with the police were a substantial improvement in contrast to 2006, indicating improved compliance towards U.S. objectives.

Shia Militias

Confronting Shia militias was a critical component of the Surge as it undermined both Operation Together Forward I and II in 2006. Militias were viewed as one of the most de-stabilising factors in Iraq from 2005. Yet, as illustrated in the previous chapter, operations against militias were limited and prevented by Maliki. Maliki was perceived to be constrained by his governing coalition, most of whom possessed militias. Hence, he did not sanction targeted operations against their militias. Therefore, one of the Surge's aims was to break up this Shia bloc to allow Maliki's compliance and permit coalition forces to target sectarian militias; however, success was limited. The administration was given a chance to break one aspect of the Shia governing United Iraqi Alliance body, the Sadrists. Before Bush's summit with Maliki in Jordan in November 2006, Muqtada al-Sadr threatened to withdraw his MPs from Maliki's government if Maliki met Bush. After the Amman summit, the Sadrist bloc walked out of parliament and suspended its participation in the government.[1017] Additionally, Sadr tried

[1012] Ibid.
[1013] General James L. Jones USMC (Ret.), 'Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq', *Center for Strategic and International Studies* [website], (6 Sep. 2007), https://www.csis.org/programs/former-programs/independent-commission-security-forces-iraq, p.114, accessed 15 Nov. 2020.
[1014] Ibid. p.92.
[1015] James Glanz, 'In the Heat of Battle and Politics, Hard Facts Melt', *New York Times*, 20 May 2007, https://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/20/weekinreview/20glanz.html, para. 12, accessed 15 Mar. 2021.
[1016] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, pp.285-286.
[1017] 'Sadr bloc suspends role in Iraqi govt over Bush talks', *Reuters*, 20 Jan. 2007, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-sadr-suspend-idUSCOL95310320061129, accessed 10 Dec. 2020.

to convince other factions within and outside Maliki's coalition to ally with his party.[1018] Accordingly, Maliki and his Dawa party refined its alliance with SCIRI and its Badr militia to counter Sadr and his Mahdi Army.[1019] Additionally, they employed the same tactic of attempting to recruit factions from within the Sadrists to join Maliki's governing coalition.[1020]

The fracture of the Maliki-Sadr alliance presented the administration an opportunity to break up one aspect of the Shia bloc that had, in its eyes, constrained Maliki. Colonel Peter Mansoor, Petraeus's chief of staff, observed that Sadr's withdrawal played on Maliki's tendencies of believing in conspiracies. It made Maliki feel Sadr was against him.[1021] Hence, Maliki began to approve operations against Sadr's militias and loosen restrictions on coalition forces to conduct raids in Sadr City.[1022] Before his departure, General George Casey stated that they could start targeting Shia militia leaders "without a peep" from Maliki.[1023] The most telling example of this occurred on 9 February. U.S. forces and Iraqi commandoes infiltrated the Ministry of Health, a portfolio given to the Sadrists, and arrested the deputy Health Minister, Hakim Zamili. Zamili was a commander of a militia that conducted sectarian killings and, until the recent tensions between Sadr and Maliki, was untouchable.[1024] Most notably, Sadr himself fled to Iran after Bush and Maliki had announced the Surge and the new Baghdad Security Plan,[1025] fearing that he would be targeted.[1026] Moreover, he ordered his militia to refrain from attacks against coalition forces and ordered his MPs to return to parliament.[1027] Thus, the administration seized on this opportunity.

In addition to targeting Sadr's militia, the coalition attempted to pursue other rogue militias known as special groups. The most notable were Asa'ib Ahl-al Haq and Kataib Hezbollah. Most of these special groups consisted of factions that broke away from Sadr's Mahdi Army

[1018] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.70.
[1019] Anthony H. Cordesman, 'Success or Failure? Iraq's Insurgency and Civil Violence and US Strategy: Developments through June 2007', *Center for Strategic and International Studies,* (9 July 2007), https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/media/csis/pubs/070709_iraqinsurgupdate.pdf, p.10, accessed 11 Feb. 2021.
[1020] Marisa Sullivan, 'Iraq Report 12: The Fragmentation of the Sadrist Movement', *Institute for the Study of War*, (Jan. 2009), http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Iraq%20Report%2012%20Sadrist%20Movement%20Fragmentation.pdf, p.22, accessed 15 Nov. 2020.
[1021] Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, p.89.
[1022] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.76.
[1023] Ibid.
[1024] Ibid. p.79
[1025] The Baghdad Security Plan was the Iraqi name given for the Surge.
[1026] 'Muqtada Al-Sadr: Keeping His Distance', [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 12 July 2007, *The National Archives*
https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123123755/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/230645/2007-07-12-jic-assessment-muqtada-al-sadr-keeping-his-distance.pdf, p.2 accessed 12 Apr. 2021.
[1027] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.77.

and fell under the influence of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).[1028] After Sadr announced the cessation of operations against coalition forces; more militia members deserted the Mahdi Army for these special groups.[1029] These special groups also included other militias that IRGC established themselves. Most of these groups received training and funding from the IRGC and Hezbollah.[1030] The coalition attempted to focus on these special groups and make a distinction between them and Sadr loyalists who adhered to Sadr's ceasefire order. The coalition hoped that Sadr would eventually be brought back into the political fold without a militia, given his lineage and status in Iraqi society.[1031] Thus, after Sadr fled to Iran, U.S. forces began to concentrate on these special groups and factions that did not obey Sadr's cessation order.[1032]

Despite the progress on Sadr and the special groups, however, the Bush administration appeared not to confront Badr, the other militia that was a consistent source of sectarian violence. Badr, the armed wing of SCIRI, had equally infiltrated the police and Interior Ministry and participated in death squads. Yet, interestingly, throughout the Surge, the coalition did not take any substantial action against the militia. Instead, coalition forces reinforced and supported Badr-ISF units involved in skirmishes with Sadr's Mahdi Army.[1033] It appeared that the police reforms initiative was the administration's only strategy to reduce Badr's influence in the ISF. This contradiction was addressed in the United States Army's official in-depth account of this period commissioned by MNF-I Commander General Raymond Odierno.[1034] It highlighted that in contrast to Sadr, SCIRI did not openly challenge the U.S. presence in Iraq and held more nationalist leanings that outweighed its long-term connection to Iran.[1035] This image was reinforced in May 2007 when SCIRI[1036] dropped the Iranian revolution label from its name and became the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI).[1037] It stated that Iran's supreme leader was no longer the dominant guiding spiritual leader.[1038] Yet, these changes

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[1028] 'Iranian Support to Jaysh Al-Mahdi Special Groups' [assessment], Current Intelligence Groups, 13 Sep. 2007, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122655/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/230665/2007-09-13-cig-current-assessment-note-iranian-support-to-jaysh-al-mahdi-special-groups.pdf, accessed 12 Jan 2021.

[1029] House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), Vol. 9 Section 5 p.155.

[1030] 'Iranian Support to Jaysh Al-Mahdi Special Groups' [assessment], Current Intelligence Groups.

[1031] 'Iraq: Whither the Sadrist Trend' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Group, 7 Feb. 2008, The National Archives, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122324/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/230735/2008-02-07-jic-assessment-iraq-whither-the-sadrist-trend.pdf, p.1, accessed 12 Feb.2021.

[1032] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.77.

[1033] Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, pp.173-174.

[1034] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.xxix. Odierno replaced Petraeus as MNF-I Commander in September 2008

[1035] Ibid. pp.71-72.

[1036] Supreme Council for Revolution in Iraq

[1037] ISCI will now be used for SCIRI for the remainder of the thesis.

[1038] Cordesman, 'Success or Failure? Iraq's Insurgency and Civil Violence and US Strategy: Developments through June 2007', p.10.

appeared cosmetic.[1039] The coalition held the contentious position that ISCI and Badr could be somewhat accommodated and engaged with despite their connections to Iran and the sectarian behaviour of their militias. According to the Army's official account, the justification was that certain activities conducted by Badr were done against the wishes of the leaders of both ISCI and Badr.[1040] Yet, this was a dubious position to hold, which was illustrated in 2007 when Bush discovered that ISCI possessed strong connections to Iran. Speaking after SCIRI's leader Sayyed Abdul Azizi al-Hakim visited the White House, Bush, in shock, asked, "is SCIRI involved with Iran?" to which Rice answered "yes".[1041] Bush replied, "So they are involved with terrorists?...So I had this guy [al-Hakim] into the Oval Office who killed our troops?".[1042] Accordingly, Rice answered that they didn't kill U.S. troops, but probably trained those who did.[1043]

The decision to not openly challenge Badr most likely spoke to a political calculation that also applied to the Sadrists. Both Petraeus and Odierno comprehended the risk of creating a political storm resulting from coalition actions against the most prominent parties such as ISCI and Sadrists. Thus, notwithstanding their desire to break up the Shia bloc and dismantle its militias, they adopted a cautious approach towards these entities. For example, in February 2007, the son of ISCI's leader, Ammar al-Hakim, was intercepted crossing the border from Iran to Iraq, where his convoy possessed weapons destined for Badr.[1044] However, only the weapons were confiscated by coalition forces, and Hakim was immediately released from custody to avoid a political explosion.[1045] Also, Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad had to issue a public apology over the brief arrest of Hakim to defuse the tensions.[1046] Balancing the desire to break up the Shia bloc against the potential for inflaming tensions meant that Odierno only authorised a limited number of targeted raids in Sadr City despite Maliki's relaxing restrictions.[1047] This was intended to avoid "provok[ing] fierce JAM[1048] resistance and a return to large-scale violence against the coalition" and limit political backlash against the coalition and Maliki's government.[1049]

[1039] Ibid.
[1040] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.72.
[1041] Ibid. p.73
[1042] Ibid
[1043] Ibid.
[1044] Richard A. Oppel Jr., 'Son of Key Iraq Shiite Arrested at Iran's Border', *New York Times*, 23 Feb. 2007, https://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/23/world/middleeast/23cnd-Iraq.html, accessed 12 Dec. 2020.
[1045] Ibid.
[1046] Christian Berthelsen, 'Arrest spurs U.S. apology', *Los Angeles Times*, 24 Feb. 2007, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2007-feb-24-fg-iraq24-story.html, accessed 14 Dec. 2020.
[1047] 'Iraq: How Will Jaysh Al Mahdi React To Pressure?' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 26 July 2006, *The National Archives,* https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122912/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/211249/2006-07-26-jic-assessment-iraq-how-will-jaysh-al-mahdi-react-to-pressure.pdf, p.2, accessed 19 Dec. 2020.
[1048] The Mahdi Army.
[1049] 'Iraq: How Will Jaysh Al Mahdi React To Pressure?' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, pp.2-3.

Maliki's actions towards Shia militias fluctuated between compliance and defiance. He continued to authorise raids against Sadr's Mahdi Army, yet, also hoped to entice the Sadrists to cease activities against Iraqi forces and re-join his cabinet.[1050] This was intended to counter ISCI, the largest dominant party in his coalition, after Sadr's withdrawal.[1051] At times, Maliki publicly objected to high profile raids against the Sadrists when he viewed them as hurting the prospects of convincing them to re-join his government. This occurred in January when a senior Sadrist cleric was arrested by the coalition to which Maliki strongly objected.[1052] According to the U.S. Army's account, Maliki wanted to use this cleric as a carrot to entice Sadr to return his MPs to his cabinet.[1053] However, Bush instructed General Casey not to release the cleric as this would be a test of Maliki's commitment to the political goals of the Surge.[1054] Maliki eventually did relent to the administration's preference. Nevertheless, Maliki's inconsistent approach to the Sadrists slowly evaporated. On 30 June, Sadr's militia bombed the international green zone, where parliament sits, in response to a raid in Sadr City.[1055] Maliki became determined to confront Sadr's Mahdi Army with force. This was exemplified in August when Maliki undertook a big public move against the Sadrists in response to a notorious violent episode involving the Mahdi Army.[1056] In the Shia holy city of Karbala, the Mahdi Army launched an attack on Badr guards in two Shia shrines.[1057] 53 civilians died, and 200 were injured.[1058] Maliki responded by travelling to Karbala with a sizeable armed convoy and fired the local police chiefs and military commanders, including his cousin, while issuing arrest warrants for several Sadrist leaders.[1059] In response, Sadr, who was still in Iran, ordered his militia to stand down for six months.[1060] Maliki's actions were encouraging for the Bush administration, with Petraeus "complimenting PM Maliki's leadership".[1061] It appeared Maliki might be the nationalist leader to take a stance against militias which the Bush administration had bet on. Also, it indicated improved compliance to U.S. goals.

[1050] 'Iraq: Tackling Shia Militias' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 24 Jan. 2007, *The National Archives,* https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122912/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/233340/2007-01-24-jic-assessment-iraq-tackling-shia-militias.pdf, p.1, accessed 10 Feb. 2021.
[1051] Ibid.
[1052] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.76.
[1053] Ibid.
[1054] Ibid. p.77.
[1055] Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, p.157.
[1056] Ryan Crocker, 'JAM Creates Crisis in Karbala, Hits Badr In Baghdad' [cable], 07BAGHDAD2906_a, 29 Aug. 2007, WikiLeaks, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07BAGHDAD2906_a.html, para. 2, accessed 8 Feb. 2020.
[1057] Crocker, 'JAM Creates Crisis in Karbala, Hits Badr In Baghdad' [cable], para. 2.
[1058] Stephen Farrell, '50 Die in Fight Between Shiite Groups in Karbala', *New York Times,* 29 Aug. 2007, https://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/29/world/middleeast/29iraq.html, accessed 11 Dec. 2020. The two Shia shrines were Imam Husayn Shrine and al-Abbas Shrine.
[1059] Crocker, 'JAM Creates Crisis in Karbala, Hits Badr In Baghdad' [cable], para. 4-6.
[1060] Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, p.175.
[1061] Crocker, 'JAM Creates Crisis in Karbala, Hits Badr In Baghdad' [cable], para. 8.

Notwithstanding these favourable actions of Maliki, there was inconsistency with Maliki's approach to militias. These spoke to Maliki's preferences that did not complement the administration's. Maliki attempted to make political alliances with the special groups that had broken away from Sadr's Mahdi Army and received training and funding from Iran's IRGC.[1062] Maliki repeatedly attempted to convince the militia group Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, under Qais Khazali, to join his governing coalition.[1063] Al-Haq, known for its brutality and attacks against U.S. forces, launched a devastating attack on U.S. soldiers in January 2007, leaving five dead.[1064] When Khazali was arrested in March, Maliki lobbied hard to have him released.[1065] Maliki viewed these special groups – that U.S. forces were targeting – as a potential opportunity to balance the dominance of ISCI in his government after the Sadrists withdrew from his coalition.[1066] Moreover, it could remove his party's future dependence on the Sadrists to counter ISCI.[1067] Hence, Maliki's political objectives were in tension with the aims of the Surge. Nevertheless, the Bush administration was somewhat successful with Maliki's compliance in disrupting Sadr's Mahdi Army. Yet, Maliki attempted to stall coalition operations against other militias important to Maliki's political interests, such as Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq.

The Insurgency and Reconciliation

A crucial aim of the Surge was to dismantle the al-Qaeda led Sunni insurgency. In February 2007, Petraeus emphasised the need to build on the Anbar Awakening that had formally begun in 2006.[1068] This was designed to complement the coalition's broader political reconciliation objectives between the Shia dominated government and the marginalised Sunni population. The announcement of the Surge and former U.S. military outreach convinced many of the remaining non-al-Qaeda aspects of the insurgency, anti-coalition Sunni tribes, to search for ceasefires and pursue reconciliation with the coalition.[1069] For some, the calculation was based on three grim outcomes: be degraded by coalition forces, destroyed by Shia militias that had implicit support from the central government or become subservient to al-Qaeda in Iraq.[1070] Hence, throughout the first six months of the Surge, the coalition began to develop more

[1062] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.76.
[1063] United States. Central Command, 'Qayis al-Khazali Papers: Tactical Interrogation Report Number 47', 4 Apr. 2007, *Homeland Security Department Library,* https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=815597, pp.6-8., accessed 17 May 2020.
[1064] 'Former al-Sadr aides arrested', *Al-Jazeera*, 22 Mar. 2007, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2007/3/22/former-al-sadr-aides-arrested, accessed 5 Dec. 2020.
[1065] Eventually Khazali was released in a prisoner swap between Iran and the United Kingdom British see House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), Vol. 9 Section 5 p.133.
[1066] United States. Central Command, 'Qayis al-Khazali Papers: Tactical Interrogation Report Number 47', pp.6-8.
[1067] Ibid.
[1068] Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, p.120.
[1069] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.181.
[1070] David E. Johnson et al., *The U.S Army and the Battle for Baghdad: Lessons Learned — And Still to Be Learned*, (Santa Monica, Calif, Rand Corporation, 2019), p.128.

relationships with these insurgent groups, attempting to incorporate them into a security force to patrol their local areas as well as disrupt al-Qaeda networks.[1071] These former insurgent groups and Sunni tribal fighters became a loose entity dubbed the Sons of Iraq. They were effectively former anti-coalition fighters now on the U.S. military's payroll.[1072] This initiative was heavily scrutinised because many insurgent groups were responsible for U.S. casualties. Yet, Petraeus and Odierno recognised an opportunity to further integrate these former insurgents into Iraq's security structure which could reduce the overall violence in Iraq. Additionally, the auxiliary forces provided by these Sunni tribal fighters permitted the United States to redeploy its troops to other hotspots.[1073] The coalition believed that recruiting Sunni tribes into the ISF would deflate the insurgency. Moreover, it could be one step to assist with the political reconciliation amongst Iraq's sectarian groups.[1074] The administration calculated that if the Maliki's government built on this initiative and pursued reconciliation efforts with the Sunni community, it could bring all aspects of the Sunni population into the political process and further reduce the insurgency and sectarian violence.

The Sons of Iraq program was one of the most difficult challenges in securing Maliki's compliance and his government's endorsement. According to Mansoor, Ambassador Ryan Crocker and Petraeus worked extremely hard every day to convince Maliki that supporting and accepting the Sons of Iraq was in his interest.[1075] As was noted in Chapter III before Maliki became prime minister, Ambassador Khalilzad observed that Maliki harboured resentment and distrust towards the Sunni population.[1076] Khalilzad claimed that Maliki stated that Sunni insurgents must be dealt with by force while the challenges from Shia militias could be resolved politically.[1077] However, the coalition understood that a potential 100,000 Sunni armed force might cause Maliki and the Shia bloc anxiety.[1078] Petraeus and Crocker often had to disprove conspiracies that reached Maliki, such that the Sons of Iraq would be used in a coup against him. While they did succeed in mitigating these conspiracies, they remained and plagued the coalition in later years. Nevertheless, according to General Odierno, the success of integrating the Sunni tribes into the ISF, thus reducing the insurgency, could only be

[1071] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.181.
[1072] Noah Shachtman, 'Baghdad Government Takes Charge of Sons of Iraq', *Wired* [website], (2 Sep. 2008), https://www.wired.com/2008/09/over-the-past-e/, para. 2, accessed 12 Nov. 2020.
[1073] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.194.
[1074] Ibid.
[1075] Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, p.86.
[1076] Zalmay Khalilzad, 'Shia Islamist PM Contenders: No Perfect Candidate' [cable], 06BAGHDAD402_a, 10 Feb. 2006, *Wikileaks,* https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06BAGHDAD402_a.html, accessed 18 Oct. 2020 and 'Iraq: How Important is the Ba'ath Party?' [assessment], Current Intelligence Groups, 20 Aug. 2007, *The National Archives,* https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123123342/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/233380/2007-08-20-cig-assessment-iraq-how-important-is-the-baath-party.pdf, p.2, accessed 10 Mar 2021.
[1077] Khalilzad, 'Shia Islamist PM Contenders: No Perfect Candidate' [cable].
[1078] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.182.

cemented if the Maliki government participated in the program.[1079] Therefore, Odierno believed that if the Sons of Iraq could be formally placed under government control, it could reduce the anxiety of Maliki and the Shia bloc and decrease their resistance to the initiative.[1080] To get Maliki onboard, Odierno and Petraeus took Maliki to Sunni dominated areas to showcase the progress made against the insurgency and the reduction of violence.[1081] Odierno took Maliki to a place in Diyala province that U.S. troops and local Sunni tribes had recently cleared to illustrate the initiative's success. Maliki, accompanied by government officials, promptly arranged to deliver food and other supplies to the area that the local tribes requested.[1082] Moreover, Maliki visited Ramadi and Anbar to meet with Sunni tribes, an attempt at confidence-building between the government and the tribes.[1083] Additionally, Ammar al-Hakim, the son of ISCI's leader, met with the Awakening tribes, and they expressed support for each other and signed a reconciliation agreement.[1084] To further mitigate Maliki's concerns about the Sons of Iraq, the coalition photographed, interviewed, and fingerprinted all personnel in a biometric identity base.[1085] Personnel also had to swear an oath of allegiance to the government.[1086] Furthermore, Odierno kept reassuring Maliki that coalition forces would not allow the Sons of Iraq to emerge as a threat to the central government.[1087]

Despite these early political and diplomatic successes, there were still simmering tensions and issues which would later transpire. Moreover, Maliki was still anxious about the Sons of Iraq. Petraeus noted this in a memorandum to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, which stated that if

> …we were to ask the Maliki Government if they support Sunni tribal engagement and reconciliation they would answer yes…In Sunni provinces like Anbar and Salah ad Din they would likely mean yes. Closer to Baghdad they might say yes, but would act to slow roll any movement…The appetite of the Shi'a leadership for Sunni tribal engagement lessens significantly as the issue gets closer to Shi'a towns and neighbour-hoods.[1088]

[1079] Ibid. p.216.
[1080] Ibid. p.182.
[1081] Ibid.
[1082] Ibid.
[1083] George W. Bush, *Decision Points*, (New York: Crown Books, 2011), p.384.
[1084] Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, p.218.
[1085] Ryan Crocker, 'Maliki on Concerned Local Citizens, Strategic Partnership Declaration, and Large-Scale Detainee Amnesty' [cable], 07BAGHDAD3721_a, 13 Nov. 2007, *Wikileaks,* https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07BAGHDAD3721_a.html, para. 4, accessed 7 Feb. 2021.
[1086] Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, p.142.
[1087] Crocker, 'Maliki on Concerned Local Citizens, Strategic Partnership Declaration, and Large-Scale Detainee Amnesty' [cable], para. 4.
[1088] Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, pp.143-144.

Additionally, Maliki argued to Odierno that the Sons of Iraq "were growing in numbers so rapidly that they could become a lucrative target for extremist infiltration".[1089] Thus, Maliki, at times, acted as a roadblock to the Sons of Iraq. He created the Follow-Up Committee for National Reconciliation which was staffed by members from his own established Office of Commander in Chief to vet the Sons of Iraq.[1090] In one case, the committee was about to disqualify 50% of the proposed Sons of Iraq candidates that the coalition had presented to join the security forces.[1091] Odierno's political advisor, Emma Sky, was able to negotiate and convince the committee to accept the list.[1092] Moreover, Odierno persuaded Maliki to continue the recruitment and integrate 20% of the Sons of Iraq into the ISF.[1093] However, tensions remained. One example included an incident in which Maliki's director of the Office of Commander in Chief, General Faruq al-Araji, told Maliki that intelligence indicated that the coalition would replace his government with the Sons of Iraq.[1094] Accordingly, Maliki deployed loyal troops into checkpoints on all major roads into Baghdad, which confused coalition commanders.[1095] Once Odierno realised what was happening, he went to Maliki to reassure him that this would not transpire.[1096] Nonetheless, Petraeus summarised Maliki's reluctance and anxiety towards the Sons of Iraq as "a frustration for us, as we try to take advantage of what likely is a narrowing window of opportunity to reconcile with Sunni former resistance elements that now oppose AQI".[1097] According to Petraeus, the prime minister, was "naturally suspicious and inclined to believe rumours that he hears from his Shi'a advisors".[1098] Notwithstanding this friction, Odierno ordered his commanders to keep up the engagement with all Sunni tribes and pursue this unilaterally at all costs, even if facing political pressure from the Iraqi government.[1099]

Despite this unease and resistance, Maliki undertook initiatives such as declaring a general amnesty for those "deceived into joining" the insurgency.[1100] Moreover, Maliki defended Odierno and the Sons of Iraq proposal in cabinet meetings against his Shia governing partners and firmly stated that "I agree with everything General Odierno laid out".[1101] He told Odierno

[1089] Crocker, 'Maliki on Concerned Local Citizens, Strategic Partnership Declaration, and Large-Scale Detainee Amnesty' [cable], para. 3.
[1090] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.217.
[1091] Emma Sky, *The Unravelling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, (London: Atlantic Books, 2015), pp.198-201.
[1092] Ibid.
[1093] Ibid. p.237.
[1094] Ibid. pp.232-233.
[1095] Ibid.
[1096] Ibid.
[1097] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.267.
[1098] Ibid. p.268.
[1099] Ibid. pp.217-218.
[1100] Ryan Crocker, 'Scenesetter for Secretary Gates' Visit to Iraq' [cable], 07BAGHDAD3922_a, 3 Dec. 2007, *WikiLeaks*, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07BAGHDAD3922_a.html, para. 3,accessed 13 Feb. 2021
[1101] Sky, *The Unravelling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, p.237.

that he "would like to send a strong message" of support to areas that had successfully established a Sons of Iraq program.[1102] This indicated a degree of compliance towards the administration's reconciliation objectives. Nonetheless, the friction between Maliki and the Sons of Iraq would remain. There was equal unease and distrust amongst the Sunni tribes too. Many Sunni tribes still regarded the Iraqi army as a branch of Badr and the Mahdi Army that would turn against them.[1103] Moreover, they did not want to be deployed to other areas of Iraq outside of their home provinces.[1104] Additionally, some tribes still maintained opposition to the central government despite working with coalition forces.[1105] In one example, a former Saddam era colonel in the insurgency stated,

> Our ultimate objective is to reach a compromise with the occupation, which we recognize, as opposed to the so-called Iraqi government, which we don't want to do anything with. Once we reach an agreement with the occupation and a timetable for their withdrawal, we will organize a national conference of the resistance in order to decide the future of Iraq.[1106]

The Bush administration intended for the Sons of Iraq program to work in tandem with the broader Sunni outreach. However, this did not materialise as envisioned. In June, the main Sunni Tawafuq bloc withdrew its members from Maliki's cabinet for an entire year.[1107] The trigger was the dismissal of the Sunni speaker; however, the bloc cited an array of reasons for its departure.[1108] The leader of Sunni Tawafuq and Vice President, Tariq Hashimi, told Ambassador Crocker that they were sidelined in Maliki's cabinet and its decision making as well as excluded from the execution of the Baghdad Security Plan.[1109] Moreover, he claimed that militias still targeted prominent Sunni politicians and religious clerics.[1110] Additionally, they were disenfranchised by the government maintaining its "symbiotic relationship" with Shia militias.[1111] Yet, the main grievance identified was the unfulfillment of critical promises made

[1102] Ryan Crocker, 'July 19 Maliki-Petraeus Meeting' [cable], 07BAGHDAD2413_a, 20 July 2007, *WikiLeaks*, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07BAGHDAD2413_a.html, para. 3, accessed 15 Feb. 2021.
[1103] Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, p.131.
[1104] Ibid.
[1105] House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), Vol. 9 Section 5, p.171.
[1106] Garrett Therolf, '20 Iraqis Die In Suicide Attacks' *Los Angeles Times*, 1 June 2007, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2007-jun-01-fg-iraq1-story.html, para. 20, accessed 13 Dec. 2020.
[1107] 'Sunni bloc boycotts Iraqi Government', *ABC News*, 30 June 2007, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2007-06-30/sunni-bloc-boycotts-iraqi-government/85304, accessed 15 Dec. 2020.
[1108] Additionally, a raid on Dulaimi house in November 2007 was the final trigger for the boycott. See Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, p.224.
[1109] Ryan Crocker, 'IIP Tells Ambassador "This Was Not The Democracy We'd Hoped For"'[cable], 07BAGHDAD1357_a, 20 Apr. 2007, *WikiLeaks*, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07BAGHDAD1357_a.html, accessed 18 Nov. 2020 and Crocker, 'Sunni Tawafuq Voices Frustration With GOI, Calls For Withdrawal' [cable], 07BAGHDAD1364_a, 22 Apr. 2007, *WikiLeaks*, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07BAGHDAD1364_a.html, para. 1, accessed 18 Nov. 2020.
[1110] Crocker, 'Sunni Tawafuq Voices Frustration With GOI, Calls For Withdrawal' [cable], para. 4.
[1111] 'Iraq: Tackling Shia Militias' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, p.2.

by Maliki's coalition to the Sunni bloc.[1112] This included further changes to the de-Baathifcation laws and the constitution.[1113] The Bush administration wanted the Maliki government to address these grievances as they were essential for the political reconciliation and unity government that the administration desired.[1114]

Maliki continued to exemplify a mixed attitude towards the Sunni outreach, which the administration struggled to overcome. In some areas, Maliki appeared to make genuine efforts towards the Sunni bloc. He drafted changes to the de-Baathification laws that addressed the bloc's grievances; however, these were blocked by both ISCI and the Sadrists.[1115] Also, Maliki recruited former Saddam-era Sunni generals and personally intervened to have pensions paid for those generals who decided to retire.[1116] This was welcomed by Tariq Hashimi.[1117] Furthermore, the administration was pleased with Maliki's response to the second bombing of the Shia al-Askari Mosque in June 2007. Maliki called for calm and national unity while forbidding violence or retaliation. Additionally, he quickly imposed a curfew around Baghdad to prevent any sectarian killings witnessed in the first bombing of February 2006.[1118] Only five casualties, attributed to sectarian revenge, were registered in the aftermath of the bombing.[1119] This was a stark contrast to the 1,000 deaths after the first bombing in 2006 under Ibrahim Jaafari's tenure.[1120]

Notwithstanding these welcomed initiatives, however, Maliki displayed less benign attitudes towards the Sunni population. A British Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) assessment noted that Maliki would still refer to Sunni "oppositionists as insurgents or Baathists".[1121] Moreover, he complained to Ambassador Crocker that the Ministry of Defence was full of Baathists loyal to al-Qaeda.[1122] Furthermore, after the Sunni bloc walked out, Maliki began to negotiate a new coalition that excluded the Sunni bloc entirely.[1123] It should be noted that Maliki was also

[1112] Katia Papagianni, 'State Building and Transitional Politics in Iraq: The Perils of a Top-down Transition', *International Studies Perspectives,* 8/3 (2007), p.255 and House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), Vol. 9 Section 5, pp.136 and 157-158.
[1113] Ibid.
[1114] House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), Vol. 9 Section 5, p 136.
[1115] Ibid. and Cordesman, 'Success or Failure? Iraq's Insurgency and Civil Violence and US Strategy: Developments through June 2007', *Center for Strategic and International Studies,* p.20.
[1116] Crocker, 'Sunni Tawafuq Voices Frustration With GOI, Calls For Withdrawal' [cable], para. 9.
[1117] Ibid.
[1118] Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, p.154.
[1119] Cordesman, 'Success or Failure? Iraq's Insurgency and Civil Violence and US Strategy: Developments through June 2007', p.30.
[1120] Ellen Knickmeyer, 'Blood on Our Hand', *Foreign Policy* [website], (25 Oct. 2010), https://foreignpolicy.com/2010/10/25/blood-on-our-hands/, para. 28, accessed 11 Jan. 2021.
[1121] 'Iraq: How Important is the Ba'ath Party?' [assessment], p.2.
[1122] Ryan Crocker, 'Maliki Says Neighbors and JAM Are Serious Threats' [cable], 07BAGHDAD1666_a, 22 May 2007, *WikiLeaks*, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07BAGHDAD1666_a.html, para. 1, accessed 10 Feb. 2021.
[1123] Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, p.163.

excluding the Sadrists due to their boycott.[1124] Yet, according to the U.S. Army's official account, Maliki considered Hashimi a "recalcitrant sectarian linked to terrorist groups, and Hashimi had reciprocal feelings about Maliki".[1125] Nonetheless, this was alarming for the administration as the exclusion of the Sunni bloc "would clearly be a blow to both reconciliation and the legitimacy of the national unity government".[1126] This tension between the Sunni bloc and Maliki's government would frustrate coalition efforts and could not be overcome by U.S. influence.

Overview of 2007

Throughout 2007 the goals of the Surge remained fragile, with the prospect of their success appearing bleak. The administration's goals required cooperation from Maliki and his government, yet this was mixed at best. For the most part, the administration was limited in its influence over Maliki to bring him into compliance. By September 2007, Crocker and Petraeus had to update Congress on the Surge's progress. Notwithstanding the mixed compliance from Maliki and his government, they presented a cautiously optimistic picture.[1127] They championed developments such as the Sons of Iraq and the decline of violence from Shia militias and al-Qaeda.[1128] Moreover, Petraeus stated that although ethno-sectarian violence and civilian deaths were "still at troubling levels", they had substantially declined from their peaks in 2006 and early 2007.[1129] Nonetheless, despite this progress, "Iraq's problems will require a long-term effort".[1130] Crocker stated that "it is possible for the United States to see its goals realised in Iraq and that a "secure, stable democratic Iraq at peace with its neighbours is attainable", though not "guarantee[d]".[1131] Yet, Crocker and Petraeus did present a "sober assessment", stating that

> The process will not be quick. It will be uneven, punctuated by setbacks as well as achievement, and it will require substantial U.S. resolve and commitment…There will be no single moment at which we can claim victory. Any turning point will likely only be recognised in retrospect.[1132]

[1124] Ibid.
[1125] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.288.
[1126] Crocker, 'Sunni Tawafuq Voices Frustration With GOI, Calls For Withdrawal' [cable], para. 12.
[1127] United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Iraq: The Crocker-Petraeus Report* (2007), https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-110shrg44322/html/CHRG-110shrg44322.htm, accessed 16. Oct. 2020.
[1128] Ibid. see para. 9 under 'Statement of Hon. Ryan C. Crocker, Ambassador to Iraq, Department of State, Washington, DC.
[1129] Ibid. see para. 3 under 'Statement of Gen David H. Petraeus, USA, Commander, Multinational Force-Iraq, Baghdad, Iraq.
[1130] Ibid, para. 37.
[1131] Ibid. see para. 2 and 28 under 'Statement of Hon. Ryan C. Crocker, Ambassador to Iraq'.
[1132] Ibid. see para. 6 under Prepared 'Statement of Hon. Ryan C. Crocker, U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Iraq, State Department, Washington, DC ' and para. 3 under' Statement of Gen David H. Petraeus, USA, Commander, Multinational Force-Iraq, Baghdad, Iraq'.
[1132] Ibid. para. 37.

Finally, Crocker addressed the issue of Maliki and the government's compliance, posing the question: "is the collective national leadership of Iraq ready to prioritize Iraq over sectarian and community interests?".[1133] Crocker affirmed that he "believes that Iraq's leaders have the will to tackle the country's pressing problems" and emphasised that Maliki was a leader who would support U.S. objectives.[1134] Bush championed Crocker and Petraeus's testimonies and stated that it showed the "troop surge was working".[1135] Moreover, Bush conveyed a message to Petraeus, saying that "I have waited over three years for a successful strategy. And I'm not giving up on it prematurely".[1136]

Although the reduction of violence and the Sons of Iraq initiative were publicly presented as a success, the other main goals of the Surge remained ambivalent. The Iraqi police remained problematic for the administration. In September, a JIC assessment judged that "the local Iraqi Police Service is at best ineffective. In many areas the police are synonymous with militia or insurgents…corruption is endemic. Many police are probably unreformable".[1137] Moreover, many "follow a Shia agenda" with "some 40 percent… thought to owe loyalty to militias linked to political parties".[1138] Additionally, speaking to militias, notwithstanding the coalition's focus on special groups and Sadr's Mahdi Army, these groups retreated from Baghdad and consolidated around Basra, where UK forces had begun withdrawing.[1139] Hence, it was judged that they would re-assert their control once the influx of coalition forces began to withdraw.[1140] Moreover, the political reconciliation that the coalition desired was not materialising. The Sons of Iraq program, which was portrayed as a milestone in the political reconciliation, remained

[1133] Ibid. see para. 17 under 'Prepared Statement of Hon. Ryan C. Crocker, U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Iraq, State Department, Washington, DC'.
[1134] Ibid.
[1135] 'President Bush's Speech on Iraq', *NPR*, 13 Sep. 2007, https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=14406922, para. 4, accessed 18 Nov. 2020.
[1136] Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, p.115.
[1137] 'Iraqi Security Forces and Structures: Quantity not Quality' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 27 June 2007, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123123219/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/233375/2007-06-27-jic-assessment-iraqi-security-forces-and-structures-quantity-not-quality.pdf, p.3, accessed 11 Feb. 2021.
[1138] 'Iraqi Security Forces: Two Steps Forward' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 20 Dec. 2007, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123123441/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/233390/2007-12-20-jic-assessment-iraqi-security-forces-two-steps-forward.pdf, p.3, accessed 11 Feb. 2021 and 'Iraq: Transition in Basra' [paper], Foreign Commonwealth Office and Ministry of Defence, 12 July 2007, *The National* Archives, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123124106/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/234266/2007-07-12-paper-by-fco-mod-officials-iraq-transition-in-basra-inc-annexes.pdf, p.2, accessed 13 Mar. 2021.
[1139] 'Baghdad Security Plan: Impact and Prognosis' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 6 Sep. 2007, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123123233/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/230660/2007-09-06-jic-assessment-baghdad-security-plan-impact-and-prognosis.pdf, para. 2, accessed 3 Feb. 2021 and 'Iraq: Transition in Basra' [paper], Foreign Commonwealth Office and Ministry of Defence, para. 1.
[1140] 'Baghdad Security Plan: Impact and Prognosis' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, p.4.

contentions for Maliki and his government. Moreover, the Sunni bloc under Hashimi was still boycotting Maliki's cabinet.

Militias and Reconciliation in 2008

Notwithstanding the continued decline of violence in Iraq, the Bush administration's goals continued to slip in 2008. The military and police remained infiltrated by militias, the resistance to the Sons of Iraq program increased, and political reconciliation continued to stall. Notably, Maliki began exhibiting authoritarian tendencies by consolidating political and military power. The Bush administration appeared to be caught off guard by this development. For example, Maliki launched a decisive operation against Sadr's Mahdi Army, which the administration welcomed as it appeared Maliki was taking a stand against rogue militias. However, others viewed this operation as an attempt to degrade the Sadrists for the 2009 provincial election while increasing the prospects of Maliki's Dawa party. Nevertheless, the U.S. goals in this period were to continue the momentum against al-Qaeda, incorporate the Sons of Iraq into the ISF, degrade Shia militias, and promote the elusive political reconciliation. However, a defining goal of 2008 was to secure a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). The Bush administration wanted an agreement that would solidify the security gains of the Surge by allowing U.S. troops to remain in Iraq. Additionally, it would commit the incoming Obama administration to maintain this U.S. troop presence. Nonetheless, the administration goals and SOFA required the compliance of Maliki. Yet, this did not quickly transpire.

Charge of the Knights: Militias and Politics

The coalition continued to pursue rogue elements of Sadr's militia and militias of the specials group while still accommodating Badr. According to Petraeus, the coalition would continue to "quietly target members of the JAM[1141] Special Groups, to contribute to additional fissures in the Sadr organisation".[1142] Maliki's compliance towards these objectives substantially increased compared to the previous year. In 2008, Maliki initiated an infamous operation, Charge of the Knights, a prolonged battle between Sadr's Mahdi Army and ISF. This occurred in Mahdi Army strongholds located in Basra, Sadr City and Amarah.[1143] Yet, the main operation focused on Basra. In 2007, Basra became increasingly populated with competing militias due

[1141] The Mahdi Army
[1142] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.295.
[1143] Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, p.233.

to the Surge operations in Baghdad, which encouraged them to retreat to Basra.[1144] Moreover, the United Kingdom, responsible for Basra, began to withdraw its forces in 2007 and relocate the remaining personnel to a nearby airbase.[1145] Moreover, UK forces made ceasefire deals with Sadrists throughout its withdrawal.[1146]

Militias consolidated in Basra and began competing with each other for power. Additionally, Iraq's main Um Qasr port and oil complex is located at Zubayr in Basra, which was a source of income for Sadrists and other militias.[1147] Maliki consistently complained to the British about the abysmal decline of security in Basra, stating that he planned to deal with it.[1148] However, the tipping point that spurred Maliki's operation occurred when Sadr's Mahdi Army members attempted to kidnap Maliki's national security advisor.[1149] After this incident, Maliki authorised operations against the Mahdi Army, which sparked a short but violent war of attrition.[1150] After a protracted month of violence, Maliki formulated and launched a decisive military operation to end the conflict. This was notable for two reasons. Maliki's plan was self-initiated and caught the Bush administration's surprise as they did not anticipate Maliki's response. Moreover, the administration attempted to stall the operation, given that it thought it would be unsuccessful.[1151] Significantly, Maliki's operation would not leave a door open for Sadr to re-join his cabinet and government.[1152] This was a departure from the previous year when Maliki did permit operations against the Sadr's Mahdi army yet left some avenue for Sadrists to return to balance the dominance of ISCI in his government.[1153]

The main operation began on 25 March 2008 and lasted until mid-April.[1154] However, operations against Sadrists continued until a ceasefire brokered by IRGC was signed on 9

[1144] 'Politics and Violence in Basra: Prospects' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 1 Oct. 2007, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123123254/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/230670/2007-10-01-jic-assessment-politics-and-violence-in-basra-prospects.pdf, p.2, accessed 10 Feb. 2021.
[1145] Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama*, (London: Atlantic Books, 2012), p.465.
[1146] 'Politics and Violence in Basra: Prospects' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, p.1.
[1147] Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, pp.235-236 and 243.
[1148] House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122743/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/the-report/, Vol. 9 Section 6, p.164, accessed 13 Dec. 2020
[1149] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* pp.485-486.
[1150] Ibid. pp.475-498.
[1151] House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), Vol. 9 Section 6, p.161 and see Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* pp.470-472.
[1152] Ryan Crocker, 'Maliki Vents His Frustration With The Sadrists in Public' [cable], 07BAGHDAD2285_a, 10 July 2007, *WikiLeaks*, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07BAGHDAD2285_a.html, accessed 22 Feb. 2021.
[1153] Ibid.
[1154] House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), Vol. 9 Section 6, p.161.

May.[1155] Initially, the operation nearly failed as ISF suffered high casualties and failed to secure targeted areas.[1156] Coalition forces had to provide support to help the operation succeed. Nonetheless, the immediate effect of the operation saw an increase in Maliki's popularity amongst the population. This included the Sunni community, given the operation was against Shia militias who had conducted horrific sectarian killings.[1157] Additionally, it indicated substantial compliance to the Bush administration's objectives of pursuing militias. Maliki stated on television that he was building a state governed by "law and order"[1158] and that "Security operations in Basra will continue to stop all the terrorist and criminal activities along with the organized gangs targeting people".[1159] The administration greatly welcomed Maliki's actions as it viewed Maliki supporting its objectives concerning militias and political reconciliation.[1160] Bush stated that "Maliki's bold decision – and it was a bold decision – to go after illegal groups in Basra shows his leadership, and his commitment to enforcing the law in an even-handed manner".[1161] Moreover, Petraeus wrote to Secretary Gates stating that "Maliki is doing what we have sought to empower him to do: use Iraqi forces to respond to an Iraqi security problem".[1162]

The Charge of the Knights operation was widely hailed as a successful operation by an emerging leader, Nouri al-Maliki. Moreover, it indicated a high degree of compliance to the objectives of the Bush administration. However, several factors dispute this notion. The operation was viewed as an attempt by Maliki and ISCI to politically degrade the Sadrists for the scheduled 2009 provincial council elections. Provincial councils choose the governor and governing administration for each province; hence, they are powerful bodies.[1163] Thus, Katzman notes that they invite patronage networks and competition from political parties and factions.[1164] Cole postulates that the Sadrists would have won a significant amount of the

[1155] Juan Cole, 'Why al-Maliki attacked Basra', *Salon* [website], (1 Apr. 2008), https://www.salon.com/2008/04/01/basra_3/, para. 2, accessed 19 Feb. 2021.
[1156] 'Iraqi Security Forces Performance In MND (SE)' [assessment], Current Intelligence Groups, 14 Apr. 2008, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122644/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/230745/2008-04-14-note-current-assessment-cig-iraqi-security-forces-performance-in-mnd-se.pdf, p.1, accessed 16 Feb. 2021.
[1157] Stephen Biddle et al., 'The Evolution of Iraq Strategy', *Brookings*, (17 Dec. 2008), https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/12_iraq_biddle.pdf, p.14, accessed 11 Feb. 2021.
[1158] Ned Parker and Ahmed Caesar, 'The Conflict in Iraq: Altered Strategy; About-turn by Maliki as he orders halt in offensives', *Los Angeles Times*, 5 Apr. 2008, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2008-apr-05-fg-iraq5-story.html, para. 4, accessed 13 Jan. 2020.
[1159] Bill Roggio, 'Maliki: "Security operations in Basra will continue"', *FDD's Long War Journal* [website], (31 Mar. 2008), https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2008/03/maliki_security_oper.php, para. 2, accessed 20 Jan. 2021.
[1160] Robert Gates, *Duty: memoirs of a Secretary at war*, (U.S.A: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), p.232.
[1161] Claire Truscott and Richard Norton-Taylor, 'Maliki vows there will be 'no retreat' against Shia militias in Basra', *Guardian*, 28 Mar. 2008, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/mar/27/iraq, para. 3, accessed 15 Feb. 2021.
[1162] Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, p.248.
[1163] Kenneth Katzman, 'Iraq: Post-Saddam Governance and Security', *Congressional Research Service*, (28 Oct. 2009), https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL31339.pdf, p.12, accessed 16 Apr. 2020.
[1164] Ibid.

provincial election in Basra due to voter dissatisfaction with ISCI.[1165] Notwithstanding this claim, a JIC assessment stated in February 2008 that "many Sadrists are eager to regain a share of political power and have focussed their attention on provincial elections".[1166] Strikingly, the assessment predicted that "fierce competition for the Shia vote between ISCI/Badr and OMS/JAM[1167] is likely to result in further clashes as provincial elections approach".[1168] It "judge[d] some local Badr commanders are using the cover of ISF to exploit" Sadr's ceasefire to "irreversibly weaken their chief rival".[1169] An additional assessment also predicted the violence stating that "intra-Shia clashes will intensify as provincial elections approach. Assassinations of politicians and violent intimidation of the electorate are likely. In the worst case, there could be outbreaks of street fighting on a large scale".[1170] Therefore, some viewed the resulting conflict as an attempt to degrade the Sadrist movement. This was borne out by the fact that the army and police units that fought Sadr's militia were Badr units, with non-Badr units fleeing the melee.[1171] Additionally, units that consisted of Mahdi Army members turned against the security forces.[1172] Notably, coalition forces supported Maliki and the Badr units.[1173]

This form of Shia politics was extended by Maliki. Throughout the Charge of Knights operation, Maliki began establishing patronage networks with Shia tribes in Baghdad and southern Iraq that would be loyal to him. This would continue to develop after the operation. These were officially known as tribal support councils. The motivations for establishing this network appeared to be twofold. First, Petraeus expressed an idea of building the equivalent of Sons of Iraq with Shia tribes in the south.[1174] The councils were intended to "assist provincial governments on policy matters, and the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) on security matters".[1175] However, Gordon and Trainor argued that Maliki saw this as a potential political threat that

[1165] Cole, 'Why al-Maliki attacked Basra', para. 5.
[1166] 'Iraq: Whither the Sadrist Trend' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Group, p.1.
[1167] Office of the Martyr Sadr
[1168] 'Iraq: Whither the Sadrist Trend' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Group, p.1. and 'Politics and Violence in Basra: Prospects' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, p.2.
[1169] 'Iraq: Whither the Sadrist Trend' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Group, p.3.
[1170] 'Iraq: Security Prospects in the South', Joint Intelligence Committee, 27 Feb. 2008, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20171123122430/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/230740/2008-02-27-jic-assessment-iraq-security-prospects-in-the-south.pdf, p.1, accessed *12* Feb. 2021.
[1171] 'Iraqi Security Forces Performance In MND (SE)' [assessment], Current Intelligence Groups, p.1. and 'Iraq: The Charge of the Knights' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 14 May 2008, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123123544/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/230755/2008-05-14-jic-assessment-iraq-the-charge-of-the-knights.pdf, p.2, accessed 18 Feb. 2021.
[1172] Ibid.
[1173] 'Iraqi Security Forces Performance In MND (SE)' [assessment], Current Intelligence Groups, p.1.
[1174] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.295.
[1175] Ryan Crocker, 'Support Councils: What They Are' [cable], 08BAGHDAD3744_a, 28 Nov. 2008, *WikiLeaks*, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BAGHDAD3744_a.html, accessed 10 Mar. 2021

could unseat him as prime minister.[1176] Hence, Maliki unilaterally took over the initiative and began cultivating ties with the tribes.[1177] Furthermore, Crocker argued that Maliki saw this as an opportunity to undermine the influence of ISCI and Sadrists in the region, especially in the 2009 provincial elections.[1178] In fact, ISCI laid this charge against him.[1179] According to Crocker, Maliki showered the tribal sheiks with money directly from his Office of Commander in Chief in an attempt to buy their political support for the upcoming provincial elections.[1180] Therefore, despite the image that Maliki was becoming compliant to the objectives of the Bush administration vis-à-vis militias, Maliki was attempting to increase and consolidate political power. This would be exemplified by the political alliance Maliki and Sadr made for the 2009 provincial election against ISCI, despite Maliki launching the Charge of the Knights operation against Sadr.[1181]

Sons of Iraq and Reconciliation

The Bush administration's goals of political reconciliation continued to experience mixed compliance from Maliki. The early months of 2008 saw some progress with Maliki; however, as U.S. additional Surge forces started to decline in 2008, so did Maliki's compliance towards reconciliation initiatives. In January, Maliki declared to his cabinet that reform and more consultation is needed in government. Further, Mansoor noted that Maliki became more engaged with his cabinet, particularly with the Sunni Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi.[1182] Although the coalition welcomed this, Mansoor stated that it was difficult to determine if this was a genuine intention or a by-product of the attempted no-vote of confidence by Iyad Allawi in December 2007.[1183] Yet, a milestone for the Bush administration was the return of the Sunni

[1176] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* pp.444-445.
[1177] Crocker, 'Support Councils: What They Are' [cable], para. 4.
[1178] Ryan Crocker, 'Top Shi'a Leader Demands Decentralization, Frets Over Maliki Scheme' [cable], 08BAGHDAD3107_a, 26 Sep. 2008, *WikiLeaks*, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BAGHDAD3107_a.html, para. 8-9, accessed 12 Mar. 2021 and Ned Parker, 'Machiavelli in Mesopotamia: Nouri Al-Maliki Builds the Body Politic', *World policy journal*, 26/1 (2009), p.23
[1179] Ryan Crocker, 'ISCI/BADR Feeling Under Threat, Raising Inter-Shia Tensions' [cable], 08BAGHDAD3023_a, 19 Sep. 2008, *WikiLeaks*, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BAGHDAD3023_a.html, para. 3, accessed 15 Mar. 2021 and Reidar Visser, 'Shi`a Leaders Disagree on Integration of Sons of Iraq into Army', *CTC Sentinel*, 1/12 (2008), https://ctc.usma.edu/shia-leaders-disagree-on-integration-of-sons-of-iraq-into-army/, para. 9, accessed 20 Mar. 2021 .
[1180] Crocker, 'ISCI/BADR Feeling Under Threat, Raising Inter-Shia Tensions' [cable], para. 3; Crocker, Crocker, Ryan, 'Karbala's Tribes and the Support Councils' [cable], 08BAGHDAD3723_a, 25 Nov. 2008, *WikiLeaks*, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BAGHDAD3723_a.html, para. 5-6, accessed 17 Mar. 2021; and Pollack, 'The Battle for Baghdad', p.22.
[1181] 'Iraqi PM, anti-U.S. group reach local alliance deal', *Reuters*, 22 Feb. 2009, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-alliances/iraqi-pm-anti-u-s-group-reach-local-alliance-deal-idUKTRE51K1J320090221, accessed 10 Apr. 2021.
[1182] Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, p.227.
[1183] Ibid.

Tawafuq political bloc to Maliki's Cabinet.[1184] The bloc flagged its intention to return in April after Maliki's operation against Sadr, which garnered support for Maliki from the Sunni and Kurdish populace.[1185] Yet, it was speculated that this was a political calculation by the bloc instead of genuine reconciliation between them and Maliki.[1186] However, the most significant development occurred in April. Members of the Sons of Iraq formed a new political party, Sahwa al-Iraq, to participate in provincial elections.[1187] According to a JIC assessment, the party's priorities were "focused on seeing security gains translate into more jobs and better public services" as well as "increased representation in the Iraqi security forces and government; release of Sunni detainees; revision of the de-Baathification laws; constitutional review".[1188] The assessment emphasised the fragility between the central government and the new Sahwa party, stating that "Sunni expectations are high and are unlikely to be met by the opportunities that political participation offers. Alienation will grow unless Prime Minister Maliki's government addresses their concerns".[1189] Nonetheless, this increase of political activity amongst the Sons of Iraq and the Sunni community, in general, was perceived as an opportunity for the Bush administration. The elections "had the potential to support the national reconciliation process by providing those who had been excluded from power with a means of entering the political process".[1190]

However, despite this optimism, the path towards reconciliation between the Shia-dominated government and the Sunni community became increasingly murky. This was became pronounced after the emergence of the Sahwa al-Iraq party. Maliki's Office of Commander in Chief continued to obstruct the integration of the Sons of Iraq into the security forces. This barrier remained despite constant prodding and soft approaches by Petraeus, Odierno, and Mansoor.[1191] This led Petraeus to report to Congress that only 21,000 of the 91,000 Sons of Iraq members had been accepted in April.[1192] Moreover, their salaries continued to be paid by

[1184] James Glanz, 'Sunni bloc to return to Iraq cabinet', *New York Times*, 24 Apr. 2008 https://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/24/world/africa/24iht-iraq.4.12322787.html, accessed 17 Mar. 2021.
[1185] 'Iraq: The Charge of the Knights' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, p.3 and Glanz, 'Sunni bloc to return to Iraq cabinet', para. 3.
[1186] This was calculated based on the idea that Tawafuq felt politically threatened by the emerging Sahwa al-Iraq party contesting the 2009 provincial elections, see Farook Ahmed, 'Backgrounder #32: The Iraqi Accord Front's Return to Government', *Institute for the Study of War*, http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/reports/The%20Iraqi%20Accord%20Front%27s%20Return%20to%20Government.pdf, pp.3-4, accessed 10 Feb. 2021.
[1187] 'Iraq: Sunni Arab Politics' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 11 June 2008, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122334/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/230770/2008-06-11-jic-assessment-iraq-sunni-arab-politics.pdf, accessed 24 Feb. 2021.
[1188] Ibid. p.2
[1189] Ibid. p.2
[1190] 'The Iraqi Provincial Elections' [assessment], Current Intelligence Groups, 9 July 2008, *The National Archives,* https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123123559/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/230775/2008-07-09-note-current-assessment-cig-the-iraqi-provincial-elections.pdf, p.1, accessed 22 Feb. 2021.
[1191] Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, pp.228-229.
[1192]United States Senate Committee on Armed Services, *The Situation in Iraq and Progress Made by the Government of Iraq in Meeting Benchmarks and Achieving Reconciliation* (2008), https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-

the United States instead of Iraq's government.[1193] Discontent started to emerge within the Sons of Iraq. They claimed that in some areas, they were still being targeted by Shia police death squads.[1194] In fact, targeted action against the Sons of Iraq began to increase after the formation of the Sahwa party. In Diyala, Maliki launched Operation Glad Tidings of Benevolence which was intended to go after al-Qaeda.[1195] Yet, Petraeus noted that the security forces that were used became interested in setting up checkpoints to control the population instead of pursuing al-Qaeda.[1196] They concentrated their attention on specific groups within the Sons of Iraq. During the operation, ISF arrested more than 1,000 Sunni locals who were Sons of Iraq members.[1197] It is difficult to confirm Maliki's political motivations for the operation. Crocker argued that some Sons of Iraq in Diyala had engaged in criminal activities such as extortion and kidnappings.[1198] However, Crocker conceded that the arrests created an impression that Maliki was using the security forces to immobilise the newly created Sahwa political party.[1199] He wrote that local Sunni politicians "expressed their belief that the operations are a pretext for the arrest of leading Sunni political figures ahead of anticipated provincial elections".[1200] Crocker summarised the effects and potential consequences of these operations:

> Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) operations in Diyala province have exhibited a consistent pattern of sectarian bias. The Government of Iraq (GOI) has launched a number of security operations in Diyala ostensibly to combat Al-Qa'ida in Iraq, but apparently targeting the Sunni political establishment while largely ignoring their Shi'a counterparts. The Sunni political leadership in Diyala argues that the Shi'a-dominated GOI in Baghdad is using these tactics to influence the results of the upcoming provincial elections. If the Sunnis in Diyala perceive that their political voice has been stymied, some may revert to insurgency.[1201]

110shrg45666/html/CHRG-110shrg45666.htm, accessed 8 Sep. 2020, see 'Statement of Gen David H. Petraeus, USA, Commander, Multi-National Force-Iraq, para. 29.

[1193] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.445.

[1194] Ryan Crocker, 'Diyala PRT: Sunnis Call for Shiite Police Chief Removal' [cable], 07BAGHDAD3438_a, 16 Oct. 2007, *WikiLeaks*, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07BAGHDAD3438_a.html, para. 3. accessed 12 Jan. 2021.

[1195] 'Operation Glad Tidings of Benevolence', *Institute for the Study of War* [website], https://www.understandingwar.org/operation/operation-glad-tidings-benevolence, accessed 5 Nov. 2020.

[1196] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.412.

[1197] Ibid.

[1198] Crocker, 'Diyala PRT: Sunnis Call for Shiite Police Chief Removal' [cable], para. 1 and Crocker, 'EPRT Diyala: Lack of NGO Support Impedes Further Progress in South Diyala' [cable], 08BAGHDAD2210_a, 15 July 2008, *WikiLeaks*, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BAGHDAD2210_a.html, para. 8, accessed 8 Feb. 2021.

[1199] Ryan Crocker, 'Baqubah Sunni Leadership Fear Arrest in Upcoming Iraq Operations' [cable], 08BAGHDAD2330_a, 26 July 2008, *WikiLeaks*, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BAGHDAD2330_a.html, para. 1, accessed 23 Jan. 2021.

[1200] Ibid.

[1201] Ryan Crocker, 'GOI Arrests Stoke Diyala Sunnis' Sense of Disenfranchisement' [cable], 09BAGHDAD64_a, 11 Jan. 2009, *WikiLeaks*, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAGHDAD64_a.html, para. 2, accessed 19 Mar. 2021.

Responding to the operation, the Sunni led Diyala provincial council sacked its local police chief, Major General Ghanem al-Qureishi, whom Sons of Iraq members had complained about for months.[1202] This led to escalation with Maliki, who had consistently supported Qureishi.[1203] A week after al-Qureishi's firing, Maliki's office ordered Iraq's Special Forces to arrest Diyala's Sunni governor, Hussein al-Zubaidi.[1204] The U.S. partnered body of Iraq's Special Forces, CJSOTF,[1205] did not support this operation given the lack of any evidence for his arrest.[1206] On the night of the raid, the Special Forces arrested two local Sunni politicians and killed the governor's secretary.[1207] As they attempted to leave, they became entangled in a firefight with the local police, mainly Sunni personnel, and fired on U.S. personnel supporting the local police.[1208] Petraeus was furious at the operation and confronted Maliki. Yet, Maliki responded by stating he "has ordered an investigation", which Petraeus found "lamentable" given that Maliki ordered the operation.[1209] According to Major General Mark Hertling, the operation "really spiked the sectarian violence in Diyala" and that it "almost had a complete falling apart of what we had established over 9 months" with the Sons of Iraq program.[1210] The tensions and threats to the program only increased after this incident. As coalition forces were preparing to transfer 8,000 Sons of Iraq members in Diyala to the central government's control, the government arrested more of its leaders, with one dying in custody.[1211] Odierno confronted Maliki on these arrests, emphasising that it would discredit the government's legitimacy and foster instability as January's provincial elections neared. Yet, Maliki defended the arrests, claiming that Sons of Iraq's leaders were "Ba'athists" and stating that one of them was suspected of the 1999 assassination of Muqtada al-Sadr's father, Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr.[1212]

The Sons of Iraq program became a divisive point in 2008 with limited response from the Bush administration. A substantial component of the Shia bloc opposed the initiative, and members of Maliki's office working on the program began receiving death threats and treason investigations.[1213] A JIC assessment stated that the Shia bloc's "fears of a Ba'athist

[1202] Crocker, 'Diyala PRT: Sunnis Call for Shiite Police Chief Removal' [cable], para. 2.
[1203] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.412.
[1204] Ned Parker and Usama Redha, 'Iraqi Sunnis protest government arrests', *Baltimore Sun*, 20 Aug. 2008, https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-2008-08-20-0808200002-story.html, para. 3-4, accessed 4 Mar. 2021.
[1205] U.S.'s Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force
[1206] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.412.
[1207] Parker and Redha, 'Iraqi Sunnis protest government arrests', para.12.
[1208] Ibid.
[1209] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.412.
[1210] Ibid.
[1211] Ned Parker, 'Baqubah still a minefield of Iraqi sectarian tensions', *Los Angeles Times*, 7 Dec. 2008, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2008-dec-07-fg-baqubah7-story.html, para. 1-3. accessed 2 Feb. 2021.
[1212] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.447.
[1213] Sky, *The Unravelling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, p.249.

resurgence, however exaggerated, are genuinely held. They will limit the Shia appetite for reconciliation with the Sunni more broadly".[1214] This resistance within the Shia bloc exacerbated Maliki's established position towards the Sons of Iraq. Maliki himself appeared to remain distrustful of the Sons of Iraq entity and the broader Sunni community. Many of Maliki's family were killed by Saddam's regime, with Maliki fleeing Iraq.[1215] Additionally, the U.S. troop presence, which acted as a guarantor and insurance policy against the Sons of Iraq, would begin to be drawn down at the end of 2008.[1216] Therefore, like many within the Shia bloc, Maliki maintained a constant paranoia and "deep-rooted fear of a Ba'athist return",[1217] which limited his appetite for engagement with the Sons of Iraq.[1218] Moreover, there were specific incidents that reinforced this paranoia. A JIC assessment claimed that some Sons of Iraq groups had "already been infiltrated by extremists".[1219] For example, a group of al-Qaeda fighters disguised themselves as a Sons of Iraq unit and engaged in a skirmish with U.S. forces.[1220] Additionally, in November, the Green Zone's residence of the Sunni Iraqi Consensus Party leader, Adnan Dulaimi, was raided by U.S. forces who found his bodyguards with a car bomb.[1221] Petraeus noted that these incidents were "likely to heighten sectarian tensions and farther [sic] increase the divide between the government of Prime Minister Maliki and the Sunni Tawafuq alliance".[1222] A JIC assessment portrayed the situation confronting Iraq in the final year of the Bush administration. It stated,

> relations between ISF and [Sons of Iraq] SoI are tense… Each is suspicious of the other's intentions once the Coalition leaves Iraq: the government worry that former insurgents carrying weapons could turn against them; SoI fear persecution from what they view as a sectarian government… Sunni SoI commanders see Shia militias as a target second only to Al Qaida in Iraq.[1223]

The Bush administration could not overcome the impact of Maliki's hesitation and perceived animosity towards the Sons of Iraq. The measures it implemented in 2007, which included confidence building, showcasing the program's success, and biometric profiling of the

[1214] House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), Vol. 9 Section 5, p.46.
[1215] Joel Wing, 'The Life Of Nouri al-Maliki, An Interview With Journalist Ned Parker', *Musings on Iraq* [website], (19 Aug. 2013), http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.com/2013/08/the-life-of-nouri-al-maliki-interview_19.html, para. 6, accessed 14 Jan. 2020.
[1216] Johnson et al., *The U.S Army and the Battle for Baghdad: Lessons Learned — And Still to Be Learned*, p.168.
[1217] House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), Vol. 9 Section 5, p.87.
[1218] Ibid. Vol 9 Section 6, p.46 and 'National Intelligence Estimate: Prospects for Iraq's Stability: A Challenging Road Ahead', National Intelligence Council, Jan. 2007, https://fas.org/irp/dni/iraq020207.pdf, p.6, accessed 6 Oct. 2020.
[1219] 'Iraqi Security Forces: Mixed Abilities' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 18 Dec. 2008, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122455/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/230805/2008-12-18-jic-assessment-iraqi-security-forces-mixed-abilities.pdf, p.4, accessed 25 Feb. 2021.
[1220] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.269.
[1221] Alissa J. Rubin, 'Bombs Found Near Home of Politician in Baghdad', *New York Times*, 30 Nov. 2007, https://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/30/world/middleeast/30iraq.html, accessed 5 Dec. 2020.
[1222] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.288.
[1223] 'Iraqi Security Forces: Mixed Abilities' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, p.4.

program's members failed to dissipate Maliki's resistance. Moreover, the United States could not dissuade Maliki from escalation against the Sons of Iraq in Diyala. Notwithstanding the protests exhibited by Odierno and Petraeus, the overall U.S. response was limited. It predominantly rested on persuasion, emphasising to Maliki that the extra U.S. troop presence was temporary and that this was Maliki's only opportunity to stabilise Iraq through political reconciliation. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates stated this in his account, stating that he informed Maliki, "that the clock is ticking and that our patience with their lack of political progress was running out. I angrily told him that every day that we bought them for reconciliation was being paid for with American blood and that we had to see some real progress soon".[1224] However, any firm action was limited.

Gates narrates that Bush objected to "action-forcing" and "didn't believe the United States could force Iraqis to reconcile their long-standing internal hatreds".[1225] Yet, according to Gates, Crocker and Petraeus disagreed, arguing "that without U.S. pressure the Iraqis just can't act".[1226] The Iraqis didn't have "enough trust or confidence or experience".[1227] Nevertheless, Ambassador Crocker seemed satisfied with the progress of the Sons of Iraq. In November 2008, he stated that "despite many worries several months ago, in fact [the Sons of Iraq] SOI transition to date in Baghdad has proceeded smoothly". Moreover, coalition forces,

> will need to remain close to the process to ensure [the] counterpart ISF[1228] and SOI units are able to work together and maintain security, the primary objective through the transition. The upcoming transition in Diyala requires particular attention due to the history of AQI activity and deep-seated sectarian tension in the province.[1229]

Furthermore, Crocker stated that "Prime Minister Maliki confidante and parliamentarian Hasan Sanayd told [them] at the end of November that obviously Dawa had made mistakes and has to reach out to the Sunni Arabs; it was willing to discuss even sensitive issues like de-Baath[ication] and find workable changes".[1230] Crocker's summary is strange because it contradicts the JIC assessments presented. Nevertheless, the U.S. Army's official account portrays a depressing narrative of powerless U.S. troops complaining to their seniors while

[1224] Gates, *Duty: memoirs of a Secretary at war*, p.63.
[1225] Ibid. p.71.
[1226] Ibid.
[1227] Ibid.
[1228] Iraqi Security Forces
[1229] Ryan Crocker, 'Sons of Iraq Transition in Baghdad' [cable], 08BAGHDAD3712_a, 25 Nov. 2008, *WikiLeaks*, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BAGHDAD3712_a.html, para. 7, accessed 5 Mar. 2021.
[1230] Ryan Crocker, 'Iraqi Politics: Shifting Alliances and the Emergence of Issue-Based Coalitions' [cable], 08BAGHDAD3789_a, 3 Dec. 2008, *WikiLeaks*, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BAGHDAD3789_a.html, para. 12, accessed 17 Nov. 2020.

removing themselves from Iraqi units conducting the sectarian operations against the Sons of Iraq.[1231]

Status of Forces Agreement

A fundamental goal of the Bush administration was to secure a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) to replace the UNSCR 1546 – which authorised the U.S. presence and operations in Iraq – that was due to expire at the end of 2008.[1232] Yet, this would require compliance from Maliki, which was not guaranteed. Maliki cancelled previous SOFA negotiations in 2007 after a U.S. raid in Sadr City, which resulted in 45 Mahdi militiamen being killed.[1233] The administration desired a SOFA for several reasons. Given that 2008 was the final year of the Bush administration, it would permit the United States to continue to build on the security progress of the Surge after Bush's tenure.[1234] Moreover, Bush wanted to signal U.S. resolve and its long-term commitment to Iraq.[1235] This was intended to prevent the expected hedging behaviour of Iraq's political elite, who perceived that U.S. forces would leave after the Bush administration.[1236] The administration's SOFA objectives simultaneously overlapped and contradicted Maliki's preferences. Maliki wanted to keep U.S. forces in Iraq, yet he had other political priorities that did not support those of the Bush administration. Nevertheless, obtaining a SOFA was critical for the Bush administration as it was the only sure way of keeping U.S. troops in Iraq after 2008.[1237] Yet, it could not be achieved without Maliki's support. Therefore, this dependence limited the ability of the Bush administration to exercise influence over Maliki to comply with its desired outcome. Hence, instead of influence attempts, the Bush administration made concessions to Maliki to secure his compliance.

Maliki and his negotiating team made the SOFA negotiations difficult due to the conflicting preferences between Maliki and the Bush administration. The administration hoped that Maliki's desire for U.S. troops would be their greatest influence, yet Maliki didn't believe he needed a substantial U.S. presence.[1238] After the Charge of the Knights operation, Maliki

[1231] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, pp.414-417.
[1232] 'Resolution 1546', *UN Security Council* [website], (8 June 2004), http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1546, accessed 10 July 2020. Initially the UNSCR was to expire in 2007 but was granted a one year extension by the Maliki government, see 'Security Council, Acting on Iraq's Request, Extends "For Last Time"', *United Nations* [website], (18 Dec. 2007), https://www.un.org/press/en/2007/sc9207.doc.htm, accessed 4 Jan. 2021.
[1233] Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, p.218.
[1234] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.523.
[1235] Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, p.218.
[1236] Ibid.
[1237] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.488.
[1238] House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), Vol. 9 Section 5, p.52 and Ryan Crocker, 'AMB, CG and PM Discuss SOFA, SOI, Ambassador's Trip to Erbil, GOI/KRG Relations and Elections Law' [cable], 08BAGHDAD3031_a 21 Sep.

thought that ISF were sufficiently capable of undertaking most security responsibilities. This prompted Bush to quip that he could borrow his "mission accomplished" banner.[1239] However, Maliki's position on U.S. troops spoke to a general desire for Iraq to be a sovereign nation, which was widely reflected within the population.[1240] Thus, for Maliki, there was no need for a large number of foreign troops.[1241] This was captured in a cable by the UK's Chief of Defence Staff Christopher Prentice, who observed that "earlier when he was weak, [the] U.S. protected him…Now, he rides high on his own and believes he can afford to kick the coalition away".[1242] Maliki's position persisted throughout the SOFA negotiations, where he remained opposed to a large coalition troop presence. The administration did not anticipate Maliki's stance on foreign troops. Therefore, the administration's influence capabilities were already limited, given that its troop presence was perceived as its fundamental leveraging tool. This position would be exacerbated by the domestic political constraints facing Maliki.

Maliki's non-compliance throughout the SOFA negotiations also stemmed from his calculation of potential repercussions against his Dawa party and his position as prime minister. A national poll of Iraqis indicated that 66% of the population did not support the coalition troop presence in Iraq.[1243] Additionally, 144 of the 275 members of Iraq's parliament signed a letter calling for the withdrawal of coalition forces.[1244] Hence, Maliki comprehended that he would lose support for his party and his position as prime minister if he became "the first Iraqi leader to legitimize a foreign military presence in Iraq".[1245] This fear was exacerbated with the upcoming provincial elections rescheduled for January 2009 and national elections scheduled in 2010. Thus, a public SOFA agreement would undermine Maliki's and his party's prospects. Maliki conveyed this to Odierno, emphasising the negotiations were happening at "a particularly sensitive time" given the upcoming elections.[1246] Also, Crocker reported that,

> Maliki also found he could not count on fellow Shi'a politicians as he sought to build domestic support for a SoFA with the U.S. The Sadrists, who hold about 10

2008, *WikiLeaks*, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BAGHDAD3031_a.html, para. 1,4 and 6, accessed 17 Jan. 2021.

[1239] Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, p.215.

[1240] House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122743/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/the-report/, Vol. 9 Section 7, p.23, accessed 13 Dec. 2020.

[1241] Ibid.

[1242] Christopher Prentice, 'Iraq: Prospects for the Autumn' [eGram], 1 Sep. 2008, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122854/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/232507/2008-09-01-egram-34129-08-baghdad-to-fco-london-iraq-prospects-for-the-autumn.pdf, p.3, accessed 2 Mar. 2021.

[1243] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.407.

[1244] Thalif Deen, 'Iraqi MPs Challenge Coalition Mandate', *Global Policy Forum* [website], (13 Nov. 2007), https://archive.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/iraq/election/2007/1113mpschallenge.htm, accessed 10 May 2021.

[1245] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.418.

[1246] Crocker, 'AMB, CG and PM Discuss SOFA, SOI, Ambassador's Trip to Erbil, GOI/KRG Relations and Elections Law' [cable], para. 8.

> percent of parliamentary seats, were consistently shrill in opposition to the SoFA. The (Shi'a) Fadhila Party, which broke away from ISCI and Da'wa's United Iraqi Alliance coalition bloc in 2007, also lined up with the secularist Iraqiya and Sunnis in resisting the SoFA.[1247]

Maliki's fears came to fruition when the Sadrists organised political protests against the negotiations and demanded the immediate expulsion of U.S. troops.[1248] The Sadrists and its Iranian supporters started to draw parallels to the 1946 U.S.-Iran SOFA before Iran's revolution and the highly unpopular Portsmouth Treaty of 1948 between the UK and Iraq's former monarchy.[1249] Even Iraqi parties that were supportive of the United States denounced the agreement – given the political landscape – despite wanting U.S. forces to remain in Iraq. The leader of the Sunni Tawafuq bloc, Tariq al-Hashimi, publicly stood against the SOFA demanding that U.S. forces should not have an indefinite position in Iraq.[1250] Yet, in private, he expressed his desire to keep U.S. forces in Iraq as he feared a campaign of Shia government violence against the Sunni population.[1251] Nonetheless, he told Ambassador Crocker that it would be hard to "defend the status of forces agreement".[1252] Crocker summarised the contradiction:

> While political logic would seem to suggest Sunni Arab support for the SoFA, the [Hashimi's] IIP and other Sunnis in fact proved extremely wary of openly expressing support, fearing they would be branded traitors or collaborators by rival Sunnis. Later, IIP and other Sunnis admitted their continued foot-dragging was principally motivated by a desire to maximize a fleeting moment of political leverage to extract concessions from Maliki on their broader grievances.[1253]

Furthermore, ISCI publicly objected to a SOFA while privately expressing their support for the agreement to the U.S. negotiating team.[1254] Additionally, Sky argued that some of these

[1247] Crocker, 'Iraqi Politics: Shifting Alliances and the Emergence of Issue-Based Coalitions' [cable], para. 6.
[1248] Stephen Farrell, 'Protests in Baghdad on U.S. Pact', *New York Times*, 21 Nov. 2008, https://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/22/world/middleeast/22iraq.html, accessed 12 Dec. 2020.
[1249] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.408.
[1250] Ibid. and Brian Katulis et al., 'Iraq's Political Transition After the Surge: Five Enduring Tensions and Ten Key Challenges', *Center for American Progress*, (Sep. 2008), https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2008/09/pdf/iraq_transition.pdf?_ga=2.106838851.1736866466.1624256434-1826342383.1624256434, p.18, accessed 10 May 2021.
[1251] Ryan Crocker, 'VP Hashimi: Defending the SOFA Will Be Difficult, and Sunni Tribal Fighters Must Be Protected' [cable], 08BAGHDAD2969_a, 15 Sep. 2008, *WikiLeaks*, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BAGHDAD2969_a.html, para. 2, accessed 12 Jan. 2021.
[1252] Ibid. para. 1.
[1253] Crocker, 'Iraqi Politics: Shifting Alliances and the Emergence of Issue-Based Coalitions' [cable], para. 7.
[1254] Ryan Crocker, 'Amar al-Hakim on SFA, Ahmadinejad Visit, and Legislation' [cable], 08BAGHDAD664_a, 6 Mar. 2008, *WikiLeaks*, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BAGHDAD664_a.html, para. 1, accessed 11 Jan. 2021; Katherine Zoepf and Atheer Kakan, 'Shiite Bloc Fails to Go to Meeting on Iraq-U.S. Pact', *New York Times*, 15 Nov. 2008, https://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/16/world/middleeast/16iraq.html, para. 4 and 10-13, accessed 15 Dec. 2020; and Alissa J. Rubin and Katherine Zoepf, 'Iraqi Cabinet Wants Security Agreement Altered', *New York Times*, 21 Oct. 2008, https://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/22/world/middleeast/22iraq.html, para. 2 and 9, accessed 17 Dec. 2020.

parties thought a SOFA would give Maliki the ability to further consolidate power.[1255] They argued that U.S. troops would be under Maliki's control to further his agenda. Crocker also reported this, stating that Sunni politicians were "resisting the SoFA on the grounds that Maliki would exploit the deal to consolidate his own power".[1256] Lastly, numerous clerics in Iraq issued *fatwas* against the SOFA negotiations.[1257]

This opposition was compounded by propaganda campaigns in Iraq sponsored by Iran.[1258] In June, Maliki visited Iran to meet with Ayatollah Khamenei and the head of the IRGC, Qassim Soleimani, to discuss the SOFA privately.[1259] The Iranian leaders informed Maliki that the SOFA was "unacceptable" and would be a "new occupation of Iraq".[1260] Petraeus observed from the meeting that Iran would attempt to undermine the SOFA negotiations. He wrote that "given the Supreme Leader's strident language about the United States during the visit, we can expect the Iranians to continue their strategic communications campaign against U.S.-Iraq SF/SOFA negotiations inside Iraq and in the regional media".[1261] Therefore, echoing Moravcsik's and Putnam's theory on domestic preferences, this pressure from Iraq's political groups and the Iranian regime limited Maliki's appetite to meet U.S. objectives with the SOFA. It was clear that Maliki's win-set, conditioned by these interest groups, was restricted and minimally overlapped with the U.S. win-set. Hence, Maliki's and U.S. preferences were not aligned. This prevented Maliki from publicly endorsing a new Status of Forces Agreement.

The U.S. senior military commanders recognised the difficult situation Maliki was in yet miscalculated its severity.[1262] The U.S. Army's account reveals significant insight into their calculation. It stated,

> …the biggest impediment to a status of forces agreement was Maliki himself. U.S. leaders believed that what held the Prime Minister from reaching a long-term military relationship with the United States was opposition from Shi'a militant

[1255] Sky, *The Unravelling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, p.267.
[1256] Crocker, 'Iraqi Politics: Shifting Alliances and the Emergence of Issue-Based Coalitions' [cable], para. 6.
[1257] 'Cleric in Iran issues fatwa against US-Iraqi pact', *Jerusalem Post,* 22 Oct. 2008, https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/cleric-in-iran-issues-fatwa-against-us-iraqi-pact-117938, accessed 27 Nov. 2020.
[1258] Joseph Felter and Brian Fishman, 'Iranian Strategy in Iraq: Politics and "Other Means"', *Combatting Terrorism Center*, (13 Oct. 2008), https://ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Iranian-Strategy-in-Iraq.pdf, pp.51-52, accessed 15 Nov. 2020.
[1259] The visit was officially portrayed as an opportunity for Maliki to confront Iran with evidence of its destabilising activities in supporting militia groups in Iraq, see Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.408.
[1260] Ibid. and Marisa Sullivan and Jeremy Domergue, 'Backgrounder #36: Overview of the SOFA Negotiations', *Institute for the Study of War*, 28 Oct. 2008, http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/reports/SOFA%20overview%203%200.pdf, p.1, accessed 17 Nov. 2020.
[1261] Ibid.
[1262] Crocker, 'AMB, CG and PM Discuss SOFA, SOI, Ambassador's Trip to Erbil, GOI/KRG Relations and Elections Law' [cable], para. 8.

> factions and the Iranian regime. If those two groups were neutralized, Maliki could sign a binding agreement.[1263]

Thus, speaking to the Surge goal of breaking up the Shia bloc, the account stated that "American leaders initially believed that the military victory over Iran's proxies in spring 2008 had removed the SOFA's biggest impediment, but they soon realized they were wrong".[1264] It appears the Bush administration did not anticipate the severity of Maliki's position in which Iraqi "parties saw opposing the security agreement as a way to weaken Maliki…[and]… that some Iraqi leaders considered constraining Maliki a higher priority than legalizing the U.S. military presence".[1265] Moreover, they did not anticipate Maliki's calculated preferences to stay in power which "prevented Maliki from publicly embracing the agreement out of fear of losing ground to Iranian-backed parties in the January 2009 provincial elections".[1266]

Therefore, once the administration recognised that Maliki would be reluctant to "expend the political capital necessary to finalize the deal",[1267] the coalition attempted to leverage the military capabilities it provided to Iraq to influence Maliki. It hoped that by implicitly threatening that these capabilities would be terminated if there was no SOFA, Maliki and his government would endorse a SOFA.[1268] Thus, Petraeus took Maliki and his national security advisor to the U.S. Special Operations headquarters, which no Iraqi official, including Maliki, had previously visited.[1269] Petraeus showcased the U.S. military's technological capabilities and according to Petraeus, the headquarters' commander "gave a terrific presentation that clearly impressed and moved the PM".[1270] Afterwards, Petraeus stated that Maliki "addressed our troops in the most complimentary terms and stressed again the importance of the U.S. to the fate of a free Iraq".[1271] Petraeus hoped that Maliki's visit would loosen his opposition to a SOFA.[1272] Additionally, Odierno followed Petraeus' initiative by having senior coalition commanders inform their Iraqi counterparts of all the military capabilities that the Iraqi government would no longer have and all the security activities that would cease if an agreement was not achieved.[1273] This was intended to compel ISF commanders to pressure their government to get an agreement.[1274] The outcomes of these initiatives may have influenced the Defence

[1263] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.418.
[1264] Ibid.
[1265] Joel Rayburn, *Iraq after America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance*, (U.S.A: Hoover Institution, 2014), pp.108-109
[1266] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.449.
[1267] Ibid. p.408.
[1268] Sky, *The Unravelling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, p.267.
[1269] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.408.
[1270] Ibid.
[1271] Ibid.
[1272] Ibid. p.409.
[1273] Ibid.
[1274] Ibid.

Minister, Abdul Qader al-Obeidi, to lobby Maliki that Iraq still required a substantial coalition troop presence past 2010.[1275] Finally, Odierno bluntly stated to Maliki that there was no "Plan B", and U.S. forces would withdraw by the end of the year.[1276]

Notwithstanding the efforts of the administration and Petraeus, Maliki still exhibited defiance towards the SOFA negotiations.[1277] Maliki told Gates that "the situation here would be very complicated. We need American forces here, at least for a while. If they leave, we lose all of our successes and accomplishments".[1278] Moreover, he stated "that it was in Iraq's interest to have U.S. forces in Iraq" and "to have a long-term relationship".[1279] Yet, in addition to the political constraints identified, he had "fundamental concerns over Iraqi sovereignty".[1280] Maliki wanted U.S. combat forces out of all major cities by 2009, immediately reducing the image of the U.S. troop presence in Iraq and amongst the population.[1281] This would be politically beneficial for Maliki and his Dawa party.[1282] Additionally, he wanted all combat forces out of Iraq in 2010.[1283] Moreover, while U.S. forces remained in Iraq, Maliki wanted them to be subject to Iraqi law.[1284] This latter point would broadly affect Maliki's domestic image, given the scandalous events that transpired in Iraq involving U.S. military personnel.[1285] Most notably, just before the SOFA negotiations, a U.S. soldier used a Quran as target practice.[1286] Nevertheless, Maliki played a calculated political card by publicly endorsing Barack Obama's election promise to withdraw troops from Iraq within 16 months.[1287] Maliki told journalists he believed that U.S. forces could safely leave Iraq within that timeframe, placing the Bush administration in a quagmire.[1288] Yet, Maliki's masterstroke was to have the SOFA subjected to Iraq's parliament for ratification. This protected Maliki from bearing the sole responsibility of agreeing to the continued presence of U.S. forces in Iraq.[1289] Yet, now the SOFA had to be somewhat amenable by an array of competing parties within and outside the Shia bloc.

[1275] House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), Vol. 9 Section 7 pp.29-30.
[1276] Crocker, 'AMB, CG and PM Discuss SOFA, SOI, Ambassador's Trip to Erbil, GOI/KRG Relations and Elections Law' [cable].
[1277] House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), Vol. 9 Section 7, p.30.
[1278] Gates, *Duty: memoirs of a Secretary at war*, p.237.
[1279] Ibid.
[1280] House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), Vol. 9 Section 7, p.30 .
[1281] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.418.
[1282] Ibid.
[1283] House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), Vol. 9 Section 7 p 34.
[1284] Ibid. and Sky, *The Unravelling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, pp.267-268.
[1285] Other notable examples included a coalition raid on Maliki's sister's house as well as the Nisour Square massacre by Blackwater contractors.
[1286] 'U.S. soldier uses Quran for target practice; military apologize', *CNN,* 17 May 2008, https://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/meast/05/17/iraq.quran/, accessed 10 Jan. 2021.
[1287] 'Iraqi PM backs Obama troop exit plan', *Reuters*, 19 July 2008, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-maliki-obama-idUSL198009020080719, accessed 5 Feb. 2021.
[1288] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.409.
[1289] Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, p.257.

To get the agreement, the Bush administration made several concessions. Given that Maliki subjected the SOFA to parliamentary approval, Maliki was able to threaten the administration by claiming that the SOFA would not pass unless certain concessions were given.[1290] This prompted Bush to observe that "a year ago we complained Maliki was too weak…now he's too strong".[1291] Nonetheless, the administration agreed to pull out combat forces from all major cities by 2009 and withdraw all combat troops by 2011.[1292] It did not meet Maliki's 2010 withdrawal goal, yet this concession was accepted. Additionally, the negotiating team agreed that Iraq would have the right to exercise immediate jurisdiction over U.S. personnel who committed grave felonies.[1293] Yet, according to Sky, any personnel who committed a felony would be extracted from Iraq immediately to face legal proceedings in the United States.[1294] Furthermore, coalition raids would have to be authorised by the Iraqi government and judge.[1295] After "more arm-twisting and haggling" the SOFA was agreed by Maliki's cabinet and sent to parliament.[1296] After many background dealings between political factions, parliament passed the SOFA, with mostly the Sadrists voting against it.[1297]

On 17 November 2008, Ambassador Crocker and Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari signed a Status of Forces Agreement that complemented the objectives of both Maliki and the Bush administration. The administration could keep its troops in Iraq, and they would be compelled to stay there under the incoming Obama administration. However, the administration was forced to make several concessions that undermined its objectives. Maliki was able to secure a smaller U.S. troop presence in Iraq, which not only fulfilled his desire for sovereignty but could also be used to bolster his political image. While the Bush administration emphasised it was a Status of Forces Agreement, Maliki publicly stressed the title of one of the documents within the SOFA: "Agreement Between the United States and the Republic of Iraq on the Withdrawal of U.S. Forces from Iraq and the Organization of Their Activities During Their Temporary Presence in Iraq".[1298] Once the SOFA was signed, Maliki championed the

[1290] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* pp.555-557.
[1291] Ibid. p.514
[1292] 'Iraq cabinet backs US troops deal', *BBC*, 16 Nov. 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/7731971.stm, para. 1, accessed 15 Feb. 2021.
[1293] Sky, *The Unravelling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, p.267.
[1294] Ibid.
[1295] 'Iraq cabinet backs US troops deal', *BBC*, para. 15.
[1296] Sky, *The Unravelling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, p.267.
[1297] Reidar Visser, 'The "Withdrawal Treaty" Is Passed', *org* [website], (27 Nov. 2008), https://historiae.org/withdrawal.asp, para. 3-4, accessed 15 Jan. 2021 and Sami Ramadani, 'Sofa so disastrous', *Guardian*, 29 Nov. 2008, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/nov/28/iraq-middleeast, para. 2-3, accessed 11 Jan. 2021.
[1298] Daniel Bolger, *Why We Lost: A General's Inside Account of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars*, (U.S.A: HMH, 2015), p.257 and 'Agreement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq On the Withdrawal of United States Forces from Iraq and the Organization of Their Activities during Their Temporary Presence in Iraq', *New York Times*, 19 Nov. 2008, https://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/world/20081119_SOFA_FINAL_AGREED_TEXT.pdf, accessed 20 Jan. 2021.

day as Iraq's Independence Day and "a solid prelude to the restoration of Iraq's full sovereignty in three years' time".[1299] Moreover, he boasted that his hard stance against the United States compelled it to remove its forces by 2011.[1300] Nevertheless, behind the scenes, there was an implicit understanding that the SOFA agreement could be extended in 2011 to permit a residual U.S. force in Iraq if needed.[1301] Moreover, despite Maliki's public attitude towards the SOFA, the Bush administration was confident that he would extend it in 2011.[1302] According to Brian Katulis et al., the SOFA was the "best of both worlds for Maliki. It allows him to simultaneously claim that he has negotiated an end to the occupation… and maintain enough room to call upon the United States to stay if necessary".[1303] Nevertheless, the inability of the United States to influence Maliki throughout the SOFA negotiations exemplifies Emerson's mutual dependence. The Bush administration was utterly dependent on Maliki's support to establish a SOFA. They needed Maliki to negotiate with Iraq's domestic interest groups to pass the agreement. As a result of this dependence, the U.S. attempt to use its military resources as leverage to influence Maliki was unsuccessful. Instead, they made several concessions. This illustrates how mutual dependency can prevent the asymmetrical-power capabilities of the stronger actor from translating into influence.

Maliki's Authoritarianism

Although the SOFA negotiations and its outcome illustrated how domestic interest groups continued to influence Maliki's preferences towards U.S. objectives, it appeared that there were additional factors within Maliki himself that impacted these preferences. As demonstrated, the Bush administration interpreted Maliki's posturing throughout the SOFA negotiations due to the Shia bloc and from Maliki himself. Nonetheless, the impact of Maliki's personal disposition towards U.S. objectives became more pronounced in 2008. In the second half of 2008, the United States perceived Maliki as exhibiting authoritarian tendencies, undermining its stability goals. During the SOFA negotiations, the UK Chief of Defence Staff, Christopher Prentice, observed that Maliki was "taking on an authoritarian cast".[1304] This observation was echoed by others, including Odierno's advisor, Emma Sky. Sky wrote that "he was growing into power, and for the first time appeared to relish it".[1305] Furthermore, Maliki

[1299] 'Iraq leader defends US troop deal', *BBC*, 18 Nov. 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7736670.stm, para. 6, accessed 16 Feb. 2021
[1300] Bolger, *Why We Lost: A General's Inside Account of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars*, p.273 and Sky, *The Unravelling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, p.270.
[1301] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.418.
[1302] Sky, *The Unravelling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, p.216.
[1303] Brian Katulis et al., 'Iraq's Political Transition After the Surge: Five Enduring Tensions and Ten Key Challenges', p.17.
[1304] Prentice, 'Iraq: Prospects for the Autumn' [eGram], p.3.
[1305] Sky, *The Unravelling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, p.250.

began to consolidate his power by centralising it through his Office of Commander in Chief.[1306] The office was initially used as means of coordinating national security policy. Yet, Maliki began to use this office to bypass the official chains of command within the police and army.[1307] For instance, he would order military operations and arrest warrants through the office. Moreover, some of these appeared sectarian motivated.[1308] This was previously demonstrated with the raids Maliki appeared to authorise against the Sahwa party and Sons of Iraq groups in Diyala. The office became ostensibly viewed as some form of shadow government by the coalition.[1309] A JIC assessment emphasised Maliki's expanding control over ISF, stating that,

> …he has continued to exploit his constitutional role as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces to the full, dictating where, when and how Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) are deployed, sometimes overruling local commanders. He has increased the number of regional military commands that report directly to him. [1310]

Moreover, Cordesman highlights the influence that the office had over the military. He stated that elements of the security forces "are dependent to some extent on Maliki's office for promotion, regular pay, arms and equipment transfers, manpower assignments, and money [sic] force services and facilities". [1311]

The Bush administration determined that Maliki's actions with his Office of Commander in Chief centred on three aspects: conspiracies, practicality and protecting his power. Sky recalls how Maliki's fear of a Baathist return continued to increase in 2008. Moreover, he was concerned that the Syrian intelligence was working with Shia groups in southern Iraq to assassinate him.[1312] Sky stated that "Maliki saw Baathists everywhere. He had surrounded himself with people who fed such fears—and then claimed credit for saving him from these spectres".[1313] Also, Crocker claimed that Maliki's "repeatedly expressed fears of coups and conspiracies against him and his government" motivated his centralisation of power.[1314] In one case, Maliki told Petraeus that "he had a report that former regime intelligence officers based in Syria were planning his assassination, to trigger the fall of the GOI, and that Russia was

[1306] Ibid. and House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), Vol. 9 Section 7 p.42.
[1307] Ryan Crocker, 'Maliki Reshapes The National Security System' [cable], 07BAGHDAD1593_a, 15 May 2007, *WikiLeaks*, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07BAGHDAD1593_a.html, para. 5, accessed 16 Feb. 2021 and Gordon & Trainor, *The Endgame: The inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.360.
[1308] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.360.
[1309] Ibid.
[1310] 'Iraqi Security Forces: Mixed Abilities' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, p.2.
[1311] Anthony H. Cordesman, 'The Shi'ite Gamble: Rolling the Dice for Iraq's Future', *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, (21 Apr. 2008), https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/media/csis/pubs/080421_cordesman_shiite_gamble.pdf, p.3, accessed 1 Dec. 2020.
[1312] Sky, *The Unravelling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, p.269.
[1313] Ibid.
[1314] Crocker, 'Maliki Reshapes The National Security System' [cable], para. 2.

encouraging this effort".[1315] Crocker further highlights Maliki's constant anxiety by paradoxically stating that "Maliki also seems gripped by two seemingly contradictory fears regarding the U.S. military presence; he worries both that we are deliberately slowing the transfer of security responsibilities to Iraq and that we might depart prematurely".[1316] Furthermore, a JIC assessment identified this susceptibility to conspiracies and highlighted the practicality of Maliki's tactics. It judged that Maliki's "approach is driven by … suspicion of political rivals and his perception that centralising power is essential to getting things done in stabilising Iraq".[1317] The latter point was further supported by another assessment, which stated that Maliki's "circumvention of over-bureaucratic processes has also enabled more rapid deployment of forces…[that] has so far furthered rather than hampered the overall improvement in security" within Iraq.[1318] Crocker also spoke to this notion, emphasising that "Maliki wants to be a strong leader…[hence]… he persists because he believes he requires full command over the security forces".[1319]

Maliki's increasing control over the military was exemplified with Iraq's Special Forces. In early 2007, Maliki expressed the desire to General Casey that these forces should report to him, yet Casey temporarily dissuaded this idea.[1320] However, in 2008, some within the coalition believed that the Special Forces should be transferred from the Defence Ministry to an Iraqi equivalent of the United States Special Operations Command. This would be an independent entity that would authorise Iraq's special operations. It was recommended that the organisation report directly to the chief executive, Maliki, to remove layers of bureaucracy that might slow the response to national terrorist incidents.[1321] This spoke to Maliki's earlier suggestion to Casey that his Office of Commander in Chief should have control over the Special Forces.[1322] Thus, Maliki eagerly endorsed this new proposal. Petraeus resisted this initiative but relented after citing pressure from higher authorities in the Department of Defense.[1323] Thus, by late 2008, Maliki had comfortably assumed control of the Special Forces. He had replaced its senior leadership with those loyal to him.[1324] Moreover, it became

[1315] Ryan Crocker, 'Gen Petraeus' Meeting With PM Maliki' [cable], 09BAGHDAD31_a, 7 Jan. 2009, *WikiLeaks*, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAGHDAD31_a.html, para. 9, accessed 3 Dec. 2020.
[1316] Ibid.
[1317] House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016), Vol. 9 Section 7 p.42.
[1318] 'Iraqi Security Forces: Mixed Abilities' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, p.2.
[1319] Crocker, 'Maliki Reshapes The National Security System' [cable], para. 17.
[1320] Bob Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History 2006-2008*, (U.S.A: Simon and Schuster, 2008), p.72.
[1321] Crocker, 'Maliki Reshapes The National Security System' [cable], para. 8-9.
[1322] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.416.
[1323] Ibid.
[1324] Marisa Sullivan, 'Middle East Security Report 10: Maliki's Authoritarian Regime', *Institute for the Study of War*, (Apr. 2013), http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Malikis-Authoritarian-Regime-Web.pdf, p.12 accessed 21 Feb. 2021.

increasingly more Shia dominated.[1325] Consequently, the Special Forces became widely recognised as Maliki's political tool.[1326] Coalition troops would refer to them as the "dirty brigade".[1327] Additionally, in Iraq, they were dubbed as "Fedayeen al-Maliki", referring to Fedayeen Saddam, a paramilitary militia created by Saddam.[1328]

The U.S. response to these developments was relatively muted. The Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSTOF), which continually advised Iraq's Special Forces and formally had authority and oversight over them until September 2006,[1329] refused to accompany the Special Forces on missions and lodged protests to Maliki's government.[1330] By late 2008, the CJSTOF separated themselves from the Special Forces and began to work with Iraqi counter-terrorism units.[1331] Yet, overall, the Bush administration was limited in its approach to overcome this challenge. Maliki's role as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces was constitutional, and he "continues to operate broadly within a constitutional democratic framework".[1332] However, Petraeus attempted to reduce the power of Maliki's Office of Commander in Chief. This was somewhat difficult given that the coalition under Casey's tenure welcomed the idea of this office to create a unified Iraqi effort in response to the increase of violence in 2006.[1333] Yet, as Maliki began issuing military orders by circumventing the official Iraqi command, Petraeus realised the need to confront this issue.[1334] He convinced Maliki to shrink its staff by half, yet the remaining were still Maliki loyalists.[1335] Moreover, Petraeus attempted to place a coalition advisor in Maliki's office, but Maliki rebuffed this.[1336] Thus, Petraeus encouraged his senior officers to build relations with staff from Maliki's office to understand what was transpiring in the office.[1337] Crocker observed that Maliki "is clearly aware of the concern by both coalition and Iraqi officials over the growing size and power of Office of the Commander in Chief and today seemed to signal that he does not intend to allow any interference in its functions".[1338] Accordingly, Petraeus planned to confront and

[1325] Ibid.
[1326] Ibid.
[1327] 'Elite Iraqi unit steps up as U.S. draws down', *NBC News*, 27 June 2009, https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna31569733, para. 1, accessed 11 Feb. 2021.
[1328] Robert Tollast, 'Maliki's Private Army', *The National Interest* [website], (31 Dec. 2012), https://nationalinterest.org/commentary/malikis-private-army-7915, para. 9, accessed 11 Feb. 2021.
[1329] David M. Witty, 'The Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service', *Brookings*, (June 2016), https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/david-witty-paper_final_web.pdf, p.7 and 11, accessed 18 Feb. 2021.
[1330] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.417.
[1331] Witty, 'The Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service', p.14.
[1332] House of Commons, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry* (2016),Vol. 9 Section 7 p.42.
[1333] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.282.
[1334] Ibid. p.283.
[1335] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.365.
[1336] Ryan Crocker, 'Maliki Blocks Meeting With OCINC Advisor (S)' [cable], 07BAGHDAD1401_a, 24 Apr. 2007, *WikiLeaks*, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07BAGHDAD1401_a.html, accessed 11 Feb. 2021.
[1337] Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, p.79.
[1338] Crocker, 'Maliki Blocks Meeting With OCINC Advisor (S)' [cable], para. 2.

undo this consolidation of Maliki's power once the insurgency was defeated.[1339] However, this would not be earnestly pursued by the Obama administration. Therefore, the administration cautiously monitored Maliki's office yet could not exert influence over Maliki regarding this consolidation of power. Consequently, Maliki's control over the armed forces would become a critical issue that undermined U.S. stability goals in the Obama period.

Conclusion

From January 2007 to December 2008, the Bush administration did not achieve all of its stated goals in Iraq with the Surge. Notwithstanding a general decline in violence by 90%, the administration's desired stability and political reconciliation did not transpire.[1340] Although Sadr's Mahdi Army was in "greater disarray and weaker than at any time since 2003",[1341] the police and army remained heavily infiltrated by militia members "affiliated with Badr or the Sadrists".[1342] Progress with the Sons of Iraq appeared to reverse, as did the larger reconciliation goals between the Shia dominated government and Iraq's Sunni community. Furthermore, the Bush administration could not dislodge Maliki from the Shia bloc. Notwithstanding an additional 30,000 troop influx, the administration's failure to achieve its goals can be attributed to Maliki's mixed compliance. Although Maliki appeared somewhat compliant with U.S. objectives surrounding militias in the police force, he exemplified non-compliance to other U.S. priorities. This non-compliance was motivated by Maliki's preferences that did not complement those of the Bush administration. Drawing on Moravcsik and Putnam, Maliki's preferences still appeared beholden to the Shia bloc. He continued to satisfy the bloc's preferences, as required, to stay in power. This was evident with the Sons of Iraq, the SOFA negotiations, and Maliki's alliance with Sadr after the Charge of the Knights operation. However, there were instances where Maliki's actions towards U.S. preferences appeared to emerge from Maliki's instead of the Shia bloc. This was illustrated with Maliki's Charge of the Knights operation, establishing Tribal Support Councils, forming alliances with other special group militias, and consolidating power in the Office of Commander in Chief. The United States interpreted Maliki's actions as reducing his dependency on the Shia bloc and his rivals by building and consolidating power. Moreover, the administration assessed that Maliki's actions also appeared motivated by insecurity and willingness to believe in conspiracies against him. Furthermore, Maliki's authorisation of military actions against the

[1339] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.283.
[1340] Biddle et al., 'The Evolution of Iraq Strategy', p.31.
[1341] 'Iraq: Security in the South' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 18 Sep. 2008, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123123428/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/230795/2008-09-18-jic-assessment-iraq-security-in-the-south.pdf, p.2, accessed 12 Feb. 2021.
[1342] 'Iraqi Security Forces: Mixed Abilities' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, pp.1-2.

Sons of Iraq in (Diyala) was perceived to have sectarian motivations based on Maliki's history in Iraq and experience with Saddam's regime. Yet, some within the Bush administration believe these operations were more politically oriented to degrade the Sons of Iraq and its new Sahwa party from participating in the provincial elections.

The administration had limited influence over Maliki and could not sway him to become more supportive of its goals. They could not overcome his reluctance to the Sons of Iraq initiative, reduce the power in his Office of Commander in Chief, and had to make numerous concessions in the SOFA negotiations. This limited influence resulted from the mutual-dependent relationship that the United States was in. The Bush administration remained dependent on Maliki to support its goals, most notably the SOFA, which required Maliki to navigate the competing interests of the Shia bloc. Moreover, this dependence became pronounced given that there was no alternative to Maliki as prime minister. The administration could not afford to reset the political clock in Baghdad by withdrawing its support for Maliki. This risked a prolonged political vacuum due to anticipated jockeying between political parties for the prime minister position, which had occurred after the December 2005 election.[1343] This would be politically unacceptable within the United States and unfeasible to implement, given that 2008 was the final year of the Bush administration. Moreover, the administration could not risk the emergence of a less friendly and less compliant prime minister.

This logic was illustrated in August and December 2007. According to Gordon and Trainor, in August 2007, Bush posed the idea to the National Security Council of removing Maliki and finding an alternative leader given his non-compliance and the dysfunction of his government.[1344] However, given the risks of starting afresh, Bush relented to keeping Maliki.[1345] Retired General Jack Keane emphasised to Bush that, "we must stick with Maliki…as weak as he is, and as weak as his coalition is, given the time that we have available back here in our own country, I don't believe we have time for the government to be changed out".[1346] The second example occurred in December 2007 when Iyad Allawi informed Rice that he was rallying a no-confidence vote in Maliki with the Sunni bloc and other parties.[1347] Strikingly, Rice and the administration rejected Allawi's proposal despite being the U.S. preferred candidate from 2004 to 2006. Thus, Allawi ceased pursuing the motion. The decision to douse Allawi's initiative can be attributed to the risk of political instability in Iraq and the fear

[1343] 'Baghdad Security Plan: Impact and Prognosis' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, p.4 and 'Iraq: Transition in Basra' [paper], Foreign Commonwealth Office and Ministry of Defence, p.5.
[1344] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.431.
[1345] Ibid.
[1346] Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History 2006-2008*, p.360.
[1347] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.292.

of the political vacuum that could see Iraq with no leadership and the government machinery at a halt.[1348] Therefore, according to Mansoor, notwithstanding his mixed compliance, the administration "had no choice but to support Maliki".[1349] Mansoor's statement epitomises how Emerson's concept of mutual dependence can limit a state's asymmetrical-power capabilities from translating into influence. Despite the immense power of the United States, exemplified with its troop presence in Iraq, it was compelled to accept Maliki's non-compliance towards its objectives.

[1348] Ibid.
[1349] Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, p.271.

Chapter VI – Maliki and the Obama Administration

The election of Obama was a pivotal milestone in the U.S.-Iraq relationship. The Obama administration possessed substantially different priorities to those of the Bush administration. Obama long opposed the U.S. invasion and campaigned on ending Bush's "dumb war".[1350] He did not share Bush's democratic aspirations, writing that, "as far as I was concerned… our national security required a stable Iraq, but not a showcase for American nation-building".[1351] Moreover, he believed that the war had distracted the United States from winning the good war in Afghanistan.[1352] In 2009, it was clear that the situation in Afghanistan was deteriorating. This prompted Bush to re-deploy some troops from Iraq to Afghanistan after the 2008 Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) was signed with Iraq.[1353] For Obama, Afghanistan required an equivalent surge. It would be the focus of his administration. Nonetheless, despite this priority, Obama wanted to bring Iraq to a responsible end. He wanted to maintain "a sizeable troop presence… to ensure stability and reduce violence" as well as prevent "Iran from taking further advantage of the mess we'd made".[1354] Obama handed the Iraq portfolio over to his Vice President, Joe Biden, because he knew "Iraq better than anyone".[1355] Biden and the administration believed that they could achieve their goal of a stable Iraq with the current Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. They perceived Maliki as a leader who wanted to maintain a close partnership with the United States. Moreover, they thought he would limit the Iranian influence in Iraq.[1356] Hence, Biden was confident that Maliki would renew the Status of Forces Agreement and allow for a residual U.S. presence in Iraq after the 2011 withdrawal timeline. Nevertheless, it would not be long before the problems that plagued the Bush administration would confront the Obama administration.

The Obama administration witnessed the re-occurrence of Maliki's mixed compliance with political reconciliation and the Sons of Iraq. Moreover, it saw an increase in his authoritarian

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[1350] Brent Budowsky, 'Obama's Speech Opposing The Iraq War', *HuffPost* [website], (11 Nov. 2008), https://www.huffpost.com/entry/obamas-speech-opposing-th_b_90944, para. 6, accessed 3 Jan. 2021.
[1351] Barack Obama, *A Promised Land*, (New York: Crown, 2020), pp.162-163.
[1352] Akbarzadeh, Shahram, 'Obama in the Middle East: Failure to Bring Change', in Shahram Akbarzadeh (ed), *America's challenges in the greater Middle East: the Obama Administration's policies*, (United States: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.3.
[1353] Mark Tran, 'Bush announces withdrawal of 8,000 troops from Iraq', *Guardian,* 9 Sep. 2008, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/sep/09/iraq.usa, accessed 24 Apr. 2021.
[1354] Obama, *A Promised Land*, pp.162-163 and 209.
[1355] Mike Giglio, 'Joe Biden's Haunted Legacy in Iraq', *The Atlantic,* 28 June 2019, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2019/06/joe-bidens-iraq-decisions-haunt-him-2020/592669/, para. 6, accessed 30 June. 2021 and Joseph R. Biden JR, *Promise Me, Dad: A Year of Hope, Hardship, and Purpose*, (U.S.A: Macmillan, 2017), p.60.
[1356] Christopher Hill, 'Prime Minister Maliki's Visit: Launching The Strategic Framework Agreement' [cable], 09BAGHDAD1932_a, 16 July 2009, *WikiLeaks,* https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAGHDAD1932_a.html, para. 9, accessed 2 May 2021.

practices. This directly affected the administration's stability goal. Observing the lessons from the Bush administration, the Obama administration considered this mixed-compliance a consequence of the influence of domestic political groups on Maliki. Obama was well aware of "Maliki's ties to Iran, where he had lived in exile for many years, as well as his uneasy alliances with certain Shiite militias".[1357] However, Biden and the new U.S. ambassador, Christopher Hill, claimed that Maliki personally supported the goals of the reconciliation and the Sons of Iraq but had to balance the Shia constituents in his coalition.[1358] These assumptions appeared to be supported by Maliki's success at the 2009 provincial elections, where his party campaigned on nationalistic and cross-sectarian platforms. Moreover, after his electoral success, Maliki declared he would not form an alliance with the dominant Shia bloc for the 2010 national elections. This was a significant announcement given how the Shia bloc frustrated the objectives of the United States. Therefore, the Obama administration appeared to give tacit acceptance to Maliki's mixed-compliance, noting that he broadly shared its strategic goals.

The administration's perception of Maliki, however, contradicted the observations of U.S. senior military commanders in Iraq. In contrast to the administration's benign assumptions of Maliki, they saw Maliki's actions as sectarian and motivated by a desire to solidify his power. Nonetheless, the administration's perception was challenged in the 2010 elections. Maliki's coalition did not win the most seats. Another party, Iraqiyya, led by the former interim prime minister, Iyad Allawi, won the most seats. Consequently, Maliki exhibited increased sectarian and authoritarian behaviour in an attempt to modify the election's results to remain as prime minister. This was alarming for the Obama administration as the Iraqiyya coalition included many Sunni-political parties. There was a perceived risk that if these parties were not included in the new government, a repeat of another Sunni boycott might transpire and lead to a renewed insurgency. This risked the administration's stability goals and potentially delay the U.S. troop withdrawal from Iraq.

The Obama Administration's Goals

For his tenure, Obama's priorities would be Afghanistan and Pakistan, not Iraq. He argued that throughout the Surge in Iraq, "the Taliban has been on the offensive, even launching a brazen attack on one of our bases. Al Qaeda has a growing sanctuary in Pakistan".[1359] Also,

[1357] Obama, *A Promised Land*, p.151.
[1358] Hill, 'Prime Minister Maliki's Visit: Launching The Strategic Framework Agreement' [cable], para. 7.
[1359] 'Obama's Remarks on Iraq and Afghanistan', *New York Times*, 15 July 2008, https://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/15/us/politics/15text-obama.html, para. 29, accessed 11 Feb. 2021.

Obama had frequently opposed Bush's war in Iraq. In October 2002, he spoke against the possible invasion of Iraq, stating that "I don't oppose all wars…what I am opposed to is a dumb war. What I am opposed to is a rash war".[1360] Moreover, he claimed that the current engagement was draining resources that "could have rebuilt our roads and bridges, laid down new rail and broadband and electricity systems, and made college affordable for every American".[1361] Given the ongoing Global Financial Crisis, this point appeared more prevalent for Obama. Moreover, in 2007, Obama introduced the Iraq War De-escalation Act in response to Bush's Surge announcement, which would "place a cap on the number of troops in Iraq and stop the escalation".[1362] He stated, "the need to bring this war to an end is here".[1363] His 2008 presidential campaign continued this theme, stating,

> …this war distracts us from every threat that we face and so many opportunities we could seize. This war diminishes our security, our standing in the world, our military, our economy, and the resources that we need to confront the challenges of the 21st century. By any measure, our single-minded and open-ended focus on Iraq is not a sound strategy for keeping America safe.[1364]

Obama outlined a 16-month plan to withdraw all combat troops and leave a small residual force in Iraq.[1365] Furthermore, in his first speech on Iraq as President, Obama stated that "we have also taken into account the simple reality that America can no longer afford to see Iraq in isolation from other priorities: we face the challenge of refocusing on Afghanistan and Pakistan; of relieving the burden on our military; and of rebuilding our struggling economy".[1366] Obama's focus on Afghanistan stemmed from his perspective that Afghanistan was "ground zero for any war on terrorism",[1367] and that al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan were the "central front in the war on terror …not Iraq".[1368] He emphasised that "this is a war that we have to win".[1369]

[1360] Budowsky, 'Obama's Speech Opposing The Iraq War', para. 6.
[1361] 'Obama's Remarks on Iraq and Afghanistan', *New York Times*, para.17.
[1362] Jaime Fuller, 'How Obama talked about Iraq, from 2002 to 2014', *Washington Post*, 19 June 2014, para. 12, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 14 Apr. 2021.
[1363] Congress.gov, 'Congressional Record Senate Articles: IRAQ; Congressional Record Vol. 153, No. 18', 30 Jan. 2007, https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/2007/1/30/senate-section/article/S1322-1, accessed 13 May 2021.
[1364] 'Obama's Remarks on Iraq and Afghanistan', *New York Times*, para. 20.
[1365] Thom Shanker, 'Campaign Promises on Ending the War in Iraq Now Muted by Reality', *New York Times*, 3 Dec. 2008, https://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/04/us/politics/04military.html, para. 1-3, accessed 8 Feb. 2021.
[1366] 'Obama's Speech at Camp Lejeune, N.C.', *New York Times*, 27 Feb. 2009, https://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/27/us/politics/27obama-text.html, para. 12, accessed 9 Feb. 2021.
[1367] Helene Cooper et al., 'On the Issues: Iraq and Afghanistan', *New York Times,* 2008, https://www.nytimes.com/elections/2008/president/issues/iraq.html, para. 3, accessed 4 Feb. 2021.
[1368] 'Obama's Remarks on Iraq and Afghanistan', *New York Times*, para. 40.
[1369] Ibid. para. 52.

According to Woodward, Obama's first briefing after the election with the Director of National Intelligence, Mike McConnell, stressed that the immediate threat to U.S. interests was originating from Pakistan.[1370] The main priority was the ungoverned FATA[1371] area that bordered Afghanistan in which Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban had settled.[1372] This allowed al-Qaeda and the Taliban to conduct attacks again U.S. forces in Afghanistan.[1373] McConnell highlighted how Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), its central spy agency, continued to provide aid to the Taliban despite supporting U.S. operations in Afghanistan.[1374] Consequently, the Taliban had re-established a strong presence in southern Afghanistan that bordered Pakistan, which continued to grow.[1375] Additionally, compared to 161,000 U.S. troops in Iraq, there were only 38,000 troops thinly spread in Afghanistan, which could not effectively deal with the growing Taliban presence.[1376] Moreover, Afghanistan's security forces were unable to handle the country's security and deal with the Taliban's insurgency without U.S. support.[1377] After Obama's briefing, he discussed Afghanistan with the chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen.[1378] Mullen told Obama that the Afghanistan project had been under-resourced for years and there was a lack of overall strategy as a consequence of the focus on Iraq.[1379] However, Mullen stated that with the proper resources they could succeed in Afghanistan. [1380] Obama agreed, stating that "I want to get Afghanistan and Pakistan right, Obama said, but I don't want to build a Jeffersonian democracy".[1381] Accordingly, Vice President, Joe Biden, visited Pakistan to emphasise Obama's priority with Afghanistan and the need for Pakistan to stop supporting the Taliban.[1382] According to Woodward, Biden told Pakistan's president, Asif Ali Zardari, that "Afghanistan is going to be his [Obama's] war" and he might send more troops to Afghanistan.[1383] Yet, Biden argued that this would be meaningless if Pakistan did not help the United States by ceasing support to the Taliban.[1384]

[1370] Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), pp.1-2.
[1371] Federally Administered Tribal Areas
[1372] Tabassum Zakaria, 'Bin Laden, Omar operating in Pakistan - U.S. official', *Reuters*, 9 Feb. 2008, https://www.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-31840620080208, accessed 7 June 2021.
[1373] Ibid. and Shuja Nawaz, 'FATA-A Most Dangerous Place: Meeting the Challenge of Militancy and Terror in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan', *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, (Jan. 2009),https://csiswebsiteprod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fspublic/legacy_files/files/media/csis/pubs/081218_nawaz_fata_web.pdf, p.11-12, accessed 3 Feb. 2021.
[1374] Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, p.1-2.
[1375] Ibid. pp.41-42.
[1376] Ibid.
[1377] Ibid.
[1378] Ibid. pp.21-22.
[1379] Ibid. pp.32-33.
[1380] Ibid.
[1381] Ibid.
[1382] 'Biden Holds Talks With Pakistani Leaders', *CBS NEWS*, 9 Jan. 2009, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/biden-holds-talks-with-pakistani-leaders, para. 1 and 7, accessed 3 June 2021.
[1383] Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, pp.63-64.
[1384] Ibid.

The Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, shared Obama's thinking. He claimed that because of the focus on Iraq, there "wasn't much I could do in Afghanistan…until we began to back off the surge in Iraq, there were no more troops to send to Afghanistan. We basically played small ball in Afghanistan".[1385] Moreover, he conveyed to Bush in November 2008 "that we were neglecting Afghanistan and it was in trouble".[1386] Thus, Gates and Obama agreed to send two combat brigades to Afghanistan of 17,000 troops in February 2009.[1387] Furthermore, in December 2009, Obama launched his own surge in Afghanistan and sent another 30,000 U.S. combat troops to Afghanistan to "end this war".[1388] Accordingly, he would accelerate the handover of security responsibilities to Afghan security forces and began withdrawing U.S. troops by July 2011.[1389] The consequence of this concentration on Afghanistan and Pakistan was that the Obama administration would not prioritise Iraq. Funding the surge in Afghanistan required a shift of assets and resources from Iraq.[1390] The Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, stated, "until we began to back off the surge in Iraq, there were no more troops to send to Afghanistan".[1391]

Stability, not Democracy

The prioritisation of Afghanistan and Pakistan motivated the Obama Administration to "wind down" Iraq.[1392] Gates stated that Obama and Biden were not saying, "we ought to walk away from Iraq or we ought to have zero troops in Iraq or that we ought not have a long-term commitment to helping Iraq. What they wanted was the war over".[1393] Hence, the Obama administration's goals for Iraq was to continue the Bush administration's stability objectives, transferring security responsibilities to Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), reducing troops to focus on Afghanistan and limit Iranian influence in Iraq. However, rather than a democratic government emerging, the Obama administration's goal entailed a stable and self-reliant Iraq that would support U.S. objectives in the region.[1394] Obama declared that his Iraq strategy was "grounded

[1385] 'Robert Gates Oral History' *Miller Center* [website], University of Virginia, 9 July 2013, http://web1.millercenter.org/poh/transcripts/gates_robert_2013_0709.pdf, p.57, accessed 10 Jan 2019.
[1386] Ibid. p.58
[1387] Helene Cooper, 'Putting Stamp on Afghan War, Obama Will Send 17,000 Troops', *New York Times*, 17 Feb. 2009, https://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/18/washington/18web-troops.html, accessed 2 Mar. 2021.
[1388] Daniel Dombey, 'US sends 30,000 troops to 'end this war', *Financial Times,* 2 Dec. 2009, https://www.ft.com/content/8d47b920-debf-11de-adff-00144feab49a, para. 3, accessed 18 Feb. 2021.
[1389] Ibid. para. 4.
[1390] Joel D. Rayburn and Frank K. Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S Army War College Press, 2019), p.494.
[1391] 'Robert Gates Oral History' *Miller Center,* p.57.
[1392] Obama, *A Promised Land*, p.209.
[1393] 'Robert Gates Oral History' *Miller Center,* p.69.
[1394] 'Obama's Speech at Camp Lejeune, N.C.', *New York Times*, para. 33.

in a clear and achievable goal shared by the Iraqi people and the American people: an Iraq that is sovereign, stable, and self-reliant".[1395] He further stated,

> …what we will not do is let the pursuit of the perfect stand in the way of achievable goals. We cannot rid Iraq of all who oppose America or sympathize with our adversaries. We cannot police Iraq's streets until they are completely safe, nor stay until Iraq's union is perfected. We cannot sustain indefinitely a commitment that has put a strain on our military, and will cost the American people nearly a trillion dollars. America's men and women in uniform have fought block by block, province by province, year after year, to give the Iraqis this chance to choose a better future. Now, we must ask the Iraqi people to seize it.[1396]

Nevertheless, Gates believed that the Bush administration had achieved its Surge objectives. "Iraq [was] stabilised and taking care of its own business in a way that we could get out there without suffering a major strategic failure".[1397] Hence, the Obama administration needed to maintain the "unity government", continue the integration of the Sons of Iraq and promote political reconciliation amongst Iraq's population.[1398] This was to be undertaken during the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq as stipulated in the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). Although Obama abided by Bush's agreement, he tailored the deal to his preferences. At the administration's first National Security Council Meeting in January, Obama instructed General Ray Odierno and Ambassador Ryan Crocker to develop three withdrawal options of combat troops to suit a 23,19, and 16-month timeframe.[1399] Crocker and Odierno developed these plans and argued for the 23-month time frame to see most U.S. troops leave Iraq by January 2011: 11 months before the SOFA's December 2011 schedule.[1400] They advocated for this timeline because they believed it entailed the least security and political risk.[1401] However, Obama chose the 19-month option to be implemented, which would entail the removal of all combat brigades by August 2010.[1402] A residual force of 30,000 would remain after August 2010 to conduct training, advising, special operations, and protecting the U.S. embassy.[1403] The speed of Obama's desired withdrawal schedule reflected his prioritisation on Afghanistan and Pakistan. Yet, it also signalled that Iraq would not pre-occupy his presidency as it did for Bush. He stated,

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[1395] Ibid. para. 14.
[1396] Ibid. para. 15
[1397] 'Robert Gates Oral History' *Miller Center,* p.36.
[1398] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.441.
[1399] 'Obama's Speech at Camp Lejeune, N.C.', *New York Times*, para. 11, and Catherine Dale, 'Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress', *Congressional Research Service*, (2 Apr. 2009), https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20090402_RL34387_f8ca4e88cf84932f9525acab0927b606f9ef3442.pdf, p.5, accessed 5 May 2021.
[1400] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.457.
[1401] Ibid.
[1402] Ibid. and 'Obama's Speech at Camp Lejeune, N.C.', *New York Times*, para. 18.
[1403] Ibid. para. 20 and Dale, 'Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress', pp.5-6.

> …the drawdown of our military should send a clear signal that Iraq's future is now its own responsibility. The long-term success of the Iraqi nation will depend upon decisions made by Iraq's leaders and the fortitude of the Iraqi people. Iraq is a sovereign country with legitimate institutions; America cannot – and should not – take their place.[1404]

The USF-I Leadership

The commanding generals of the newly established United States Forces-Iraq (USF-I)[1405] broadly supported the administration's goals for Iraq yet disagreed on the approach to be implemented. Obama mentions this disagreement in his autobiography, writing that "Petraeus, on the other hand, believed that without a more sustained U.S. investment, whatever gains we'd made were still easily reversed".[1406] Moreover, Gates admitted in a 2009 interview that, "I think that, if the commanders had a complete say in this matter, that they would have preferred that the combat mission not end until the end of 2010".[1407] Thus, the USF-I leadership did not support Obama's timeline and believed a pre-emptive withdrawal would have consequences and risk the gains of the Surge.[1408] Odierno recommended to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that U.S. forces remain up to the very last day of the SOFA agreement.[1409] Moreover, he suggested a "flexible plan" to keep U.S. forces past the agreed 31 December 2011 withdrawal date with the consent of the Iraqi government.[1410] However, he strongly objected to the transfer of military resources from Iraq to Afghanistan.[1411] The United States Army's official account claims that the new administration did not appreciate the fragility of the gains made in the Surge. This was exacerbated by the redeployment of Ambassador Ryan Crocker to Afghanistan in February 2009. The USF-I military leadership did not welcome the new U.S. ambassador, Christopher Hill.[1412] According to the Army's account, Hill arrived

> …with what he believed was a Presidential mandate to civilianize the U.S. presence in Iraq and to make the Baghdad Embassy a "normal" U.S. diplomatic

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[1404] 'Obama's Speech at Camp Lejeune, N.C.', *New York Times*, para. 23.
[1405] At the start of 2010, the Multi-National Force Iraq (MNF-I) merged into the new USF-I command, see Luke Koladish and Kat Briere, 'New command marks milestone in Iraq', [website], (2 Jan. 2010), https://www.army.mil/article/32437/new_command_marks_milestone_in_iraq, accessed 1 June 2021.
[1406] Obama, *A Promised Land*, pp.162-163.
[1407] 'Meet the Press transcript for March 1, 2009', *NBC News*, 2 Mar. 2009, https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna29453052, para. 24. accessed 3 May 2021.
[1408] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.479, 492 and 497.
[1409] Ibid. p.457.
[1410] Ibid.
[1411] Ibid. p.497.
[1412] Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* (London: Atlantic Books, 2012), p.582.

> mission in which the ambassador was the President's personal representative with final authority over all operations in the country.[1413]

Additionally, Hill believed "that Iraq had stabilized, and it was time for the U.S. military to leave".[1414] Hill began ending long-standing embassy participation in the Iraqi government's security and finance meetings.[1415] He commented that he was "appalled by the idea that anyone but Iraqis should be in attendance at an Iraqi national security meeting".[1416] Nonetheless, despite this disagreement between the administration and USF-I military command, Odierno would implement Obama's directive to remove all combat troops in 19 months. Yet, he believed that the focus of U.S. military and diplomatic efforts in Iraq needed to "shift from security primacy to political primacy".[1417] This would entail continuing the Sons of Iraq initiative and political reconciliation. Furthermore, the provincial elections in 2009 and national elections in 2010 would be an opportunity to support political reconciliation.[1418] The success of these political goals, however, would be conditional on the compliance of Nouri al-Maliki.

Provincial Elections: Early Optimism?

The first milestone under the Obama administration was Iraq's provincial elections. The provincial elections were significant for two reasons. They witnessed the emergence of Maliki's own list, the State of Law coalition, and the participation of newly created Sunni tribal Awakening parties. Maliki's State of Law campaigned on nationalism, stability, services and security while showcasing the improvements in security since the Surge.[1419] It attributed these security gains from the Surge to Maliki's stewardship, rather than additional U.S. troops.[1420] Interestingly, the election produced poor results for the dominant sectarian parties including ISCI, the Sadrists, and to an extent, the Sunni Tawafuq bloc.[1421] However, Maliki's coalition did exceptionally well in Baghdad and southern Iraq at the expense of ISCI.[1422] This sparked

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[1413] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.496 and Christopher R. Hill, *Outpost: Life on the Frontlines of American Diplomacy: A Memoir*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), pp.350-352.
[1414] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.497.
[1415] Ibid.
[1416] Christopher R. Hill, 'How the Obama Administration Ignored Iraq: One ambassador's story of an exit strategy gone wrong', *Politico* [website], (2 Oct. 2014), https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/10/how-the-obama-administration-disowned-iraq-111565/, para. 2, accessed 3 Apr. 2021.
[1417] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.436.
[1418] Ibid. p.491.
[1419] 'Iraq's Uncertain Future: Elections and Beyond', *International Crisis Group*, (25 Feb. 2020), https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/94-iraq-s-uncertain-future-elections-and-beyond.pdf, pp.15-16, accessed 15 Feb. 2021.
[1420] Ibid.
[1421] Ibid. p.i.
[1422] 'Ibid. p.5.

optimism in the Obama administration. Sky celebrated Maliki's victory as his campaign "had focused on imposing the law and national reconciliation. This appealed to Iraqis who were fed up with sectarianism…It was a significant victory for him. We believed he was emerging as a nationalist leader of the country".[1423] Also, Crocker stated that Maliki's "Da'wa can legitimately claim to have displaced the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) as the country's preeminent Shi'a political party".[1424] Moreover, justifying his troop withdrawal schedule, Obama declared that "the relative peace and strong participation in January's provincial elections sent a powerful message to the world about how far Iraqis have come in pursuing their aspirations through a peaceful political process".[1425] Additionally, Maliki made several gestures speaking to reconciliation with Iraq's Sunni population. He offered retirement benefits and return to service options for more former regime Sunni military commanders.[1426] This led to public praise from the prominent leader of the Sunni National Dialogue Front, Saleh al-Mutlaq.[1427] Consequently, Mutlaq allied with Maliki in 4 provincial councils.[1428]

Examining Maliki's victory, however, reveals issues that undermined these democratic and nationalistic impressions. Moreover, it speaks to Maliki's political manoeuvring to weaken rivals and further solidify his power. Although Maliki campaigned on reconciliation, nationalism, and law and order, he formed an alliance with the Sadrists after the election to further marginalise ISCI.[1429] Sadrists joined numerous provincial councils that Maliki won.[1430] Hence, this alliance contradicted Sky's altruistic impression, which the Obama administration promoted. Moreover, it was a stark contrast to Maliki's rhetoric and actions throughout the Charge of the Knights operation against Sadr's Mahdi Army. It also contradicted the Surge objectives of breaking up the Shia bloc. Yet, Crocker welcomed this development, believing Maliki was simply courting "the disarrayed Sadrists and bring[ing] them closer to the political mainstream (and even groom them as potential coalition partners)".[1431] Crocker's observation

[1423] Emma Sky, *The Unravelling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq,* (London: Atlantic Books, 2015), p.276.
[1424] Ryan Crocker, 'PM Maliki: Strengthened Center or Emerging Strongman?' [cable], 09BAGHDAD379_a, 13 Feb. 2009, *WikiLeaks*, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAGHDAD379_a.html, para. 1, accessed 10 Mar. 2021.
[1425] 'Remarks of President Barack Obama - Responsibly Ending the War in Iraq', *White House*, 27 Feb. 2009, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-barack-obama-ndash-responsibly-ending-war-iraq, para. 6, accessed 4 Apr. 2021.
[1426] Jeremy Domergue and Marisa Sullivan, 'Balancing Maliki: Shifting Coalitions in Iraqi politics and the rise of the Iraqi parliament', *Institute for the Study of War,* (June 2009), http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/IraqReport14_BalancingMaliki.pdf, p.14, accessed 5 Apr. 2021.
[1427] Ibid.
[1428] Ibid. p.15.
[1429] Khaled Farhan, 'Iraq's Sadr ready for alliances with rival Maliki', *Reuters*, 15 Feb. 2009, https://www.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-38018520090214?edition-redirect=uk, para. 1,5 and 7, accessed 11 Mar. 2021 and Anthony Shadid, 'In Iraq, Political Ambiguity', *Washington Post*, 4 Apr. 2009, https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/03/AR2009040303437.html?wpisrc=newsletter, para. 11, accessed 12 Mar. 2021.
[1430] See Figure 5.2 in Anthony Cordesman et al., 'Iraq and the United States: Creating a Strategic Partnership', *Center for International and Strategic Studies*, (June 2010), https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/100622_Cordesman_IraqUSStrategicPartner_WEB.pdf, p.114, accessed 22 Apr. 2021.
[1431] Crocker, 'PM Maliki: Strengthened Center or Emerging Strongman?' [cable], para. 24.

is understandable given that Maliki's Charge of the Knights significantly disrupted the Sadrists. Hence, courting disgruntled Sadrist members would further splinter the Sadrist movement. However, Crocker's analysis seems misplaced given the consequence of the Sadr-Maliki alliance for the United States in the 2010 election, which is discussed later in this chapter. Furthermore, Maliki's outreach to Sunnis after the election was eventually viewed as a ploy to court more Sunni votes.[1432] This was evident given that the alliance between Mutlaq and Maliki broke down in April 2009 over reconciliation with former Baath party members.[1433] Moreover, after this dispute between Maliki and Mutlaq, Maliki's rhetoric on reconciliation was tempered.[1434]

The Deputy Chief of the U.S. Embassy, Patricia Butenis, noted that the Tribal Support Councils, which Maliki established and funded from his own office, significantly contributed to his electoral success in southern Iraq.[1435] This charge was also laid by ISCI.[1436] Yet, they did not influence Maliki's results in Anbar and other northern Sunni provinces where Maliki's party fared poorly.[1437] Nonetheless, Maliki's electoral success generated even more resentment amongst his political rivals, especially those from the ISCI.[1438] However, most importantly, Maliki's success empowered him to run his State of Law coalition list for the 2010 elections independent of the dominant Shia coalition, the Iraqi National Alliance (INA).[1439] The INA rebranded itself from the United Iraqi Alliance to the Iraqi National Alliance.[1440] Maliki's decision was interesting given it risked electoral loss against the INA coalition. Nevertheless, the administration welcomed this decision to run independently of ISCI and the Sadrists.[1441] They saw the potential of Maliki transcending above the constraints of the existing governing coalition, which had frustrated the Bush administration since Jaafari's tenure. Maliki's chief of staff, Tariq Abdullah, told the acting Deputy Chief of Mission Robert Ford that Maliki's decision not to join the INA was a result of his "wishes to lead a cross-sectarian list against the [INA][1442]", and "because its Shia rivals are not offering Da'wa enough seats and because, without significant Sunni or Kurdish membership, the [INA] resembles the [former] Shia-only

[1432] Domergue and Sullivan, 'Balancing Maliki: Shifting Coalitions in Iraqi politics and the rise of the Iraqi parliament', p.14.
[1433] Ibid. p.15.
[1434] Ibid.
[1435] Patricia Butenis, 'Support Councils in Sunni Regions: Failure to Launch' [cable], 09BAGHDAD431_a, 19 Feb. 2009, *WikiLeaks*, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAGHDAD431_a.html, para. 3, accessed 11 Mar. 2021.
[1436] 'Iraq's Uncertain Future: Elections and Beyond', *International Crisis Group*, p.9.
[1437] Butenis, 'Support Councils in Sunni Regions: Failure to Launch' [cable], para. 1,3 and 4 and see Figure 5.3 in Cordesman et al., 'Iraq and the United States: Creating a Strategic Partnership', p.115.
[1438] 'Iraq's Uncertain Future: Elections and Beyond', *International Crisis Group*, p.ii.
[1439] Ibid. p.13.
[1440] Ibid.
[1441] Rod Nordland, 'Iran Plays Host to Delegations After Iraq Elections', *New York Times*, 1 Apr. 2010, https://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/02/world/middleeast/02iraq.html, para. 15, accessed 6 May 2021.
[1442] In his cables, Ford refers to the Shia Iraqi National Alliance (INA) as the Iraqi National Coalition (INC). The author has replaced Ford's use of INC with the INA to avoid confusion.

[UIA] and reinforces sectarian politics".[1443] Thus, echoing Moravcsik's and Putnam's theoretical logic, Maliki's transcendence of the INA could limit the Shia bloc's influence over his preferences towards the United States. Accordingly, it might broaden Maliki's win-set to overlap with that of the United States and lead to Maliki supporting U.S. objectives.

Notwithstanding this optimistic picture, there were claims that Maliki's decision to run independently for the 2010 election was based on his desire to remain in power as prime minister. Before declaring to run independently, Maliki reached out to the Shia INA coalition. During the May 2009 negotiations for the INA electoral list, Maliki attempted to gain their support to retain the premiership.[1444] According to Colonel Joel Rayburn, Maliki insisted that he would re-join the bloc in exchange for being its prime minister nominee.[1445] Moreover, at the negotiations, Maliki called for the end of the *Muhasasa*-consensus system, which guaranteed certain senior government positions for Sunni and Kurdish minorities, and advocated for a majority rule.[1446] This prompted a backlash from the Kurdish parties and Saleh al-Mutlaq, which started the demise of his alliance with Maliki after the provincial elections.[1447] Nevertheless, ISCI, the Sadrists, and other parties in the INA informed Maliki that he might not be nominated as their candidate for prime minister.[1448] This may have prompted Maliki to withdraw from the negotiations and gamble with his 2009 electoral success by running independently. Therefore, it appeared that Maliki was running as an independent to remain in power as prime minister rather than the cross-sectarian motivations that his advisor told Robert Ford. Rayburn observed that "for Maliki, conversely, there were compelling reasons for staying out of the Shia alliance if possible. Maliki's patronage network was extensive, but immature, and if he were forced to surrender control of the premier's office, the network would probably collapse".[1449] Moreover, Humam Hamoudi, a senior ISCI, leader claimed that "there is no real difference between our and Maliki's list…The only difference is that Maliki wants a bigger share. If we tell him he can be our candidate for prime minister, he will join the INA".[1450] However, a State of Law aide explained Maliki's decision. He stated that,

> Maliki stayed out of the INA because he would have had to ally himself with the Kurds [as the UIA allied itself with the Kurds following the 2005 elections], and he would not have been given the top spot. Maliki understands he needs to stand

[1443] Robert ford, 'New Shia Alliance Excludes Maliki, But Final Make-Up Still To Be Negotiated' [cable], 09BAGHDAD2288_a, 30 Aug, 2011, *WikiLeaks*, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAGHDAD2288_a.html, para. 4, accessed 6 May 2021.
[1444] Domergue and Sullivan, 'Balancing Maliki: Shifting Coalitions in Iraqi politics and the rise of the Iraqi parliament', p.18.
[1445] Joel Rayburn, *Iraq after America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance*, (U.S.A: Hoover Institution, 2014), p.73
[1446] 'Shi'ite Maliki calls for majority rule in Iraq', *Reuters*, 16 May 2009, https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSLF624378, accessed 12 Dec. 2020.
[1447] Domergue and Sullivan, 'Balancing Maliki: Shifting Coalitions in Iraqi politics and the rise of the Iraqi parliament', p.20.
[1448] Ibid. pp.20-21.
[1449] Rayburn, *Iraq after America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance*, pp.72-73.
[1450] 'Iraq's Uncertain Future: Elections and Beyond', *International Crisis Group*, p.13.

> apart during the elections, win them and only then enter into an alliance with the INA and the Kurds. He does not want to once again be a weak prime minister based on Daawa's twelve seats.[1451]

This statement is revealing for two primary reasons. Despite his antipathy towards the Kurdish parties, Maliki appeared committed to reducing his dependence on the Shia INA coalition. The Obama administration would welcome the latter factor. However, Maliki seemed to be willing to make a deal with the Shia coalition from a position of strength to maintain his power as prime minister. Hence, if the means to attain his preferences involved making deals that did not support the priorities of the Obama administration, Maliki would do so.

Notwithstanding the ambiguity behind Maliki's strategy, nationalism and reconciliation triumphed over sectarianism in the provincial elections. This portrayed the impression to the Obama administration that nationalist and cross-sectarian parties would be the standard for the 2010 election.[1452] In 2009, Philip Zelikow publicly declared that "the [Shia] United Iraqi Alliance bloc is disintegrating. The Sunni parties are more powerful, but they are much more fractured…[and]…the big cities are voting for Iraqi nationalism and centralism".[1453] Additionally, Crocker reported that "grand political alliance among Shi'a [parties]… that has characterized post-Saddam Iraqi politics was beginning to fray".[1454] Moreover, there was a further cause of optimism for the Obama administration. Newly formed parties from the Sons of Iraq participated in the provincial elections.[1455] As many as 35 parties competed in the Anbar provincial election.[1456] Moreover, there were 300,000 thousand votes cast in Ambar compared to 2,500 in 2005.[1457] This led Butenis to suggest "that political engagement is taking the place of rejectionism and violence" and optimistically note that "this will have national reverberations in the 2010 elections".[1458] Compounding this optimism were statements from Sunni politicians and tribal leaders in the election's immediate aftermath. They suggested that they would try to form an alliance with Maliki's State of Law in the 2010 national election. Asked about a coalition with Maliki in the national elections, Ahmed Abu Risha, a prominent Sunni Sheik in

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[1451] Ibid.
[1452] Philip Zelikow, 'The new strategic situation in Iraq', *Foreign Policy* [website], (9 Feb. 2009), https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/02/09/the-new-strategic-situation-in-iraq/, para. 17, accessed 4 Apr. 2021.
[1453] Ibid. para. 7-8.
[1454] Ryan Crocker, 'Iraqi Politics: Shifting Alliances and the Emergence of Issue-Based Coalitions' [cable], 08BAGHDAD3789_a, 3 Dec. 2008, *WikiLeaks*, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BAGHDAD3789_a.html, para. 3, accessed 17 Nov. 2020.
[1455] Central Intelligence Agency, 'Iraq-Provincial Election Guide 2009', *Open Source Center*, (21 Jan. 2009), https://irp.fas.org/dni/osc/iraq-elections.pdf, p.40 and 51, accessed 17 May 2021.
[1456] Patricia Butenis, 'The Sunni Arab Central Provinces; More Stable, Re-Engaged Politically, And In Need of Development' [cable], 09BAGHDAD579_a, 6 Mar. 2009, *WikiLeaks*, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAGHDAD579_a.html, para. 3, accessed 13 Mar. 2021.
[1457] Ibid.
[1458] Ibid. para. 8.

Ramadi, responded, "without a doubt… If he's willing, we have no objection… If this project will keep Iraq united and on the path of reconciliation, we support it".[1459] This potential alliance also expanded to Saleh al-Mutlaq, before the breakdown of his relationship with Maliki, whose party represented remaining Baath party supporters in Iraq and abroad.[1460] Yet, despite this optimism, Butenis cautiously warned the administration that, "should [the Government of Iraq] GOI outreach to the Sunnis fail or falter, and should Sunni Arabs abandon support for the political process as a result, these provinces could once again become a center of instability".[1461]

Sons of Iraq and Reconciliation

Despite the optimism from the provincial elections, Maliki's mixed compliance with the Sons of Iraq and reconciliation witnessed in 2007 and 2008 continued. Moreover, as will be demonstrated, the Obama administration did not attempt to exercise influence to bring Maliki into compliance. In March 2009, a U.S. Defense report to Congress stated that "national reconciliation and accommodation continue to be hindered by the pursuit of [an] ethno-sectarian agenda".[1462] The report observed that "longstanding Sunni-Shi'a discord remains, with some Sunnis suspicious of the extent of the Shi'a political parties'" ties to Iran.[1463] Moreover, they are "doubtful of the GoI's long-term commitment to the Sons of Iraq (SoI) transition program".[1464] Notwithstanding Maliki's previous mixed compliance towards the Sons of Iraq, the USF-I military command was adamant that the success of the Anbar Awakening was conditional on the integration of the Sons of Iraq under Iraq's central government.[1465] Placing the Sons of Iraq under the central government's control was intended to relieve the Shia dominated government's anxiety of a Sunni armed force. Hence, by the end of November 2008, the USF-I agreed to transfer the Sons of Iraq's payroll from the U.S. government to Iraq's central government.[1466] Although the Sons of Iraq initiative would become further hampered by Maliki in January 2009; Crocker was optimistic about the program. He wrote,

> Maliki has also exceeded expectations to date in his handling of the integration of the mainly Sunni Sons of Iraq/Awakening Movement into the Iraqi Security Forces. Many had feared that he would not honor the SOI salary system set up by coalition

[1459] Shadid, 'In Iraq, Political Ambiguity', para. 15.
[1460] Ibid. para. 9 and 17.
[1461] Butenis, 'The Sunni Arab Central Provinces; More Stable, Re-Engaged Politically, And In Need of Development' [cable], para. 10.
[1462] United States Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq* (2009), https://archive.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/Measuring_Stability_and_Security_in_Iraq_March_2009.pdf, p.iv, accessed 15 May 2021.
[1463] Ibid.
[1464] Ibid.
[1465] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.447.
[1466] Ibid. p.445.

> forces and would instead arrest and purge SOI leaders…On the whole, Maliki has thus far honored his commitment to take on and continue the SOI program.[1467]

Crocker's optimism appeared to be reinforced by successful operations in early 2009 coordinated by the Interior Ministry and conducted by Iraqi's Security Forces and the Sons of Iraq.[1468] However, Crocker sounded warnings on the program. He stated that "while the transition in Baghdad province went smoothly, signs have been less encouraging in Diyala, and the GOI's[1469] commitment to find work for the 80 percent of SOI not absorbed into the ISF remains mainly hypothetical".[1470] Furthermore, Crocker was concerned about Maliki's ability to pursue genuine reconciliation, stating that "Maliki has shown that he is either unwilling or unable to take the lead in the give-and-take needed to build broad consensus…[and] has appeared willing to confront his adversaries with force".[1471] Moreover, Maliki's perceived paranoia and "deep distrust of virtually all other actors on the Iraqi (and regional) scene undercuts his -- and our -- efforts to reinforce the reconciliation process".[1472] Crocker's more pessimistic concerns, however, were realised when Maliki's opposition to the Sons of Iraq initiative increased.

Maliki and the government's opposition to the Sons of Iraq program increased in 2009. By April 2009, only 18,000 out of the 92,000 Sons of Iraq members were absorbed into government jobs, with remaining members alleging that the government wasn't paying them.[1473] Thus, according to the U.S. Special Inspector for Iraq Reconstruction's 2009 report, this left "more than 70,000 Sunnis uncertain about their future employment in a country where the overall unemployment rate is estimated to be at least 30%".[1474] Local influential Sunni sheikhs told the new ambassador Christopher Hill that the program was surrounded with "broken promise[s]".[1475] They alleged that the government "has either not provided SOI with jobs, provided jobs that are demeaning, has not paid out salaries, or has persecuted with

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[1467] Crocker, 'PM Maliki: Strengthened Center or Emerging Strongman?' [cable], para. 25.
[1468] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.480.
[1469] Government of Iraq
[1470] Crocker, 'PM Maliki: Strengthened Center or Emerging Strongman?' [cable], para. 25.
[1471] Ibid. para. 5.
[1472] Ibid. para. 26.
[1473] 'Loose Ends: Iraq's Security Forces Between U.S. Drawdown and Withdrawal', *International Crisis Group*, (29 Oct. 2010), https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/99-loose-ends-iraq-s-security-forces-between-u-s-drawdown-and-withdrawal.pdf, p.25 accessed 12 Feb. 2021; Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress* (2009), https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=685191, p.6, accessed 16 May 2021; and Rod Nordland & Alissa J. Rubin, 'Sunni Fighters Say Iraq Didn't Keep Job Promises', *New York Times*, 23 Mar. 2009, https://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/24/world/middleeast/24sunni.html, para. 2-5, accessed 3 Feb. 2021.
[1474] Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress* (2009), p.6.
[1475] Christopher Hill, 'South Baghdad: On The Eve of U.S. Military Reduction, The Former "Triangle of Death" at a Crossroad' [cable], 10BAGHDAD350_a, 10 Feb. 2011, *WikiLeaks,* https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/10BAGHDAD350_a.html, para. 12, accessed 4 May 2021

illegal detentions those who heroically fought the AQI".[1476] Additionally, 40 Sons of Iraq leaders were arrested on charges of terrorism and possession of illegal weapons in 2009.[1477] These arrests were authorised by Maliki's Office of Commander in Chief.[1478] For example, in March, the leader of a prominent Sons of Iraq group, Adel al-Mashhadani, was arrested by ISF. Although the arrest warrant was based on Mashhadani's illegal mafia-like activities and received approval from the USF-I, the repercussions of his arrest were stark.[1479] After the arrest, Mashhadani's Sons of Iraq group opened fire on Iraqi troops and U.S. soldiers, which morphed into an all-night battle. It ended with the Mashhadani militia members surrendering or fleeing.[1480] Mashhadani was sentenced to death and executed in 2014.[1481]

The most significant area of concern, however, was Diyala. As illustrated in Chapter V, numerous military operations in Diyala were authorised by Maliki's Office of Commander in Chief. This increased in 2009. In May, Maliki launched Operation Promise of Good II in Diyala.[1482] This saw the arrests of many local Sons of Iraq's leaders and other Sunni politicians, including some from Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi's party.[1483] Additionally, Maliki began issuing arrest warrants for Sunni members of Diyala's provincial government.[1484] Moreover, he ordered army units to assume control over Diyala's local government functions.[1485] U.S. forces were able to prevent some of these arrests; however, they were relatively sidelined and could only watch the chaos unfold.[1486] Consequently, due to the arrests, Diyala's Sunni dominated provincial council elected a university professor as governor because he was not affiliated with any party and did not have an outstanding arrest warrant.[1487] Moreover, the deputy Sunni governor fled the region.[1488]

[1476] Ibid.
[1477] 'Loose Ends: Iraq's Security Forces Between U.S. Drawdown and Withdrawal', *International Crisis Group*, p.26.
[1478] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.591.
[1479] John Leland, 'Iraq Sentences Sunni Leader to Death', *New York Times*, 19 Nov. 2009, https://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/20/world/middleeast/20iraq.html, para. 2, accessed 11 June 2021 and Patricia Butenis, 'CDA, CG and PM Discuss Evolving Security Concerns, The Budget, Oil Contracts; CDA Delivers Demarche on Camp Ashraf' [cable], 09BAGHDAD791_a, 23 Mar. 2009, *WikiLeaks*, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAGHDAD791_a.html, para. 7-9, accessed 7 April. 2021.
[1480] See footnote 71 on Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.471.
[1481] 'Loose Ends: Iraq's Security Forces Between U.S. Drawdown and Withdrawal', *International Crisis Group*, p.26.
[1482] Marc Santora, 'Iraq Arrests 2 Sunni Leaders, Raising Fears of Violence', *New York Times*, 18 May 2009, https://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/19/world/worldspecial/19iraq.html, accessed 14 July 2021.
[1483] Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress* (2009), p.112.
[1484] Ibid.
[1485] Ibid. pp.112-113.
[1486] Joel Wing, 'New Political Crackdown In Diyala', *Musings on Iraq* [website], (19 May 2009), http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.com/2009/05/new-political-crackdown-in-diyala.html, accessed 3 June 2021.
[1487] Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress* (2009), p.112.
[1488] Ibid. p.113.

Conspiracies and Politics

The USF-I attributed Maliki's increased opposition to the Sons of Iraq and aspects of the Sunni population to the escalation of al-Qaeda attacks in 2009 and political motivations. As U.S. forces withdrew from Iraqi cities, al-Qaeda began a new bombing campaign.[1489] This occurred in Mosul and Baghdad and close to the secure Green Zone.[1490] In August, al-Qaeda launched a devastating bomb attack in Baghdad which killed 80 people and injured 800.[1491] Additionally, al-Qaeda undertook several assassination attempts of senior ISF commanders.[1492] Maliki claimed that al-Qaeda's attacks were conducted by Iraqi Baathists in Syria. These attacks amplified Maliki's prejudice towards the Sons of Iraq.[1493] In April 2009, Maliki declared that they had arrested and obtained a confession from al-Qaeda in Iraq's leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.[1494] Al-Baghdadi's confession implicated Sunni politicians and some Sons of Iraq members.[1495] This led to more arrest warrants for several Sunni leaders of the Sons of Iraq and Tariq al-Hashimi's Iraqi Islamic Party.[1496] However, the arrested individual was an imposter and not Baghdadi.[1497] Nonetheless, this fictional confession fuelled Maliki's allegations that there was a conspiracy to unseat his government which involved al-Qaeda, the Baath party, Sunni political parties and the Syrian Assad regime.[1498] Thus, Maliki's accusations encouraged additional arrests of Sons of Iraq leaders in 2009 and a further crackdown on the group.

Political motivations also influenced Maliki's actions against the Sons of Iraq. The International Crisis Group notes that Maliki opposed the Sons of Iraq groups in politically sensitive areas. For example, the Anbar tribal groups did not experience the same number of operations and accusations from Maliki's government due to Anbar's distance from Baghdad and lack of strategic resources.[1499] However, as mentioned, Sons of Iraq groups in Diyala faced repeated assaults by Maliki's government. The International Crisis Group alleged that Diyala was essential given its proximity to Baghdad and border with Iran, thus serving as an entry point

[1489] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.480.
[1490] Ibid.
[1491] Sam Dagher, '2 Blasts Expose Security Flaws in Heart of Iraq', *New York Times,* 19 Aug. 2009, https://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/20/world/middleeast/20iraq.html, accessed 3 June 2021.
[1492] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.488.
[1493] Ibid. p.490.
[1494] 'PM confirms capture of suspected al Qaeda leader al-Baghdadi', *France 24*, 28 Apr. 2009, https://www.france24.com/en/20090428-pm-confirms-capture-suspected-al-qaeda-leader-al-baghdadi-, accessed 4 June 2021.
[1495] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p470.
[1496] Ibid.
[1497] Ibid.
[1498] Ibid.
[1499] 'Loose Ends: Iraq's Security Forces Between U.S. Drawdown and Withdrawal', *International Crisis Group*, p.27.

for Iranian pilgrims and trade.[1500] Hence, Maliki's government was anxious about Diyala falling under the control of a Sunni paramilitary force such as the Sons of Iraq.[1501] Additionally, the provincial council in Diyala was fundamentally controlled by Sunni Arabs and Kurds after the January provincial election. The election saw "the Sunni Tawafuq list (IIP and its allies) placed first in Diyala… winning almost four times as many votes as [Maliki's] Da'wa".[1502] This represented a heavy swing from ISCI and Dawa, which had won most seats in the 2005 provincial elections.[1503] Maliki issued arrest warrants for some of the new provincial council members on the day they were intended to be sworn in after the January election.[1504] Hence, the U.S. Special Inspector for Iraq Reconstruction saw this as a "power play… including Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's State of Law Coalition, against a ruling coalition of Kurds and Sunni Arabs".[1505]

General Odierno was troubled by what he viewed as the government's failure to embrace and integrate the Sons of Iraq. He saw the potential opening for al-Qaeda to return and exploit the tensions between the Sons of Iraq and the government.[1506] This could lead to Sunni tribes re-aligning themselves with al-Qaeda. Moreover, U.S. personnel in Diyala noted the consequence of Maliki's actions. They stated that the operations and arrests of the Sunni government members are "depriving Diyala of moderates whose participation in the political process is essential for the establishment of a sustainable democracy".[1507] Furthermore, the rhetoric on the Sons of Iraq emerging from the government was pessimistic. One of Maliki's senior advisors, Sadiq al-Rikabi, complained that "they are citizens like any other, and there are terrorists and corrupt people among them. We should blame the U.S. They left us with a security apparatus comprising hundreds of criminals and executioners, because their recruitment policy was anarchic and failed to investigate recruits' prior history".[1508] Moreover, a senior Shia Iraqi Army commander proclaimed that "nobody cares about the Awakening groups. The population hates them, and from the government's point of view, they only carry light weapons. The army has enough men, means and discipline to crush them militarily on

[1500] Ibid.
[1501] Thomas E. Ricks, *The Gamble: General Petraeus and the Untold Story of the American Surge in Iraq*, 2006 – 2008, (U.S.A: Penguin Press, 2009), pp.310-311.
[1502] Crocker, 'PM Maliki: Strengthened Center or Emerging Strongman?' [cable], para. 18.
[1503] This was widely attributed to the Sunni boycotts of elections in 2005 see Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield, 'The Implications of Elections for Federalism in Iraq: Toward a Five-Region Model', *Publius*, 35/3 (2005), pp.365-366.
[1504] Joel Wing, 'New Political Crackdown In Diyala', *Musings on Iraq* [website], (19 May 2009), http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.com/2009/05/new-political-crackdown-in-diyala.html, para. 1, accessed 3 June 2021.
[1505] Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress* (2009), p.112.
[1506] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.490.
[1507] Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress* (2009), p.112.
[1508] 'Loose Ends: Iraq's Security Forces Between U.S. Drawdown and Withdrawal', *International Crisis Group*, p.26.

any given day!".[1509] Furthermore, U.S. ambassador Christopher Hill observed that Maliki "considered some of these Sons of Iraq groups to be nothing more than terrorists who were now getting paid for operating checkpoints".[1510]

The actions and rhetoric from Maliki and his government exacerbated the USF-I commander's fear that the progress of the Sons of Iraq would be lost. A senior U.S. military officer summarised the current situation: "you have to realise the Iraqi government may have an S.O.I. [Sons of Iraq] transition program, but al-Qaeda and all those groups have their own S.O.I. transition program as well".[1511] This statement was reinforced by some of the local Sunni Sheiks who "alluded to" Ambassador Hill "the consequences of not finding meaningful employment for a cadre of 18-35 year old males, a thinly-veiled warning that cannot be taken as mere bluster".[1512] As a result, the USF-I established a new "employment assistance managers" program for the Sons of Iraq.[1513] The U.S. military would temporarily hire Sons of Iraq members while the USF-I would attempt to find full-time employment for the Sons of Iraq members with local businesses or within the government.[1514] Nevertheless, the trajectory of the Sons of Iraq, especially in Diyala, continued to decline. In January 2010, 75,000 of the 90,000 members were still not integrated into Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). Moreover, the Diyala Sons of Iraq groups abandoned their posts as a result of Maliki's crackdown. This led to Major General John Johnson stating that the integration of Sons of Iraq forces would have to be delayed until after the March 2010 election.[1515] Nevertheless, Maliki's actions against the Sons of Iraq severely damaged the prospects of reconciliation between the government and the Sunni population — a critical component for the stability the Obama administration sought.

[1509] Ibid. p.28.
[1510] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.490.
[1511] Nordland and Rubin, 'Sunni Fighters Say Iraq Didn't Keep Job Promises', para. 16.
[1512] Hill, 'South Baghdad: On The Eve of U.S. Military Reduction, The Former "Triangle of Death" at a Crossroad' [cable], para. 12.
[1513] Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress* (2009), p.6.
[1514] Ibid.
[1515] Chelsea J. Carter, 'AP Interview: Sunni fighters must be treated fairly by Iraq, US commander says', *Canadian Press*, 26 Dec. 2009, in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 1 June 2021 and Joel Wing, 'Integration Of Sons Of Iraq Delayed Until Mid-2010', *Musings on Iraq* [website], (4 Jan. 2010), http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.com/2010/01/integration-of-sons-of-iraq-delayed.html, para. 1, accessed 3 June 2021.

Maliki and Shia Militias

Shia militias continued to be a thorn for the USF-I, but less so than for the Bush administration. Militias continued to infiltrate the police and army; however, the Obama administration did not seriously confront this. Maliki's 2008 Charge of the Knights operation significantly degraded Sadr's militia and compelled other rogue militias to limit their activities. Hence, in contrast to the previous chapters, Shia militias are not a principal component to gauge Maliki's compliance in this period. Nonetheless, discussing the status of Shia militias and Maliki's actions is still beneficial. It exemplifies the continued corruption and politicisation of the ISF. Moreover, it illustrates how the administration accepted this outcome and discarded the Bush administration's priorities of confronting the militia problem. Overall, Maliki and the Interior Minister Jawad al-Bolani continued to implement reforms in the Interior Ministry. Maliki gave al-Bolani a degree of autonomy to reassign or dismiss corrupt and sectarian personnel.[1516] However, the progress was minor, and the status of the police by 2010 was akin to previous periods. In 2011, the U.S. Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction noted that "both MOI and MOD security forces are behind in the attainment of Minimum Essential Capability", and corruption "has hindered [its] development".[1517] Moreover, Cordesman alleges that U.S. advisors "found military commissions and positions were for sale in many units".[1518] Furthermore, the militia influence in the ISF remained.[1519] In a 2010 interview with the International Crisis Group, an Iraqi Major General noted that,

> …the ISF [Iraqi security forces] itself is the battleground in the larger communal struggle for power and survival. Middle Eastern concepts of civil-military relations are fundamentally different than Western concepts. Western militaries have developed a culture of political control over armed forces. While this may have been a tool for the development of Western democracies, this is not the established culture in either Iraq or the greater Middle East. In Iraq, there is a culture of he who owns the security forces, owns the politics.[1520]

[1516] 'Loose Ends: Iraq's Security Forces Between U.S. Drawdown and Withdrawal', *International Crisis Group*, p.20.
[1517] Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report and SemiAnnual Report to the United States Congress* (2011), https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=685197, p.69, accessed 18 May 2021.
[1518] Anthony Cordesman and Sam Khazai, 'Shaping Iraq's Security Forces', *Center for International and Strategic Studies*, 12 July 2014, https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/140612_Shaping_Iraq_Security_Forces.pdf, p.18, accessed 3 May 2021.
[1519] Ibid.
[1520] Najim Abed Al-Jabouri, 'Iraqi Security Forces after U.S. Troop Withdrawal: An Iraqi Perspective', *Institute for National Strategic Studies,* No. 245 (2009), National Defense University, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/104726/SF245.pdf, p.3, accessed 3 Feb. 2021.

He further defined the influence of parties and their militias over certain Iraqi Army divisions:

> The majority of these divisions are under the patronage of a political party. For example, the 8th IA [Iraqi Army] division in Kut and Diwaniya is heavily influenced by the Daawa party; the 4th IA Division in Salahideen is influenced by President Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan; the 7th IA Division in Anbar is influenced by the Iraqi Awakening Party, and the 5th IA Division in Diyala is heavily influenced by the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq.[1521]

Except for the reforms that Bolani attempted to introduce, there was no attempt by the Obama administration to press for further action against the Sadrist and Badr influence in the ISF. The United States consistently conducted police development programs in Iraq after 2003, yet these did not dismantle the Sadrists and Badr's presence.[1522] Moreover, in 2011, the program was significantly downsized and, according to the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction's 2011 report, was at risk of becoming a "bottomless pit" for U.S. taxpayer dollars.[1523]

Rogue Shia Militia Activities

Rogue Shia militia – those outside the ISF – continued sporadic activities against U.S. forces after Maliki's Charge of the Knights. A Defense report to Congress noted that the Shia southern provinces "remains positive, and the population supports the GoI's security initiatives, preferring relative normalcy to lawlessness and violence".[1524] Yet, the report also noted that "Iran continues to fund, train, equip, and give some direction to residual Shi'a militias and extremist elements in Iraq".[1525] Nonetheless, rogue Shia militias "experienced difficulties in maintaining its networks and conducting operations".[1526] Sadr's militia, which reorganised into the Promised Day Brigade, was "plagued with internal conflicts of plans and policy".[1527] Nevertheless, there were sporadic attacks on U.S. forces by Kataib Hezbollah (KH), Asa'ib Ahl al-Haqq (AHH), and Sadr's Promised Day Brigade.[1528] The USF-I attempted to disrupt and

[1521] Ibid. p.4.
[1522] Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress* (2009), https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=691702, pp.2-3 accessed 3 June 2021.
[1523] Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Iraqi Police Development Program: Opportunities For Improved Program Accountability and Budget Transparency* (2011), https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA551054.pdf, p.8, accessed 1 June 2021.
[1524] United States Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq* (2009), https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=717324, p.32, accessed 12 May 2021.
[1525] Ibid. p.v.
[1526]Ibid. p.28.
[1527] Ibid.
[1528] 'June deadliest month in 2 years for US troops in Iraq', *NBC News,* 1 July 2011, https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna43599005, accessed 13 June 2021.

destroy the groups' cells and networks.[1529] Nevertheless, Maliki continued to court some of these rogue militias into a political alliance.

Reflecting Maliki's desire to remove his dependence on ISCI and the Sadrists, Maliki attempted to establish a political alliance with AHH.[1530] As mentioned in the previous chapter, AHH, under the leadership of Qais al-Khazali, launched several high-profile attacks against U.S. forces. Interestingly, Odierno agreed to Maliki entering negotiations with AHH to become a political party and renounce its militia activities.[1531] A controversial deal was made between Odierno, Maliki and AHH to begin a roadmap for reconciliation. This entailed the release of Khazali and hundreds of imprisoned AHH members.[1532] However, this reconciliation did not last long. After the release of Khazali and AHH prisoners, AHH attacks conducted by recruited militants resumed against U.S. forces which could not be traced back to AHH.[1533] Interestingly, as AHH withdrew from the arrangement, Sadr reached out to the USF-I to seek some similar arrangement.[1534] Nevertheless, despite the progress against these Shia militias, a Defense report stated that,

> …despite the improving security environment, Shi'a militant groups seek to rebuild their damaged networks and demonstrate their capabilities through low level residual violence, which will continue to change based on the AAH reconciliation process and the reposturing [sic] of U.S. forces.[1535]

The limited threat of rogue Shia militias to U.S. objectives makes it a difficult factor to examine Maliki's compliance in contrast to earlier years. Throughout its tenure, the Bush administration was consistently frustrated by Maliki blocking its attempts at confronting Shia militias. Given that rogue Shia militias, predominantly Sadr's Mahdi Army, were degraded in the 2008 Charge of the Knights, they were no longer a critical threat to USF-I forces or the administration's objectives. Additionally, due to the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), U.S. forces were technically unable to conduct unilateral operations against militias without Iraq's governmental authority.[1536] Moreover, by June 2009, U.S. troops had withdrawn from most Iraqi cities where remnants of Shia militias remained. Thus, U.S. forces mostly acted as support for the ISF.

[1529] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.474.
[1530] Ibid.
[1531] Ibid.
[1532] This included AHH disarming, but also providing proof of life of a captured U.S. soldier from 2006 as well as 5 abducted British citizens. See Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.474.
[1533] Ibid. pp.474-475.
[1534] Ibid. p.475.
[1535] United States Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq* (2009), p.32.
[1536] Rick Brennan Jr et al., *Ending the U.S. War in Iraq: The Final Transition, Operational Maneuver, and Disestablishment of United States Forces-Iraq*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND CORPORATION, 2013), p.144.

They conducted fewer unilateral operations against militias than in previous years.[1537] Hence, in contrast to 2006-2008, Maliki did not hinder U.S. goals towards rogue Shia militias. There were sporadic public outbursts against U.S. raids if they included civilian causalities.[1538] Yet, overall, Maliki did not exhibit non-compliance to U.S. objectives against Shia militias. Nonetheless, the broad militia influence in the ISF would continue to exist even in the post-Maliki period.[1539]

Interpreting Maliki's Mixed Compliance

Maliki's non-compliance towards the Sons of Iraq and reconciliation initiatives and his authoritarian practices threatened the administration's stability and withdrawal goals. This prompts the need to address the administration's perception of Malik and its response to his mixed compliance. Interestingly, there was a split between the Obama administration and the USF-I military leadership. The administration appeared to accept that Maliki was still U.S. aligned and shared its goals for Iraq. Yet, they believed that Maliki remained constrained by the Shia bloc. Thus, Maliki's non-compliance resulted from this configuration instead of deliberate defiance. However, USF-I military commanders increasingly saw Maliki as deliberately undermining the administration's goals. The administration's perception of Maliki is somewhat revealed by diplomatic correspondence in 2009. Crocker reported that Maliki continuously expressed his support for the Sons of Iraq. According to Crocker, Maliki said,

> …many had been skeptical of the SOI being reconciled, and he worried about the process of them transitioning to Iraqi control, but he had proven the critics wrong. Maliki continued that while most SOI were loyal and trustworthy, some were not. In any vocation, you will find some bad apples, he suggested. This is true for SOI as with any other group of people. Some of my best officers are former Ba'thists, but they have now reformed and I trust them.[1540]

Concerning the ISF raids in Diyala, Crocker claimed that,

> Prime Minister Maliki implicitly acknowledged that there had been cases of the ISF overstepping its boundaries in Diyala, allowing that some arrest warrants and

[1537] Ibid. and Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress* (2011), https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=691698, p.57, accessed 16 May 2021.
[1538] Bill Roggio, 'US breaks up Mahdi Army 'Promise Day Brigade' cell in Al Kut', *Long War Journal* [website], (26 Apr. 2009), https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/04/us_breaks_up_mahdi_a.php, para. 7, accessed 2 June 2021.
[1539] Qassim Abdul-Zahra and Zeina Karam,'A growing challenge for Iraq: Iran-aligned Shiite militias', *Associate Press*, 31 Mar. 2021, https://apnews.com/article/iran-middle-east-baghdad-tehran-iraq-ebcc325e288b8dad431c713283eab70c, accessed 4 June 2021.
[1540] Ryan Crocker, 'Gen Petraeus' Meeting With PM Maliki' [cable], 09BAGHDAD31_a, 7 Jan. 2009, *WikiLeaks*, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAGHDAD31_a.html, para. 6-7, accessed 3 Dec. 2020.

> incidents in the province were based on spite and score settling among local elites. Maliki nonetheless denied that the GOI was following sectarian policies in Diyala. I am ready to work with Sunnis and ex-Ba'thists when they are good, he said. But not all of them are good.[1541]

Nonetheless, throughout 2009 multiple senior Iraqi officials complained to administration officials visiting Iraq that Maliki was emerging as a sectarian dictator. Ambassador Hill downplayed these concerns as he viewed them as politically motivated. Hill believed that Maliki did not have sectarian motivations but was prevented from supporting the Sons of Iraq and reconciliation due to the Shia bloc. Moreover, he re-affirmed that Maliki supported the goals of the Obama administration.

In May 2009, the Sunni parliamentary speaker Iyad al-Sammarrie and Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister, Rafi al-Issawi, met with the Under-Secretary for Department of State, William Burns, and Under-Secretary for Defense, Michele Flournoy. Al-Sammarrie complained that reconciliation agreements "were not moving".[1542] He further highlighted that "the Sons of Iraq (SoI) are being arrested and not being paid".[1543] Moreover, he complained about the politicisation of the police and army "through Maliki's penchant for replacing senior commanders with officers he personally knows and trusts, as well as forming ad-hoc command arrangements (such as the Office of the Commander-in-Chief) which circumvent the MoI and MoD chain of command".[1544] Moreover, "Al-Samarraie said it is his understanding that neither the Minister of Defense nor the Minister of the Interior had the authority to decide anything without the approval of the Prime Minister (who is also the Commander-in-Chief)".[1545] Ambassador Hill reported that, "concerning reconciliation efforts, Issawi said that there has been more rhetoric than progress…only a small number of Sons of Iraq (SOI)…have genuinely been integrated in the security services".[1546] Furthermore, Issawi met with a group of U.S. senators and Hill where he highlighted Maliki's authoritarian practices. He protested that Maliki "is using the democratic process and liberal rhetoric to conceal a move to dictatorship" and was not integrating the Sons of Iraq into the security forces as well as not implementing the de-Baathification legislation.[1547] Issawi "described two ways of looking at the

[1541] Ibid. para. 14.
[1542] Christopher Hill, 'U/S Burns, and U/S Flournoy's Meeting with Iraqi Council of Representatives Speaker Ayad al-Samarraie' [cable], 09BAGHDAD1333_a, 21 May 2009, *WikiLeaks,* https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAGHDAD1333_a.html, para. 9, accessed 1 May 2021
[1543] Ibid.
[1544] Ibid.
[1545] Ibid. para. 10.
[1546] Christopher Hill, 'Under Secretaries Burns and Flournoy Meet with DPM Issawi' [cable], 09BAGHDAD1321_a, 20 May 2009, *WikiLeaks,* https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAGHDAD1321_a.html, para. 9, accessed 3 May 2021.
[1547] Christopher Hill, 'DPM Essawi Tells Codel Leahy PM Maliki Is "A Dictator in Democracy's Clothing"' [cable], 09BAGHDAD1380_a, 26 May 2009, *WikiLeaks,* https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAGHDAD1380_a.html, para. 1. accessed 1 May 2021.

SOI: nationalists or Ba'athist/AQI[1548] tools. Essawi said that Maliki's advisors believed SOI were the latter, leading them to resist integrating SOI into Iraqi society".[1549] According to Issawi, this was evident by Maliki's actions in Diyala.[1550] Issawi summed up Maliki's tenure as "the emergence of a new dictator (Maliki) manipulating the processes of democracy and Maliki's new rhetoric of non-sectarian consensus building that concealed a sectarian agenda".[1551] He further alleged that Maliki threatened him and al-Sammarrie and stated that he would go after their allies and political leaders in response to Issawi and al-Sammarrie's attempts to refer Maliki's ministers to the anti-corruption commission.[1552]

The U.S. Response

Hill's reporting on Issawi and al-Sammarrie's claims, as well as the 2009 military operations against the Sons of Iraq, illustrates the administration's perception of Maliki. They assumed that Maliki's actions were motivated by his need to navigate the competing interests of the Shia bloc. Yet, they believed he still shared U.S. stability goals. Hill noted that Maliki's public opposition to the Sons of Iraq and reconciliation was motivated by the "PM's various political bargains in his continuing efforts to reconstitute the UIA" for the upcoming national election in January 2010.[1553] Yet, in meetings between Maliki and the ambassador, Maliki reiterated his support for the Sons of Iraq and reconciliation. Hill remarked that "he has told us quietly that he fully supports the political issues we continue to press," including the Sons of Iraq program.[1554] Yet, Maliki complained that public U.S. pressure on these issues "decrease[s] his maneuvering room and makes any compromise appear to be at the behest of American pressure, the death knell for any leader here".[1555]

According to Hill, Maliki argued that he wasn't pursuing sectarian policies by showing "statistics that Iraqi forces round up Shia detainees at an outsized ratio to the population (demonstrating, in his view, the non-sectarian nature of his policies), and that nearly nine in 10 of MNF-I[1556] detainees were Sunnis ('but nobody accused MNF-I of being sectarian', he says)".[1557] Additionally, Maliki told Hill that the Iraqi parliament was accountable for the Sons

[1548] al-Qaeda in Iraq
[1549] Hill, 'DPM Essawi Tells Codel Leahy PM Maliki Is "A Dictator in Democracy's Clothing"' [cable], para. 3.
[1550] Ibid. para. 4.
[1551] Ibid. para. 2.
[1552] Ibid. para. 4.
[1553] Ibid. para. 3.
[1554] Hill, 'Prime Minister Maliki's Visit: Launching The Strategic Framework Agreement' [cable], 09BAGHDAD1932_a, para. 7.
[1555] Ibid.
[1556] Multi-National Forces Iraq. The previous acronym for coalition forces.
[1557] Hill, 'Prime Minister Maliki's Visit: Launching The Strategic Framework Agreement' [cable], 09BAGHDAD1932_a, para. 8.

of Iraq not receiving their salaries. Maliki stated that Iraq's Parliament, the Council of Representatives (COR), "may have been playing political games with the budget and that he had taken money from the MOI's budget to pay the salaries of the SOI. The COR is trying to sabotage our efforts".[1558] He then assured the embassy's Deputy Chief, Patricia Butenis, that "payments would be made, even if the money had to come from their own salaries. The PM said that 'we can not sacrifice…security, of which the SOI are an important part, even if we have to cut the budget in other areas'".[1559]

Maliki further reinforced the image that he shared the goals of reconciliation and the Sons of Iraq with Vice President Biden's visit to Iraq in July 2009. Maliki's senior advisor, Sadiq al-Rikabi, told Hill that "the Prime Minister welcomed the approach the Vice President outlined on national reconciliation" as well as "ensuring SOI integration".[1560] Yet, in addressing the mixed compliance from Maliki, Rikabi argued, "that the Prime Minister is politically vulnerable on the most difficult reconciliation issues, including in particular the issue of de-Ba'athification reform".[1561] Hill reported that

> In the Iraqi mind, Rikabi said, when Americans speak of the need for reconciliation, it evokes the idea that Americans want to bring back the Ba'ath Party in a reconstituted form. He noted that few Shia leaders ever used the word before 2006 and even now it needs to be carefully explained and understood so as to avoid causing mistrust between the Iraqi people (especially the Shi'a) and the American side. He further claimed that Ba'ath leaders in Syria and elsewhere are claiming the United States has a new policy towards Iraq: moving away from democracy and concentrating on stability, which they read as a signal the Americans are open to supporting the party coming back to power. He said Maliki supports the principles of de-Ba'athification reform but could never support the return of the Ba'ath as an entity in any form... At the same time, the Prime Minister wants to assure the U.S. side (and hopes he did so with the Vice President) that he shares our same vision and is working on reconciliation issues.[1562]

Hill appeared to accept the image that Maliki and Rikabi were presenting. Reflecting Moravcsik's and Putnam's theoretical logic, Maliki was navigating the preferences of the domestic interest groups that he had to consider. This prevented Maliki from publicly supporting U.S. reconciliation objectives. Furthermore, Hill discounted the idea that Maliki had sectarian motivations. In his book, he wrote that "as much as the Sunnis tried to suggest

[1558] Butenis, 'CDA, CG and PM Discuss Evolving Security Concerns, The Budget, Oil Contracts; CDA Delivers Demarche on Camp Ashraf' [cable], para. 6.
[1559] Ibid.
[1560] Christopher Hill, 'PM Advisor Rikabi Upbeat on VP Biden Visit' [cable], 09BAGHDAD1817_a, 7 July 2009, *WikiLeaks,* https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAGHDAD1817_a.html, para. 3, accessed 2 May 2021.
[1561] Ibid.
[1562] Ibid. para. 4-5.

(especially to uninformed foreigners) that Maliki was a sectarian/Iranian agent, in fact, State of Law under Maliki was one of the most secular of the Shia political structures".[1563] However, Hill did concede that Maliki had underlying sectarian tones towards the surrounding Sunni Arab states whom Maliki did not trust.[1564] In a cable to Washington, Hill stated that "we do not believe he is sectarian, yet his bitterness at the Sunni Arab world is palpable".[1565] Hill's reporting overlapped with previous diplomatic cables from the former ambassador Ryan Crocker. Crocker offered a lengthy assessment of Maliki in one of his final cables. Crocker wrote,

> Similarly, Maliki shows a tendency to associate all Sunni (and more broadly, Arab) opposition to his policies with Ba'athist irredentism. This manifests itself in his strained relationships with Iraqi Sunni political figures such as Tawafuq/IIP leader Tariq al-Hashimi. It is also visible in his (mistaken) dismissal of Iraq's externally displaced as Sunnis who have not come to terms with post-Saddam democratic Shi'a majoritarian rule. Maliki's sectarian suspicion also shapes his view of the Saudis and other Arab neighbors as unaccepting of Shi'a in governance. Maliki staunchly denies -- and we agree -- that he is motivated by overt sectarian bias. Rather, we see Maliki's worldview as deeply informed by the Shi'a historical experience. Unfortunately, the consequences in terms of his willingness and ability to reach out to Iraqi Sunnis and the broader Sunni world are effectively the same.[1566]

Hill attributed most of the sectarian accusations to politics in Iraq, where he may have situated Issawi's and al-Sammarrie's claims.[1567] This is plausible given that al-Sammarrie's election as Speaker was viewed as a competition between Maliki and ISCI.[1568] Al-Sammarrie was very close to ISCI and, once elected as speaker, began to summon Maliki's allies to be investigated by parliament.[1569] Although this led to the resignation of the Minister for Trade, Abdel Falah al-Sudani, who indeed was significantly corrupt, al-Sammarrie's activities were suspected of being politically motivated.[1570] Amidst witnessing this competition and accusations in parliament, Hill appeared sympathetic to Maliki and his authoritarian practices. For Hill, not only did Maliki have to navigate this fierce competition, but he also had to placate the Shia bloc in his coalition. Hill summarised the situation as,

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[1563] Hill, *Outpost: Life on the Frontlines of American Diplomacy: A Memoir*, p.374.
[1564] Ibid. pp.376-377.
[1565] Hill, 'Prime Minister Maliki's Visit: Launching The Strategic Framework Agreement' [cable], 09BAGHDAD1932_a, para. 3.
[1566] Crocker, 'PM Maliki: Strengthened Center or Emerging Strongman?' [cable].
[1567]Hill, *Outpost: Life on the Frontlines of American Diplomacy: A Memoir*, p.371.
[1568] Reidar Visser, 'Maliki Suffers Setbacks as Samarrai Is Confirmed as New Speaker and More Governors Are Elected South of Baghdad', *Historiae.org* [website], (19 Apr. 2009), https://historiae.org/samarrai.asp, accessed 15 June 2021.
[1569] 'Iraq's Uncertain Future: Elections and Beyond', *International Crisis Group*, p.12.
[1570] Ibid.

> Maliki is the compromise political candidate who has grown into his job, much to the consternation of his rivals. He is greatly constrained by the system of checks and balances under the Iraqi constitution, especially when combined with the ethno-sectarian division of spoils from the December 2005 elections. He controls at best a handful of the 275 seats in parliament. Key members of his delegation to Washington, such as Minister of Interior Bolani, are openly competing to unseat him from power. Key members of his cabinet, including his two deputies (one Sunni, one Kurd) routinely conspire against him and seek to block his initiatives; other ministers answer to their political parties, not to him -- yet he lacks legal authority to build a cabinet or fire ministers. Maliki chafes at this state of affairs and has sought to compensate for it by using his constitutional authority as "Commander in Chief" to bolster his command of Iraqi Security Forces. While his rivals cite this as an example of "dictatorial" tendencies, the picture is far more complicated, and he is by no means the Saddam-in-the-making those rivals suggest.[1571]

Hill accepted that Maliki's mixed compliance resulted from the Shia bloc, as Moravcsik would suggest. Moreover, drawing on Putnam's two-level game, the influence of the Shia bloc restricted Maliki's win-set. This limited the overlap of shared preferences between Maliki and the Obama administration. Therefore, Hill rationalised Maliki's non-compliance towards the Sons of Iraq and reconciliation and authoritarian practices. Maliki's non-compliance was a by-product of the environment he was in, rather than deliberate behaviour intended to undermine U.S. goals. Indeed, for Hill, Maliki shared the administration goals. This assumption was based on the improved security conditions since 2006, Maliki's rhetoric, and Hill's perception that Maliki was dependent on the United States. Hill stated that "like most leaders here, Maliki is imperfect at best, but he has managed over three years to do things nobody thought he could -- and he expects some credit for the remarkable turnaround in Iraq's fortunes since the dark days of 2006".[1572] Moreover, he championed Maliki's achievements of "having taken on the Shia extremist Jaysh al-Mahdi,[1573] built ties to Sunni tribal leaders, and succeeded beyond expectations in local elections".[1574] Furthermore, Hill reiterated Maliki's statements about the future U.S.-Iraq relationship in their conversation. Hill claimed,

> Maliki will be seeking to deepen Iraq's long-term partnership with the United States, building normalized ties in security and non security areas, with bilateral relations governed by the Security Agreement (SA) and the Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA)...Maliki told us he would…begin making the case inside Iraq for a long-term relationship with the United States, beyond security and military areas, and he has begun to do so.[1575]

[1571] Hill, 'Prime Minister Maliki's Visit: Launching The Strategic Framework Agreement' [cable], 09BAGHDAD1932_a, para. 4.

[1572] Ibid. para. 10.

[1573] The Mahdi Army

[1574] Ibid. para. 1.

[1575] Hill, 'Prime Minister Maliki's Visit: Launching The Strategic Framework Agreement' [cable], 09BAGHDAD1932_a, para. 2.

Hill wrote that on Maliki's upcoming visit to the United States, he "hopes to hear that Iraq remains a priority for the United States, that the United States is committed to the [Security Agreement] SA and [Status of Forces Agreement] SFA, and that we are thinking of Iraq as a long-term partner and ally".[1576] Furthermore, Hill argued that Maliki's paranoia and susceptibility to conspiracies made him feel dependent on the United States to maintain his position. He writes that "Maliki sees potential enemies surrounding Iraq and believes Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Syria, and Iran, seek to keep Iraq fractured, weak, and divided…This is one reason he seeks tangible signs of a long-term security relationship with the United States".[1577]

Hill's favourable perception of Maliki was also reinforced by Maliki's declaration that he would run independently of the Shia Iraqi National Alliance (INA). This had the potential to reduce Maliki's dependency on the Shia bloc that continued to undermine the priorities of the Bush and Obama administrations. In his reporting, Hill stated that Maliki's,

> …tenure in power, however, has given rise to so many opponents and antibodies that his ability to forge such an alliance is questionable. Pressure from his Shia bedfellows, and from Iran, are also pushing the Shia parties together again, to compete in a grand sectarian-based coalition that will protect the only Shia Arab state from the Sunni world. Maliki and his primary political advisor Sadiq Rikabi tell us repeatedly that he wants to break away from this alliance.[1578]

Moreover, Hill stated that "Maliki hopes to build a national alliance (Shia, Kurd, Sunni) to compete in elections, and win a majority that would allow him to build a cross-sectarian government and advance an ambitious economic agenda".[1579] Therefore, notwithstanding his history of mixed compliance, Hill believed that Maliki would be the partner for the United States in Iraq that would allow it to pursue its essential stability and withdrawal goals.

The USF-I leadership and Maliki

Hill's assumptions of Maliki were not shared by USF-I's senior commanders. They became frequently concerned watching Maliki's actions in 2009 and 2010. The new CENTCOM Commander, James Mattis, wrote, "I increasingly considered sectarian Maliki the politician least capable of unifying Iraq and continuing the process of reconciliation".[1580] Moreover, General Odierno was anxious about Maliki's grasp on power and what Maliki would do if he

[1576] Ibid.
[1577] Ibid. para. 9.
[1578] Ibid. para. 5.
[1579] Ibid.
[1580] Jim Mattis and Bing West, *Call Sign Chaos: Learning to Lead*, (New York: Random House, 2019), p.224.

did not get re-elected in the 2010 election.[1581] Notwithstanding seeing Maliki's actions with the Sons of Iraq and reconciliation, Odierno witnessed further consolidation of Maliki's power over Iraq's security institutions.[1582] He saw Iraq's intelligence apparatus, the Iraqi National Intelligence Service (INIS) – developed and mentored by the Unites States – fall under the control of Maliki.[1583] After the resignation of its leader, Mohammed Shahwani, in August 2009, Maliki fired 376 intelligence officers and replaced them with loyalists from his Dawa party.[1584] According to the U.S. Army's official account, Maliki's loyalists became fixated on "regime preservation" and targeting Maliki's political opponents.[1585] Additionally, Maliki secured control of the INIS's paramilitary unit, the Special Tactics Unit (STU). Moreover, he transferred the authority over the STU to his Office of Commander in Chief.[1586]

After this transition, the CJOSTF[1587] commander, Colonel Mark Mitchell, claimed the STU became "a hit squad used to disappear Sunni election candidates or to arrest them on vague corruption charge[s]".[1588] However, the U.S. military's response was limited. CJSTOP officials were prevented from inspecting STU and INIS detention facilities.[1589] Moreover, due to their sectarian actions, the CJSOTF withdrew its military advisors and ceased ties with both entities in March 2010.[1590] As highlighted in Chapter V, CJOSTF implemented the same approach in 2008 after Maliki gained control of Iraq's Special Forces. Therefore, in contrast to Hill, the USF-I did not share the assumption that Maliki would support U.S. goals. They simply saw him as a sectarian leader motivated to gain and consolidate power as prime minister. This contrast of perceptions between the administration and the USF-I leadership would surface in the 2010 election.

The 2010 National Election

The 2010 Iraqi election was a watershed moment for the U.S.-Iraq relationship. It exemplified the mutual dependence in the relationship. The election sparked great controversy as Iyad Allawi, the former interim prime minister in 2004, won the most votes. Allawi's electoral success resulted from attaining a significant number of votes from Iraq's Sunni population.

[1581] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* pp.614-615.
[1582] Ibid. p.632.
[1583] Rayburn, *Iraq after America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance*, pp.86-87.
[1584] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.509.
[1585] Ibid.
[1586] Ibid.
[1587] The U.S. Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force. This entity was responsible for training, mentoring as well as monitoring Iraq's elite military units.
[1588] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.509.
[1589] Ibid.
[1590] Ibid.

However, Maliki refused to accept the election outcome and attempted to circumnavigate Iraq's democratic procedures to remain as prime minister. Consequently, Iraq was without an elected government for 278 days. Despite Maliki's actions and Allawi's electoral success and history as the preferred candidate for the United States, the Obama administration supported Maliki over Allawi. The Obama administration was anxious that the absence of a government that included sufficient Sunni representation would promote instability and delay the U.S. troop withdrawal. Moreover, the administration was dependent on the emergence of a friendly prime minister to extend the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) and limit Iranian influence after the withdrawal of U.S. forces. Ideally, Allawi as prime minister, would support these goals given his affinity for the United States. Moreover, he would ensure significant Sunni representation. Most importantly, however, Allawi and his potential governing coalition would not be as beholden to the Shia bloc. Hence, echoing Moravcsik and Putnam, Allawi's preferences might be more supportive of U.S. objectives. Nevertheless, the Obama administration concluded that Allawi could not find the necessary support to be prime minister. Thus, it was dependent on the only remaining candidate, Maliki.

The Iran-UIA Alliance

A critical factor in the 2010 election was Iran's attempts to recruit Maliki into an alliance before the election. Alarmed at seeing the dismal results of pro-Iranian parties, including the Sadrists and ISCI, in the 2009 provincial elections, Iran's leadership made a diplomatic offensive. After the 2009 provincial election, Iran sent its foreign minister and its speaker to Iraq to mend the relationship between ISCI, Sadr and Maliki and revive the Iraqi National Alliance (INA).[1591] Moreover, all of the senior Shia leadership of the INA, including Sadr, Maliki, and the Kurdish President Jalal Talabani, visited Iran in May 2009 to discuss the upcoming January 2010 elections.[1592] Hill anticipated that Iran "is seeking to increase pressure on Maliki to join forces with the other prominent Shia coalition (Iraqi National Alliance) led by the Sadrists and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI)" to achieve a "pro-Iran, Shia-dominated, and preferably Islamist government, led by a united Shia alliance".[1593] Hill further analysed Iran's priorities stating,

[1591] Domergue and Sullivan, 'Balancing Maliki: Shifting Coalitions in Iraqi politics and the rise of the Iraqi parliament', pp.15-16 and 18 and Christopher Hill, 'Chalabi on Larijani Visit, Iran, And Iraqi Electoral Politics' [cable], 09BAGHDAD2910_a, 31 Oct. 2009, *WikiLeaks,* https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAGHDAD2910_a.html, para. 6, accessed 12 May 2021.
[1592] Domergue and Sullivan, 'Balancing Maliki: Shifting Coalitions in Iraqi politics and the rise of the Iraqi parliament', p.20.
[1593] Christopher Hill, 'Iran's Efforts in Iraqi Electoral Politics' [cable], 13 Nov. 2009, *WikiLeaks,* https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAGHDAD2992_a.html, para. 1-2, accessed 5 May 2021 and Hill, 'Chalabi on Larijani Visit, Iran, And Iraqi Electoral Politics' [cable], para. 6.

> …for Iran, a rebellious Maliki pursuing a more nationalist vs. sectarian agenda risks splitting the Shia vote, which in turn weakens the Shia political bloc's negotiating strength during the government formation period post-election. Iran's greatest fear for the upcoming election is a fractured Shia coalition that is unable to coalesce and thereby dominate the next government.[1594]

Hence, "a weak Shia coalition before or after the election would further undermine the INA and their pro-Iranian entities, notably ISCI and the Sadrist Trend".[1595] As previously stated, after the May 2009 negotiations, Maliki declared that he would not join the alliance. Officially, Maliki's justification was that the coalition was too sectarian, and he wanted to end his dependence on the Sadrists and ISCI. Yet, as noted earlier, some argued that Maliki did not join the alliance as it did not guarantee him the position of prime minister.

Crisis

As the 2010 election approached, Iyad Allawi declared that his new Iraqiyya Alliance would participate in the upcoming national election.[1596] This alliance included the prominent Sunni politician, Saleh al-Mutlaq of the Iraqi National Dialogue Front, Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi and his new Tajdeed list,[1597] and the deputy Prime Minister Rafi al-Issawi.[1598] Thus, Allawi's party had significant Sunni representation, which also included Diyala's Sunni Awakening groups.[1599] However, a crisis emerged when the renamed de-Baathification commission, the Supreme National Commission for Accountability and Justice, disqualified over 500 candidates for the 2010 elections.[1600] The commission predominantly targeted the secular parties of Allawi's Iraqiyya alliance. 72 of Allawi's candidates and 67 candidates from the new Unity of Iraq Alliance, under former-Interior Minister Jawad al-Bolani, were disqualified.[1601] Alarmingly, it targeted the Iraqi National Dialogue Front leader, Saleh al-Mutlaq. 171 of the total disqualified candidates immediately appealed the decision through the commission's appeals panel.[1602] The motivations of the Accountability and Justice Commission were

[1594] Hill, 'Iran's Efforts in Iraqi Electoral Politics' [cable], para. 8.
[1595] Ibid. para. 9.
[1596] 'Iraq's Uncertain Future: Elections and Beyond', *International Crisis Group*, p.17.
[1597] Hashimi broke away from the dominant Tawafuq Sunni bloc see Stephen Wicken, 'Iraq's Sunnis in Crisis', *Institute for the Study of War*, (May 2013), http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Wicken-Sunni-In-Iraq.pdf, p.12, accessed 6 Feb. 2021.
[1598]Issawi established his Mustaqabl party and joined Allawi's coalition see Wicken, 'Iraq's Sunnis in Crisis', *Institute for the Study of War*, pp.12-13 and 'Iraq's Uncertain Future: Elections and Beyond', *International Crisis Group*, p.17.
[1599] 'Iraq's Uncertain Future: Elections and Beyond', *International Crisis Group*, p.32 and Wicken, 'Iraq's Sunnis in Crisis', p.12.
[1600]'Iraq's Uncertain Future: Elections and Beyond', *International Crisis Group*, p.27.
[1601] Ibid. p.20.
[1602] Ibid. p.31.

unclear. The heads of the committee were the infamous Ahmed Chalabi[1603] and Ali al-Lami.[1604] Al-Lami was released from U.S. captivity just before the election for his part in the killing of U.S. officials in Sadr City in 2008.[1605] Additionally, al-Lami and Chalabi were both running as candidates in the elections for the Shia INA, hence, acting in a significant conflict of interest.[1606] Therefore, it can be speculated that they were operating to improve the electoral prospects of their INA partners. This was the view of Odierno and Ambassador Hill, who bluntly accused Chalabi and al-Lami of acting under Iranian influence.[1607] Hill wrote,

> …this controversy, at its simplest, can be viewed as an Iranian plot, directed by Tehran allies Ahmed Chalabi and Ali Faisal al-Lami, as many Sunni interlocutors have averred. There is some evidence to support this view. Chalabi and Lami have been heavily involved in directing the efforts of the Accountability and Justice Commission (AJC) staff to identify Ba'athist-affiliated candidates and pressure the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) to disqualify them. It seems reasonable that staunch anti-Iranian Saleh al-Mutlaq, a key target of the AJC early on, would cause heartburn for Tehran, particularly given his increased prominence when he joined Iyad Allawi's coalition. Tehran may also have been motivated to shore up the electoral prospects of ISCI and its Iraqi National Alliance (INA) by discouraging Sunni voters and limiting the appeal of Allawi's coalition among Iraq's Shi'a community.[1608]

Although Maliki did not initiate the Commission's actions, he embraced its decision.[1609] His Dawa party held anti-Baathist protests supporting the Commission's actions.[1610] ISCI and the Sadrists also endorsed the Commission's findings while some, including President Talabani, denounced the decision.[1611] Moreover, Hill observed that not only did Maliki embrace it, but both "Shi'a and Sunni alike saw the de-Ba'athification issue as an opportunity to attack and eliminate rivals, galvanize their political bases, and, for Chalabi and his allies, curry favor with Tehran".[1612] Nonetheless, the actions of the Commission were viewed as an attack on the Sunni parties and, by and large, the Sunni community. [1613]

[1603] This is the same Ahmad Chalabi identified in Chapter II whose Iraqi National Congress was initially viewed, by Paul Wolfowitz and Douglas Feith, as the desired government of Iraq for the post-invasion period.
[1604] 'Iraq's Uncertain Future: Elections and Beyond', *International Crisis Group*, p.28.
[1605] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.508.
[1606] Stephen Wicken, 'Iraq's Sunnis in Crisis', *Institute for the Study of War*, p.14.
[1607] Josh Rogin, 'U.S. ambassador doubles down on Chalabi's Iran connections', *Foreign Policy* [website], (17 Feb. 2010), https://foreignpolicy.com/2010/02/17/u-s-ambassador-doubles-down-on-chalabis-iran-connections/, para.1 -3, accessed 18 June 2021.
[1608] Christopher Hill, 'The De-Ba'athification Controversy: Sectarianism, Consensus Politics, and Iraqi Democracy' [cable], 10BAGHDAD266_a, 1 Feb. 2010, *WikiLeaks,* https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/10BAGHDAD266_a.html, para. 2, accessed 18 May 2021.
[1609] Liz Sly, 'Iraqi prime minister backs ban on 500 candidates', *Los Angeles Times,* 17 Jan. 2010, A. 21, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 14 June 2021.
[1610] Stephen Wicken, 'Iraq's Sunnis in Crisis', p.14.
[1611] 'Iraq's Uncertain Future: Elections and Beyond', *International Crisis Group*, p.31.
[1612] Hill, 'The De-Ba'athification Controversy: Sectarianism, Consensus Politics, and Iraqi Democracy' [cable], para. 11.
[1613] Stephen Wicken, 'Iraq's Sunnis in Crisis', p.14, accessed 6 Feb. 2021.

The crisis sparked Biden to make an immediate trip to Iraq on 22 January. He proposed that the Accountability and Justice Commission's ruling be postponed and resolved after the election.[1614] This was echoed at the international level with the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative Ad Melkert arguing that the disqualified candidates should have their appeal "carefully considered and to remain a candidate until such an appeal has been dealt with appropriately".[1615] Nevertheless, on 3 February, the Accountability and Justice Commission's Appeals panel stated there was insufficient time to review all the cases and recommended they be postponed until after the elections.[1616] This appeared to defuse the immediate crisis. However, in a stunning turn of events, Maliki persuaded the Accountability and Justice Commission's Appeals panel to reverse its decision and immediately review all 171 appeal cases.[1617] In less than a week, the appeals panel told the Independent High Electrical Commission (IHEC) it had revised 26 disqualifications while upholding the remaining 145 disqualifications, including Saleh al-Mutlaq.[1618] Allawi considered calling a boycott of the election while Mutlaq endorsed a boycott and left the country for Jordan.[1619] This prompted fears of a repeat of the 2005 Sunni boycott of the election. Anxious at the developments, Odierno stressed that "we need to put our arms around Iraqiya and keep them in the game".[1620] The UN released a statement stating that it would closely monitor the electoral process, which convinced Allawi's Iraqiyya to continue participating in the election.[1621] Nonetheless, the damage had been done. The aftermath of this crisis saw huge tensions between the competing parties and an escalation of political assassinations that reached more than 100 in a month.[1622]

Election Results

Surprisingly, Allawi's Iraqiyya list won the most seats in the election despite the activities of the Accountability and Justice Commission. His Iraqiyya party won 91 seats, while Maliki's State of Law won 89 seats out of the 325 seats available. Interestingly, the Sadrists won 40

[1614] 'Iraq's Uncertain Future: Elections and Beyond', *International Crisis Group*, p.31.
[1615] 'Barred Iraq candidates allowed to stand', *Sydney Morning Herald,* 4 Feb. 2010, https://www.smh.com.au/world/barred-iraq-candidates-allowed-to-stand-20100204-ndwy.html, para. 6, accessed 8 July 2021.
[1616] 'Iraq's Uncertain Future: Elections and Beyond', *International Crisis Group*, p.31.
[1617] Wicken, 'Iraq's Sunnis in Crisis', p.15.
[1618] 'Iraq's Uncertain Future: Elections and Beyond', *International Crisis Group*, p.31.
[1619] Sky, *The Unravelling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, pp.314-315.
[1620] Ibid. p.317.
[1621] Ibid. pp.315-316.
[1622] 'Iraq's Uncertain Future: Elections and Beyond', *International Crisis Group*, p.32.

seats, an increase of 12 from the 2005 election.[1623] Yet, ISCI-Badr only won 17 seats.[1624] This decreased from 36 in the 2005 election and can be attributed to the death of ISCI's leader, Sayyed Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, in 2009.[1625] His son, Ammar al-Hakim, took over as the new leader.[1626] Allawi's success shocked Maliki and his allies, who immediately challenged the results. According to Iraq's constitution, the election result should have given Allawi the first chance to form a government.[1627] However, Maliki sent a letter to Iraq's Constitutional Court asking the Chief Justice, Medhat Mahmoud, to interpret the direction "of the largest bloc" to be asked to form a government.[1628] Maliki secured a ruling from Mahmoud that stipulated any party who could create the largest post-election bloc had the right to form a government.[1629] Hence, Allawi was no longer entitled to be given the first chance automatically. This ruling was viewed as devious and associated with previous relationships between Chief Justice Mahmoud and Maliki.[1630] Maliki also attacked Iraq's Electoral Commission and demanded recounts in areas where his party performed poorly.[1631] The U.S. Army's account alleges that Maliki sent threatening messages to the Electoral Commission and attempted to issue arrest warrants for them.[1632] Further complicating the situation, on 26 April, Lami's de-Baathification committee disqualified an additional 52 candidates, which Maliki welcomed.[1633] These were mainly candidates from Allawi's party who had replaced the earlier disqualified candidates.[1634]

[1623] Elena Derby and Anthony Cordesman, 'The Uncertain Politics behind Iraq's Election: Political Controversies and the Formation of a Viable Government', *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, (12 Apr. 2010), https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/100414_Uncertain_Politics_Iraq.pdf, p.15, accessed 5 Feb. 2021.
[1624] Ibid.
[1625] Ibid.
[1626] Ibid.
[1627] 'Iraq's Allawi 'open to talks' over new government', *CNN*, 27 Mar. 2010, http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/meast/03/27/iraq.election/index.html, para. 5, accessed 14 July 2021.
[1628] Marisa Sullivan, 'Maliki's Authoritarian Regime', *Institute for the Study of War* [website], (Apr. 2013), http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Malikis-Authoritarian-Regime-Web.pdf, p.19 accessed 21 Feb. 2021.
[1629] 'Allawi races to form govt after slim election victory', *France 24,* 26 Mar. 2010, https://www.france24.com/en/20100326-allawi-races-form-govt-after-slim-election-victory, para. 10, accessed 18 July 2021.
[1630] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.508.
[1631] Ibid.
[1632] Ibid.
[1633] Ian Black, 'Iraq Election Chaos as 52 Candidates are Disqualified', *Guardian*, 26 Apr. 2010, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/apr/26/iraq-election-candidates-disqualified, para. 3, accessed 18 July 2021 and Nibras Kazimi, 'Iraqi election results: What do they mean for the biggest winners, Allawi and Maliki?', *Long War Journal* [website], (27 Mar. 2010), https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/03/iraqi_election_resul.php, para. 10, accessed 15 May 2021.
[1634] Kazimi, 'Iraqi election results: What do they mean for the biggest winners, Allawi and Maliki?', para. 10.

Iran's Window of Opportunity

The disputed election prompted a crisis in Washington but an opportunity for the Iranian leadership. They organised an immediate meeting with Talabani, a delegation from Maliki's State of Law, and senior leaders of the Shia Iraqi National Alliance to discuss forming a new government.[1635] Allawi and his Iraqiyya party were deliberately excluded.[1636] Iran's influence in the election was immediately felt. Notwithstanding the Constitutional Court's ruling, Iraq's President, Jalal Talabani, still had the power to give Allawi a 30-day mandate to form a government for winning the most seats. Yet, Talabani's trip to Iran the day after the election results were published without giving Allawi the mandate to form a government represented the profound influence Iran had.[1637] Nonetheless, Rayburn summarised the meeting in Iran:

> The position of the various bargainers was clear from the beginning: Maliki was willing to form a governing coalition with the other Shia parties and Kurds, but only if they agreed to his return as premier. The Iranians, still unhappy with Maliki's 2008 crackdown on their Shia militant clients, seemed to prefer any other Shia Islamist premier, but apparently would accept Maliki's return if he agreed not to extend the U.S. military presence in Iraq beyond its scheduled expiration in 2011.[1638]

However, the Sadrists, who still resented Maliki after the Charge of Knights, were willing to join a governing coalition with Maliki's State of Law, yet only if someone other than Maliki was prime minister.[1639] It was unsurprising to see this opposition to Maliki remaining as prime minister. He had created multiple rivals and resentment from his actions, including consolidating power in his Office of Commander in Chief and establishing Tribal Support Councils.[1640] Moreover, the Sadrists were effectively the power broker of the INA, given they won more seats than all the other parties in the INA combined. Hence, Sadr was a formidable roadblock to Maliki retaining the premiership.

Maliki's prospects for retaining the premiership appeared to decline after the meeting in Iran. Moreover, so did Allawi's chances of gaining the premiership. Allawi made high-profile visits to regional Sunni countries for political and financial support to entice other parties to join his

[1635] Nordland,'Iran Plays Host to Delegations After Iraq Elections', para. 7.
[1636] Rayburn, *Iraq after America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance*, p.247.
[1637] Ibid.
[1638] Ibid. pp.247-248.
[1639] Ibid.
[1640] Crocker, 'Iraqi Politics: Shifting Alliances and the Emergence of Issue-Based Coalitions' [cable], para. 5 and Derby and Cordesman, 'The Uncertain Politics behind Iraq's Election: Political Controversies and the Formation of a Viable Government', p.12.

alliance.[1641] This led to the charge that Allawi's Iraqiyya was a Sunni party with a Shia head[1642] that had a sectarian agenda.[1643] Moreover, Allawi's Iraqiyya started to fracture. Allawi accused Saleh al-Mutlaq of negotiating with Maliki to join his bloc.[1644] Also, Rafi al-Issawi claimed Allawi's obsession with being prime minister was destroying Iraqiyya's prospects.[1645] Additionally, there were rumours that other parties in Allawi's list were negotiating with Maliki's party. Nevertheless, in June, Maliki's State of Law and Allawi's Iraqiyya entered formal negotiations.[1646] Iraqiyya stipulated that they were willing to offer Maliki the position as speaker or president but not the prime minister.[1647] Furthermore, the Shia Iraqi National Alliance formally sent a letter to Maliki requesting that he withdraw his prime minister bid.[1648] Moreover, the Kurdish parties indicated to Maliki that they did not want him to continue as prime minister.[1649] This prompted Odierno and Hill to inform Maliki that he had little support to remain as prime minister.[1650] Yet, Maliki stated his intention to remain as prime minister and began to make accusations. Moreover, Maliki's well-known suspicion and paranoia started to increase. According to Sky, Maliki accused Rafi al-Issawi of secretly leading a Sunni militia.[1651] He presented intelligence for this accusation to Odierno, which was disproved, and demanded that Issawi step down from Iraqiyya.[1652] Furthermore, Hill observed that talk of the Obama administration replacing Maliki "was reaching the ever-paranoid Maliki and not helping our relationship with him".[1653] Hill was concerned that this paranoia would push Maliki to make an alliance with the INA.[1654]

The Administration's Strategy

The election stalemate put the Obama administration in a complex dilemma. It presented several concurrent challenges to its goals. For the administration, the immediate risk was a prolonged absence of a new government that would allow for the U.S. troop schedule to remain on time, as well as the renewal of the SOFA. With the remaining combat troops

[1641] Wicken, 'Iraq's Sunnis in Crisis', p.13.
[1642] Referring to Allawi's Shia religious beliefs.
[1643] Wicken, 'Iraq's Sunnis in Crisis', p.15.
[1644] Ibid.
[1645]'Iraq's Secular Opposition: The Rise and Decline of Al-Iraqiya', *International Crisis Group*, (31 July 2012), https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/127-iraq-s-secular-opposition-the-rise-and-decline-of-al-iraqiya.pdf, p.21, accessed 10 Feb. 2021.
[1646] Sky, *The Unravelling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, pp.329-330.
[1647] Ibid. p.333-334.
[1648] Ibid.
[1649] Ibid.
[1650] Ibid.
[1651] Ibid. p.334.
[1652] Ibid.
[1653] Hill, *Outpost: Life on the Frontlines of American Diplomacy: A Memoir*, p.363.
[1654] Ibid. p.375.

scheduled to be withdrawn by August 2010, it would be difficult for the administration to confidently state that the conditions in Iraq were ideal to start.[1655] Moreover, the administration needed to ensure that the new government had significant Sunni representation given the election results of Allawi's Iraqiyya party. If not, the Sunni community would view the election as stolen.[1656] This was a logical conclusion given that the Accountability and Justice Commission's pre-election activities were considered an attack on the Sunni community.[1657] Hence, without Sunni inclusion and representation, it was feared that a similar outcome to the Sunni boycott of the 2005 election could transpire. This was identified as a contributing factor that fuelled the al-Qaeda led Sunni-insurgency between 2004 and 2008. Thus, any Sunni exclusion from representation risked the administration's stability goals. Additionally, the administration had to contend with the potential consequences of Maliki remaining as prime minister. Allawi's prospects of attaining the premiership rapidly diminished, leaving Maliki as the remaining option. However, Maliki's actions throughout the election crisis signalled increasing authoritarianism that could jeopardise the desired stability in Iraq. Notwithstanding his favourable view of Maliki, Ambassador Hill had stated that "we need a Maliki strategy... he is the only one with the tools to screw up democracy".[1658] Finally, the administration needed to prevent a perceived Iranian victory. This victory was identified as a Shia dominated government consisting of Maliki's State of Law, the INA, and the Kurdish parties to exclude Allawi's list. This outcome risked repeating Maliki's non-compliance due to the interests of the Shia bloc. Thus, an immediate plan was hatched by Hill and Biden to overcome the election impasse while addressing the several challenges identified. However, this plan was not endorsed by the USF-I military leadership.

The solution was to form a power-sharing partnership between Allawi and Maliki. Hill presented his plan to Biden when he visited Iraq on 4 July.[1659] Biden endorsed the plan as it offered an immediate solution to the current crisis.[1660] Yet, Biden expanded the plan to encompass the multi-faceted challenges. The power-sharing agreement would see Maliki retain the premiership. Yet, a new National Council for Strategic Policies would be established, which Allawi would preside over as secretary-general of National Security Affairs.[1661] The

[1655] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama* p.628.
[1656] Ibid. pp.615-624 and 625.
[1657] Norman Cigar, *Al-Qaida, The Tribes, and the Government: Lessons and Prospects for Iraq's Unstable Triangle,* (Quantico: Marine Corps University Press, 2019), p.62.
[1658] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.615.
[1659] Ibid. pp.629-631.
[1660] Ibid. p.631.
[1661] Leila Fadel and Karen DeYoung, 'Iraqi leaders crack political deadlock', *Washington Post*, 11 Nov. 2010, A.1., available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 15 July 2021.

newly established secretary-general position and council had several purposes. It attempted to create more seats at the table to cater for the U.S. desired partnership between Allawi and Maliki. However, more importantly, it was an attempt to taper Maliki's centralisation of power and authoritarian tendencies.[1662] The council would have authority to review the ISF's budget, oversee weapon purchases, consult on majority military operations, and provide oversight on detainee policy. Moreover, it would have the authority to nominate military offices above the senior rank of brigadier general.[1663] This would provide oversight over Maliki and hinder his regular use of his Office of Commander in Chief to authorise operations and his tendency to appoint loyalists to senior military positions. The council would ensure that the ISF would not turn into Maliki's private army as U.S. forces withdrew.[1664] Moreover, it would reassure many of Maliki's rivals and opponents that he would not be able to target them through Iraq's state institutions.

The partnership would also ensure Sunni representation given the Sunni parties in Allawi's list. Finally, it would deny Iran an outright victory. Malik and Allawi could not unilaterally form a governing majority without the Shia INA, or at least the Sadrists who won the most seats in the INA.[1665] Hence, the Obama administration was fearful of pushing Maliki towards the INA to remain as prime minister. Hence, a partnership between Allawi and Maliki would reduce the prevalence of the INA in the next governing coalition. Biden attempted to sell the plan to Maliki and Allawi on 20 July, yet this spectacularly failed with both of them walking out on Biden.[1666] Both were determined to secure premiership. Allawi and Maliki sent delegations around the region to support their bid for prime minister.[1667] On 1 September, Biden revisited Iraq and tried to push his plan; however, the stalemate continued.[1668] Both Maliki and Allawi would not accept anything less than the premiership.[1669]

[1662] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama* p.629.
[1663] Ibid.
[1664] Ibid.
[1665] Kazimi, 'Iraqi election results: What do they mean for the biggest winners, Allawi and Maliki?', para. 11.
[1666] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama* p.633.
[1667] Ibid. pp.633-636.
[1668] Ibid. p.637.
[1669] Hill, *Outpost: Life on the Frontlines of American Diplomacy: A Memoir,* p.370.

Maliki and the INA

Throughout the stalemate, the Iranian regime continued to try and influence the outcome of the election dispute and see a government of its preference emerge. The Iranian leadership convened a meeting in October with Maliki and the INA.[1670] According to Sky and Rayburn, they put substantial pressure on ISCI to agree to Maliki remaining as prime minister if he joined their alliance.[1671] Yet, they had difficulties convincing the Sadrists to support Maliki for a second term. However, it is alleged that the Sadrists accepted Maliki as prime minister in exchange for several concessions. The Sadrists would be allocated an array of cabinet portfolios and governor positions in southern-Iraq provinces.[1672] Yet, the most controversial aspect of the deal was that Maliki reportedly agreed that he would not renew the SOFA and prohibit a small residual U.S. troop presence after the 2011 withdrawal.[1673] Thus, given these concessions, the INA declared that they would endorse Maliki as their candidate and form an alliance with his State of Law coalition.[1674] This announcement was a setback for the administration given that the Sadrists and Iran could exert a strong presence in the new government.

Ambassador James Jeffrey, who replaced Hill in September 2010, outlined the administration's displeasure at the alliance. At a press conference, he declared that "the problem that we see and that others see here … is that there is no clarity on whether the Sadrist movement is a political movement or it is an armed militia which carries out political objectives through violent means… and a democracy can't tolerate that".[1675] Thus, Jeffrey stated:

> We would urge our Iraqi friends to be cautious in the kind of positions that they leave open to anyone who has not made clear their position…any group that cannot distinguish between peaceful political processes and violent intimidation, violent attacks and the threat of violence is a problematic partner for the democratic process.[1676]

[1670] 'Iraqi PM Maliki seeks Iran's help in reconstruction', *BBC*, 18 Oct. 2010, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-11564343, accessed 13 Feb. 2021.
[1671] Sky, *The Unravelling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, p.329 and Rayburn, *Iraq after America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance*, pp.247-248.
[1672] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.532.
[1673] Rayburn, *Iraq after America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance*, pp.247-248.
[1674] Mohammed Tawfeeq, 'Shiite bloc taps al-Maliki as PM candidate', *CNN*, 1 Oct. 2010, http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/meast/10/01/iraq.politics/index.html, para. 1, accessed 12 May 2021.
[1675] Thom Shanker and Steven Lee Myers, 'U.S. Presses Iraqi Leaders to Broaden Coalition', *New York Times*, 10 Oct 2010, https://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/11/world/middleeast/11iraq.html, para. 5, accessed 14 Apr. 2021.
[1676] Jane Arraf, 'Iraq election breakthrough?', *Christian Science Monitor,* 5 Oct. 2010, https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2010/1005/Iraq-election-breakthrough, para. 17, accessed 3 Apr. 2021

Furthermore, Jeffrey had to address the speculation on the arrangements made between Maliki and Sadr. Interestingly he claimed that reports that "the Sadrists had made a deal to back Maliki in exchange for several government ministries and other concessions, including prisoner releases, were untrue".[1677] According to Shanker and Myers, the administration quickly sought and received guarantees from Maliki that he would not offer the Sadrists positions in the ISF and the Interior and Defence Ministries in exchange for their support.[1678] Nonetheless, the INA endorsement of Maliki was a significant game-changer for the Obama administration, which had to mitigate the challenge presented by the new Maliki-INA alliance quickly.

"The Axis of Evil and the Great Satan both support Maliki"- Ammar al-Hakim[1679]

Notwithstanding Maliki's mixed compliance and authoritarian behaviour after the election, the INA's endorsement of Maliki compelled the Obama administration to double-down on Biden's original plan to support Maliki. With the INA's support, Maliki had 159 seats out of the 163 required to form a majority government.[1680] Hence, the feared outcome of a government forming without Iraqiyya and thus absent Sunni representation was close to materialising. Moreover, it did not help that after the INA's declaration that it would ally with Maliki, the Kurdish KDP and PUK parties[1681] said they were open to supporting either Maliki or Allawi for prime minister.[1682] This was primarily viewed as a ploy to seek more concessions from Maliki's State of Law and Allawi's Iraqiyya.[1683] However, Biden claimed he secured an agreement with the KDP leader, Masoud Barzani, that the KDP would not join a new government unless it had substantial Sunni representation.[1684] This was similar to the promise made in the 2006 election. Nevertheless, it was crucial to implement the administration's power-sharing plan to ensure that Maliki remained in the U.S. camp while also including significant Sunni representation with the inclusion of Iraqiyya. Biden held a virtual teleconference on 6 October with the embassy and the White House to discuss the administration's next steps.[1685]

[1677] Ibid. para. 15.
[1678] Shanker and Myers, 'U.S. Presses Iraqi Leaders to Broaden Coalition', para. 2.
[1679] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.639.
[1680] Ibid. p.649.
[1681] Kurdistan Democratic Party and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.
[1682] Ibid. p.640.
[1683] Ibid.
[1684] Ibid.p.643.
[1685] Ibid. p.640.

The administration was primarily divided on supporting Maliki to remain as prime minister. Some proposed that they should not support Maliki and endorse another candidate like Adel Abdul-Mahdi.[1686] Others claimed that no other candidate but Maliki could find the necessary support to be prime minister; thus, they had to back him.[1687] Moreover, they believed Maliki would support essential U.S. priorities. The new CENTCOM Commander, James Mattis, argued that "the National Security staff in the White House believed that Maliki offered a continuity that, in their minds, would facilitate the withdrawal of U.S. troops".[1688] Moreover, Jeffrey Feltman, the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern affairs, claimed that "there was a very strong contingent that said Maliki is that devil we know".[1689] However, there was significant opposition from USF-I senior commanders. Mattis staunchly opposed the idea of supporting Maliki, telling Biden that,

> Prime Minister Maliki is highly untrustworthy, Mr. Vice President…He looks at our ambassadors and military advisers as impediments to his anti-Sunni agenda. Leaders across the region have warned me that he is set on disenfranchising the Sunnis. He wants to purge or marginalize Sunnis and Kurds from the government. He's devious when he talks to us.[1690]

Odierno also flagged his opposition to Maliki. He had witnessed Maliki consolidate power over ISF through his Office of Commander in Chief.[1691] Moreover, before the election, Odierno believed Maliki would attempt to alter the outcome if he did not emerge as the clear winner.[1692] Thus, Odierno urged the administration to uphold the integrity of the election. He stated that the administration should "let Allawi at least attempt to form a government first. If they don't, the election looks like a sham".[1693] He warned Biden and Hill that Iran was trying to block Allawi from becoming prime minister.[1694] Furthermore, he argued that Iran's actions could lead to "the worst case scenario for security, stability, and our continued strategic partnership with Iraq as it excludes significant Sunni participation, [and] potentially causes the Iraqi people to lose faith in the democratic process, as the leading candidates are excluded from the government formation".[1695] The result could be "a compromise Shi'a Prime Minister who is beholden to Iran".[1696]

[1686] Ibid. p.640 and 642.
[1687] Ibid.
[1688] Mattis and West, *Call Sign Chaos: Learning to Lead*, p.224.
[1689] Giglio, 'Joe Biden's Haunted Legacy in Iraq', para. 24.
[1690] Mattis and West, *Call Sign Chaos: Learning to Lead*, p.224.
[1691] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* pp.614-615.
[1692] Ibid.
[1693] Sky, *The Unravelling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, p.317.
[1694] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.509.
[1695] Ibid.
[1696] Ibid.

Stability over Democracy

Notwithstanding the USF-I commanders' opposition to Maliki, Hill, Biden and Obama endorsed Maliki as prime minister. This decision rested on prioritising the administration's strategic goals of stability and withdrawal over the democratic and reconciliation goals. Hill, Biden, and Obama viewed Maliki as the immediate solution to the prolonged political vacuum despite his sectarian and authoritarian undertones. Given this imperative, Obama and Biden were not willing to spend the political capital and risk further entrenchment in Iraq to see a democratic and inclusive government form. Hill wrote, "in a perfect parliamentary world, the party or coalition that garners the most seats is given the opportunity to form the government. If Iraq were part of that world, Ayad Allawi should have been given the right to form the government".[1697] Yet, for Hill, "the reality of the situation" required a quick solution.[1698] Hence, the rationale was simple, Maliki was the best solution from a poor hand dealt. Furthermore, Hill, Biden and Obama doubted that elections and democracy would overcome the sectarian divide in Iraq.

Although Allawi's alliance seemed to offer an inclusive cross-sectarian party with a leader who held an affinity for the United States and antipathy towards Iran, Hill doubted that Allawi's Iraqiyya was genuinely inclusive and cross-sectarian. He reported in his correspondence that "these new coalitions, however, are far from solid as the competing egos and aspirations they contain [sic] will likely result in internal power struggles; some have likened them to marriages of convenience".[1699] Moreover, he wrote that "Iraqis would tell foreigners things that were different from what they would tell each other. Time and time again, a politician would say things like 'never will I support Maliki', but two weeks later he would be in Maliki's office cutting a deal of some kind".[1700] Furthermore, Hill expressed doubt that better governance and democratic institutions would overcome a "1,300-year-old Sunni-Shia" divide.[1701] Hill's candidness on this topic is revealing. He writes:

> Many foreign visitors, especially those who view the 1,300-year-old Sunni-Shia divide as just another challenge in the security environment, saw sectarianism as a by-product of weak governance and poor economic performance, a passing inconvenience rather than the main driver of the crisis. After all, the sectarian killing had been reduced because of the surge. Soon, the thinking went, it would be

[1697] Hill, *Outpost: Life on the Frontlines of American Diplomacy: A Memoir*, p.370.
[1698] Ibid.
[1699] Christopher Hill, 'Iraqi Electoral Coalition Update' [cable], 09BAGHDAD2907_a, 30 Oct. 2009, *WikiLeaks,* https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAGHDAD2907_a.html, para. 11, accessed 15 May 2021.
[1700] Hill, *Outpost: Life on the Frontlines of American Diplomacy: A Memoir*, p.371.
[1701] Ibid. p.355.

> eliminated with a stronger economy and the emergence of "issues-based" politics. The surge was the wonder drug for all that ailed Iraq, even centuries of sectarian political conflict.[1702]

For Hill, the de-Baathification controversy before the election proved his theory. It was an "indicator of the stubbornly sectarian character of Iraqi politics" which "Shi'a and Sunni alike saw the de-Ba'athification issue as an opportunity to attack and eliminate rivals".[1703] For Hill, this would continue as "the process of national reconciliation…was not nearly strong enough to counter this tendency".[1704] Hence, according to Sky, after Maliki contested the election results, Hill told Odierno that "Iraq is not ready for democracy, that Iraq needs a Shia strongman. And Maliki is our man".[1705]

Biden and Obama shared similar observations. According to his National Security Advisor, Anthony Blinken, when it came to Iraq, Biden "knows that we can't simply go in and flip a switch and fix everything".[1706] Additionally, Sky claims that Biden told her, "look, I know these people…My grandfather was Irish and hated the British. It's like in the Balkans. They all grow up hating each other".[1707] Also, Biden publicly expressed his doubt on the ability for Iraq to overcome its sectarian tensions. He advocated for greater federalism in Iraq to see three distinct Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish enclaves.[1708] This was to replicate the "relative peace" that "America and other forces" achieved in Bosnia.[1709] Moreover, Biden previously criticised Bush's goals of national unity in Iraq, writing that, "Iraq's new government of national unity will not stop the deterioration. Iraqis have had three such governments in the last three years, each with Sunnis in key posts, without noticeable effect".[1710] Biden summarised his experience in his 2017 book. He stated that "a dozen years trying to persuade the political leaders in Iraq to see the benefits of a government based on something other than raw power and sectarian dominance had been time-consuming, draining, and ultimately nearly impossible".[1711] Finally, Obama shared the same scepticism of achieving an inclusive and democratic government. He wrote about his visit to Iraq immediately after the 2010 election in his memoir. He recounted that,

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[1702] Ibid.
[1703] Hill, 'The De-Ba'athification Controversy: Sectarianism, Consensus Politics, and Iraqi Democracy' [cable], para. 3 and 11.
[1704] Ibid. para. 3.
[1705] Sky, *The Unravelling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, p.322.
[1706] Giglio, 'Joe Biden's Haunted Legacy in Iraq', para. 13.
[1707] Sky, *The Unravelling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, p.337.
[1708] Joseph R. Biden JR. and Leslie H. Gelb, 'Unity Through Autonomy in Iraq', *New York Times*, 1 May 2006, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/01/opinion/01biden.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0, para. 3, accessed 4 Jan. 2021.
[1709] Ibid. para. 1.
[1710] Ibid. para. 6
[1711] Biden JR, *Promise Me, Dad: A Year of Hope, Hardship, and Purpose*, (U.S.A: Macmillan, 2017), p.106.

> I'd offered Prime Minister Maliki suggestions for how he might embrace needed administrative reforms and more effectively reach out to Iraq's Sunni and Kurdish factions. He'd been polite but defensive…As far as he was concerned, Shiites in Iraq were the majority, his party's coalition had won the most votes, Sunnis and Kurds were hindering progress with their unreasonable demands, and any notions of accommodating the interests or protecting the rights of Iraq's minority populations were an inconvenience he assumed only as a result of U.S. pressure… the conversation had been a useful reminder to me that elections alone don't produce a functioning democracy; until Iraq found a way to strengthen its civic institutions and its leaders developed habits of compromise, the country would continue to struggle. Still, the fact that Maliki and his rivals were expressing hostility and mistrust through politics rather than through the barrel of a gun counted as progress.[1712]

The administration's pro-Maliki contingent also believed that Allawi could not find the necessary support to become prime minister. The majority of the Obama administration somewhat shared this view. The administration comprehended that Iran would oppose Allawi's appointment through all its channels in Iraq.[1713] Some Iraqiyya politicians conceded this. One Iraqiyya member admitted that "it was clear that Allawi could not become prime minister because Iran opposed him".[1714] Moreover, according to Gordon and Trainor, even Syrian President Bashar al-Assad told Allawi that he was a "red line" for Iran and that they would only endorse Maliki.[1715] Allawi's support from the regional Sunni Arab states such as Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt increased Iran's opposition to Allawi. Furthermore, Hill claimed that Allawi's party was too Sunni dominated and would never be accepted by the majority of the Shia population. Hill's political counsellor, Garry Grappo, stated,

> Realistically speaking there was no chance . . . that Allawi, himself a Shi'a, would win the election as the leader of a largely Sunni political coalition. . . . 60 to 65 percent of the country was Shi'a, [and] after what they had experienced not only under Saddam but all previous regimes, they were not about to trust this crowd that was basically the leftovers from the Saddam era.[1716]

Also, Hill wrote,

> Many described Iraqiyya as a crypto-Baathist party. I became sceptical that Allawi's party would ever be allowed by the Shia and Kurds to become the governing party. Allawi was a Shia, but he was not a Shia leader… Those

[1712] Obama, *A Promised Land*, p.419.
[1713] Tara Golshan and Alex Ward, 'This is Joe Biden's checkered Iraq history', *Vox,* 15 Oct. 2019, https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/10/15/20849072/joe-biden-iraq-history-democrats-election-2020, para. 65, accessed 8 July 2021.
[1714] 'Iraq's Secular Opposition: The Rise and Decline of Al-Iraqiya', *International Crisis Group*, p.21
[1715] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.633.
[1716] Hill, *Outpost: Life on the Frontlines of American Diplomacy: A Memoir,* p.384.

> foreigners who had not seen these political patterns in other countries, who believed that a Shia without Shia constituents could become prime minister in Iraq's current circumstances didn't understand the game being played.[1717]

Furthermore, Hill criticised Allawi's election campaign and his post-election activities. He stated that,

> During the hard-fought campaign, Allawi never ventured into southern Iraq, where most of the Shia lived. In short, he did not make the slightest effort to gain Shia votes... the difference between Maliki's and Allawi's approaches was striking. Maliki went to work, while Allawi went to CNN. Allawi thought it was enough to get on CNN to accuse Maliki of becoming the "new Saddam". Allawi also thought that what became known as the government formation period was a good occasion to fly around the Middle East and complain about Maliki.[1718]

Thus, Hill concluded, "that regardless of Maliki's volatile and at times ugly behaviour, there seemed to be no swing from other Shia blocs toward Allawi".[1719]

With Allawi "disqualified" from the premiership,[1720] the pro-Maliki camp within the administration saw Maliki as the only option, notwithstanding his mixed compliance and authoritarian tendencies. Hill observed that,

> Maliki's tough-minded behaviour, his own bitter disappointment at not coming out ahead of Allawi, and his increasing feistiness on every issue were making him a thoroughly unlikable and unlikely candidate to replace himself. The foreign press corps was completely against him. Most foreign diplomats were against him, including the U.S. Embassy's own political section.[1721]

Yet, according to Hill, "even if we wanted to topple Maliki, you can't beat something with nothing, and the Iraqi political landscape was not exactly blooming with new political prospects".[1722] Hence for Hill, "Maliki was far from my ideal candidate, but I had real doubts whether someone else was going to be able to unseat him. Can't beat someone with no one, I kept repeating".[1723] Blinken and Brett McGurk, an advisor in the Department of State's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, confirmed the notion that Maliki was the only available option. Blinken stated, "basically, Maliki was the most resilient, the most effective politician, and the last guy left standing".[1724] Additionally, McGurk claimed that "he worked to find alternatives… but none

[1717] Ibid. p.372.
[1718] Ibid. pp.373-374.
[1719] Ibid. p.372.
[1720] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, pp.508-510.
[1721] Hill, *Outpost: Life on the Frontlines of American Diplomacy: A Memoir,* p.371.
[1722] Ibid. p.363.
[1723] Ibid. p.372.
[1724] Giglio, 'Joe Biden's Haunted Legacy in Iraq', para. 23.

of Maliki's rivals had a realistic chance of collecting more seats". According to McGurk, "while they waited on the sidelines for U.S. officials to win them support…Maliki worked his ass off from day one and just collected seat after seats".[1725] Hence, notwithstanding Maliki's faults, he was perceived as the only option. Furthermore, the pro-Maliki camp believed that Maliki would deliver on fundamental U.S. goals of the SOFA, withdrawal, stability and limiting Iranian influence. Yet, addressing his mixed compliance and authoritarian behaviour, Hill outlined his perceived strategy. He wrote that "there is a good Maliki, and a bad Maliki. We need to encourage one and discourage the other".[1726] The best strategy was "to focus on a better Maliki than he had been in his first four-year term, rather than engage in a quixotic effort to try to oust him".[1727]

The administration's belief that Maliki would deliver on its essential goals rested on its perception that Maliki was dependent on the United States. Biden thought Maliki was dependent on the United States for political survival in Iraq and needed the United States to prevent Iraq from falling into Iran's orbit. At a virtual teleconference on 6 October, Biden was confident that Maliki wanted the United States as a partner. According to Mattis, Biden argued that "Maliki wants us to stick around, because he does not see a future in Iraq otherwise".[1728] Also, he claimed, "I'll bet you my vice presidency Maliki will extend the SOFA".[1729] Mattis was uncomfortable with Biden's endorsement. He recounted the episode in his book, stating,

> Biden and his assistants listened politely. But as we spoke, I sensed I was making no headway in convincing the administration officials not to support Maliki. It was like talking to people who lived in a wooden houses but saw no need for a fire department. I saw that the die was already cast.[1730]

Furthermore, Biden asked the incoming general who replaced Odierno in September as head of the USF-I, General Lloyd Austin,[1731] if Maliki would be beholden to Iran. Austin portrayed an optimistic picture saying that Maliki confronted their militia allies in Charge of the Knights and would probably resist Iranian control.[1732] This affirmed to Biden that Maliki would not fall

[1725] Ibid. para. 22
[1726] Hill, *Outpost: Life on the Frontlines of American Diplomacy: A Memoir,* pp.330-331.
[1727] Ibid. p.373.
[1728] Mattis and West, *Call Sign Chaos: Learning to Lead*, p.225.
[1729] Ibid.; Sky, *The Unravelling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, p.336; and Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.633.
[1730] Mattis and West, *Call Sign Chaos: Learning to Lead*, p.225.
[1731] Mark J. Sievers, 'Working hand-in-glove: A first-hand account of Lloyd Austin's leadership in Iraq', *Atlantic Council* [website], (9 Dec. 2020), https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/working-hand-in-glove-a-first-hand-account-of-lloyd-austins-leadership-in-iraq/, para. 1, accessed 3 July 2021.
[1732] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.640 and 642.

under Iran's influence. Hence, for Biden and Hill, Maliki was "the strongest of the Shi'a leaders [and] would be the most reliable U.S. partner".[1733]

Eventually, Obama himself endorsed Maliki as the preferred candidate. He declared that too much time had passed, and the administration had to decide whom to support as prime minister.[1734] Yet, they would have to ensure that there would be Sunni representation in Maliki's government and mitigate Maliki's anticipated future mixed-compliance. Hence, the administration would implement Biden's plan of pushing for the partnership with Maliki and Allawi. According to Hill, the government would be "inclusive, to use what has become a tiresome American expression to describe the need for political balance".[1735] However, the administration did not hold high hopes for the efficiency of the government given the array of competing parties and tensions between Maliki and Allawi. Nonetheless, it was viewed that an inefficient government was preferable to having major factions "outside the tent".[1736] To mitigate Malik's anticipated mixed-compliance, Biden most likely thought that the ongoing presence of U.S. troops in Iraq through an extended SOFA would allow some avenue of influence. This would enable the administration some input into the trajectory of Iraq and Maliki's government.[1737] Moreover, Allawi chairing the new National Council for Strategic Policies would oversee Maliki and provide a check on his power. This would address the USF-I's concern of siding with Maliki.[1738] However, Hill, who retired from his ambassador role in August 2010, argued that the Obama administration should embrace the logical consequence of its larger strategy. He suggested that the administration accept anticipated non-compliance from a strong-man in exchange for supporting U.S. essential goals. Hill wrote, "for years, U.S officials had looked for a strong Iraq leader and having found one they objected to the fact that he didn't do what he was told… we wanted a junkyard dog like this for a long time. Why would people expect him to start sitting in our lap?".[1739]

The Irbil agreement

On 10 November, at the request of Obama, the Kurdish KDP leader, Masoud Barzani, hosted a meeting with Maliki, Allawi and two U.S. diplomatic staffers to reach a final compromise that

[1733] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.510.
[1734] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.644.
[1735] Hill, *Outpost: Life on the Frontlines of American Diplomacy: A Memoir,* p.396.
[1736] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.630.
[1737] Obama, *A Promised Land*, p.419.
[1738] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* pp.629-630.
[1739] Hill, *Outpost: Life on the Frontlines of American Diplomacy: A Memoir,* p.362.

reflected Biden's composition.[1740] This would be known as the Irbil agreement.[1741] It consisted of Allawi accepting Maliki as prime minister and Jalal Talabani as president.[1742] In exchange, Iraqiyya would receive extensive representation in the new government. It would receive the speakership, the Defence Ministry and Allawi would be appointed as the secretary-general of the yet to be established National Council for Strategic Policies.[1743] Additionally, Tariq al-Hashimi, who had joined Iraqiyya, would remain as vice president.[1744] Finally, Maliki would work to amend the de-Baathification laws to allow the return of some of the disqualified politicians.[1745] Most notably, this would see Mutlaq al-Saleh's disqualification reversed.[1746] Additionally, Mutlaq would be given the position of deputy prime minister.[1747] However, this meeting was not without drama. Apparently, Maliki and Allawi threatened to walk out of the meeting as they were unsatisfied with the deal. Reportedly, Barzani himself physically blocked the door to stop Allawi from leaving.[1748] Nonetheless, the agreement was eventually signed on a hand-written note.[1749]

Accordingly, on the first session of the Council of Representatives to implement the agreement, the Iraqiyya member, Usama al-Nujaifi, was elected as speaker. However, Allawi, who was sitting next to Maliki, and his bloc staged a walkout during the session. The walkout was a protest against the refusal of the Council of Representatives to admit other Iraqi members whom the Accountability and Justice Commission had disqualified.[1750] Mutlaq declared to the media that "we boycotted the session because we showed good intentions to others, but they stabbed us in the back".[1751] This indicated the fragility of the so-called unity government. Moreover, Allawi did not attend parliament when Talabani made Maliki the prime minister-designate, giving him 30 days to form a cabinet.[1752] Maliki received approval for his cabinet, yet he temporarily allocated himself the contentious ministries of Interior, Defence

[1740] Ned Parker et al., 'How Iraq's Maliki defined limits of U.S. power', *Reuters*, 1 July 2014, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-security-maliki-specialreport/special-report-how-iraqs-maliki-defined-limits-of-u-s-power-idUSKBN0F51HK20140630, para. 3-5, accessed 26 May 2021.
[1741] Kenneth Katzman, 'Iraq: Politics, Governance, and Human Rights', *Congressional Research Service*, (19 Apr. 2012), https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4fa24f302.pdf, p.13, accessed 19 May 2021.
[1742] Ibid.
[1743] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.532.
[1744] Wicken, 'Iraq's Sunnis in Crisis', pp.21-22.
[1745] Katzman, 'Iraq: Politics, Governance, and Human Rights', p.13.
[1746] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.649.
[1747] Wicken, 'Iraq's Sunnis in Crisis', pp.21-22.
[1748] Parker et al., 'How Iraq's Maliki defined limits of U.S. power', para. 3-4 and Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* pp.649-650.
[1749] Ibid.
[1750] 'Nouri Maliki reappointed Iraqi prime minister', *BBC NEWS*, 12 Nov. 2010, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-11732158, para. 11-15, accessed 5 July 2021.
[1751] Ibid. para. 14.
[1752] Katzman, 'Iraq: Politics, Governance, and Human Rights', p.13.

and National Security until permanent nominees were approved for the positions.[1753] Although this could be viewed with alarm; former Prime Minister Jaafari temporarily acted as Minister for Defence until the political jockeying found consensus for a candidate.[1754] Additionally, after the 2006 election, Maliki temporarily acted as Minister for Interior before Jawad al-Bolani was appointed.[1755] Nevertheless, the Iraqiyya bloc received 9 out of 42 cabinet positions.[1756] The INA was given 17 cabinet positions.[1757] Yet, despite Ambassador Jeffrey's public comments that claimed Sadr's support for Maliki was not conditional on receiving cabinet positions, the Sadrists were rewarded with 8 of the INA's 17 cabinet posts.[1758] Yet, they were junior positions.[1759] Moreover, Maliki appointed several Sadrists as governors in provinces that Maliki's State of Law won in the 2009 provincial election.[1760] Finally, the Kurdish bloc received 6 Cabinet positions.[1761] Despite these tensions and after 278 days of no elected government, the Unity Government was unveiled on 21 December 2010.[1762]

Conclusion

The Obama administration's decision to support Maliki as prime minister exemplified Emerson's mutual dependence, which continued to define the U.S.-Iraq relationship. It was a controversial decision given that Maliki previously demonstrated mixed compliance with political reconciliation goals and increased his authoritarian practices. These two factors had the potential to threaten the U.S. stability goals. Furthermore, Allawi won the most seats – despite having many candidates disqualified – and should have been given the mandate to form a government. Moreover, Allawi was consistently viewed as the desired pro-western leader who would willingly support U.S. goals. Also, drawing on Moravcsik's theory, if Allawi's bloc could form a government, perhaps Allawi's preferences towards the United States would not have been beholden to the Shia bloc. Nevertheless, the administration believed Allawi was not able to form a government. Thus, there was no other option but Maliki. Hence,

[1753] Ibid,
[1754] 'Iraq's New Cabinet', *New York Times*, 29 Apr. 2005, https://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/29/opinion/iraqs-new-cabinet.html, para. 4, accessed 11 June 2020.
[1755] 'Iraq assembles a new government', *The Economist*, 22 May 2006, https://www.economist.com/news/2006/05/22/iraq-assembles-a-new-government, para. 2, accessed 13 July 2021.
[1756] 'Lawmakers to vote on al Maliki's cabinet choices', *France 24*, 21 Dec. 2010, https://www.france24.com/en/20101220-iraq-lawmakers-vote-nuri-maliki-cabinet-choices-political-stalemate, para. 21, accessed 8 July 2021.
[1757] Ibid.
[1758] Katzman, 'Iraq: Politics, Governance, and Human Rights', p.14.
[1759] Ibid. pp.20-21. These included Housing, Labor and Social Affairs, Ministry of Planning (and Tourism and Antiquities. Yet, they all came with a budget that could be siphoned.
[1760] 'Iraqi sources say PM's bloc to give up governor posts in favour of Sadrists', *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, 17 Nov. 2010, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 7 July 2021.
[1761] Katzman, 'Iraq: Politics, Governance, and Human Rights', p.14.
[1762] John Leland and Jack Healy, 'After Months, Iraqi Lawmakers Approve a Government', *New York Times*, 21 Dec. 2010, https://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/22/world/middleeast/22iraq.html, accessed 13 July 2021.

notwithstanding his mixed compliance, the Obama administration was dependent on Maliki to fulfil its immediate goals. Supporting Maliki, however, did entail risks for the administration's goals. Although Obama, Biden and Hill expressed scepticism that Iraq's sectarian divide could truly be reconciled, it was essential to have an inclusive government. Given that Allawi's party had a significant Sunni constituency, it was imperative that they were given substantial representation in government. If they did not receive this representation, it could risk a new Sunni insurgency. Additionally, the administration had to factor in the risk of Maliki's alliance with the Shia bloc. Exemplifying Moravcsik's and Putnam's theory of domestic preferences, Maliki's renewed partnership with the Shia bloc risked continuing the bloc's influence on Maliki's preferences at the expense of U.S. interests. Finally, the administration had to consider the risk of increased Iranian influence in Iraq. This could materialise after the United States completed its withdrawal in December 2011 and the INA's presence in Maliki's governing collation.

To mitigate these risks, Biden implemented his desired Maliki-Allawi partnership. This would ensure that the new government would have adequate Sunni representation. Additionally, the partnership would see Allawi assume the leadership over a new National Council on Strategic Policies. This position would give Allawi and the Sunni members of his party tangible power. Moreover, the Council would curb Maliki's authoritarian power vis-à-vis the Office of Commander in Chief, which had stoked sectarian tensions with the Sons of Iraq in Diyala. Additionally, this partnership would balance the dominance of the INA in Maliki's government. The INA won a total of 70 seats compared to Iraqiyya's 91.[1763] Hence, Blinken stated that the partnership was "a real setback for Iran".[1764] Addressing the potential increase of Iranian influence, Biden perceived that Maliki's desire for a long-term strategic partnership with the United States would limit Iranian encroachment. Biden believed Maliki was dependent on the United States to maintain his position as prime minister and prevent Iranian influence in Iraq. To avoid being beholden to Iran and its political allies in Iraq, Maliki would extend the SOFA and allow a small U.S. troop presence in Iraq to continue indefinitely. Therefore, the administration made a calculated bet on Maliki supporting U.S. essential goals while managing the potential risks of sticking with him. Paradoxically, however, this bet would have profound consequences for the United States after the elections. As previously mentioned, Maliki reportedly made a deal with Sadr that he would not renew the SOFA and not permit a U.S. troop presence after the December 2011 withdrawal. Furthermore, the partnership between

[1763] Ranj Alaaldin, 'Iraq election: Result is only the beginning', *Guardian*, 27 Mar. 2010, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/mar/26/iraq-election-result-analysis, para. 2, accessed 9 July 2021.
[1764] Fadel and DeYoung, 'Iraqi leaders crack political deadlock'.

Allawi and Maliki was already dissipating at the inauguration ceremony. The effects of this on U.S. goals will be illustrated in the next chapter.

Chapter VII – The Unravelling

After the disputed 2010 election, the Obama administration's gamble on Nouri al-Maliki did not produce the desired outcome. Maliki did not implement the conditions of the Irbil agreement by sharing power with Iraqiyya. The National Council for Strategic Policies, which was to be chaired by Iyad Allawi, was not created. Moreover, Maliki held onto the Ministry of Interior and Defence, which the latter was supposed to be allocated to Iraqiyya.[1765] Hence, the initiatives to curb Maliki's non-compliant behaviour vis-à-vis the Irbil agreement and the National Council for Strategic Policies did not transpire. Moreover, Iraqiyya could not form a formidable balance against the Shia bloc, the Sadrists and Iran, as the administration intended. Furthermore, there was no extension of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). The failure to reach an extended SOFA can be accounted for by using Putnam's two-level game. The Obama administration and Maliki could not find a win set to renew the agreement. Nonetheless, with no extended SOFA, U.S. troops would depart Iraq by December 2011. The departure of U.S. troops meant that the Obama administration lost one of its few avenues of influence to achieve its objectives in Iraq. Moreover, it increased the severity of the mutual dependence in the U.S.-Iraq relationship. With the removal of troops, the administration was even more dependent on Maliki to support its objectives of a "stable, and self-reliant" Iraq.[1766]

Before the U.S. troop withdrawal, Maliki effectively began coup-proofing his government, which entailed many arrests within the Sunni community. Furthermore, in the proceeding days of the U.S. troop withdrawal, Maliki targeted Iraqiyya's leadership. Maliki called for the sacking of the Deputy Prime Minister, Saleh al-Mutlaq, and issued an arrest warrant for the Vice President, Tariq al-Hashimi. In the following year, Maliki issued an additional warrant for the arrest of the former Deputy Prime Minister, Rafi al-Issawi. This attack on Iraqiyya's leadership spurred mass protests in Sunni majority provinces and led to clashes between Sunni protesters and tribal forces against Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). Against this backdrop, the government failed to integrate the Sons of Iraq, which compounded the alienation of the Sunni community. Hence, the U.S. long-term goal of stability in Iraq quickly eroded. Witnessing the turmoil in Iraq, the so-called Islamic State (IS) – which had expanded mainly in Syria – took an opportunity to exploit the chaos in Iraq.[1767] Building on the mass dissatisfaction of the Sunni population and tribes, IS was able to take over 1/3 of Iraq. Furthermore, after the U.S.

[1765] Michael S. Schmidt and Tim Arango, 'Bitter Feud Between Top Iraqi Leaders Stalls Government', *New York Times,* 25 June 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/26/world/middleeast/26iraq.html, para. 19, accessed 11 Aug. 2021
[1766] 'Obama's Speech at Camp Lejeune, N.C.', *New York Times*, 27 Feb. 2009, https://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/27/us/politics/27obama-text.html, para. 14, accessed 9 Feb. 2021
[1767] 'Exploiting Disorder: al-Qaeda and the Islamic State', *International Crisis Group*, (14 Mar. 2016), https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/exploiting-disorder-al-qaeda-and-the-islamic-state_0.pdf, pp.17-19, accessed 10 Aug. 2021.

withdrawal, other developments transpired that undermined long-term U.S. objectives. Rogue Shia militias began to re-surface in Iraq and became further entrenched in Iraq's politics. Also, the Iranian regime expanded its influence in Iraq to pursue its objectives in Syria which contradicted those of the Obama administration. The Obama administration's response to Maliki's behaviour was limited until the IS invasion of 2014. Maliki visited the United States when Sunni dissatisfaction led to a renewed insurgency in Iraq. Senior U.S. lawmakers publicly criticised him for his destabilising behaviour, yet he did not receive any public rebuke from the Obama administration. The placid response appeared to be the result of the administration's limited influence over Maliki and its focus on the Syrian conflict and other uprisings from the Arab Spring. Hence, with the administration's focus fragmented between competing priorities, there appeared to be no concentrated effort on Iraq to rectify Maliki's behaviour until the IS invasion of 2014. Only after the fall of Mosul did the administration's focus return to Iraq, where it pressured Maliki to step down from power. Nevertheless, it was too late. The objectives that both the Bush and Obama administration had sought in Iraq were shattered.

The Demise of the Irbil Agreement

The election's immediate aftermath witnessed two significant developments; protests against Maliki's government and the crumbling of the Irbil power-sharing agreement between Maliki and Iyad Allawi. The Arab Spring, which began in December 2010, led to sporadic protests against Maliki's government. Witnessing the revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa, Iraqis began demonstrating against Maliki's government which culminated into the "day of rage" on 25 February 2011.[1768] Responding to the protesters, Maliki declared that he would cut his salary by 50% and not seek to remain as prime minister for the 2014 elections.[1769] Additionally, he set a 100-day deadline for the government to improve the delivery of services and reduce corruption.[1770] However, Maliki and his government also responded with force to the protests. It engaged in intimidation and physical assaults on protesters and raids on media

[1768] Khalid al-Ansary, 'Thousands rally in Iraq's "Day of Rage" protests', *Reuters,* 25 Feb. 2011, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-protests-idUSTRE71O1RN20110225, accessed 7 Aug. 2021.
[1769]'Failing Oversight: Iraq's Unchecked Government', *International Crisis Group*, (26 Sep. 2011), https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/113-failing-oversight-iraq-s-unchecked-government.pdf, p.1, accessed 15 July 2021 and Andrew Raine, 'Iraq authorities 'using violence and bribes' to curb dissent', *The National*, 2 Mar. 2011, https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/mena/iraq-authorities-using-violence-and-bribes-to-curb-dissent-1.445013, accessed 21 July 2021.
[1770] Muhanad Mohammed, 'Iraq PM sets 100 day deadline for gov after protests', *Reuters*, 28 Feb. 2011, https://www.reuters.com/article/oukwd-uk-iraq-protests-idAFTRE71Q1XI20110227, para. 5-6, accessed 21 July 2021.

outlets.[1771] Moreover, 23 protesters were killed by security forces on the "day of rage".[1772] This violence was not just limited to the central government. Kurdish security forces killed, injured and arrested a handful of protesters in Kurdish Government regions.[1773] Despite his cabinet championing improved services, Maliki's 100-day deadline did not produce any tangible improvements in services.[1774] This provoked immediate protests after his self-imposed timeline.[1775] It also generated a heavy-handed response from the government, including police and hired thugs attacking protesters with sticks and knives.[1776] Nevertheless, sporadic protests continued throughout the year.

Amidst the protests, the 2010 power-sharing agreement between Maliki and Allawi was crumbling. The key components, such as the National Council for Strategic Policy, were never established. Maliki and Allawi's opponents vividly objected to the creation of the Council while others stated there were no constitutional grounds for it to be established.[1777] Furthermore, Maliki still maintained the positions as acting Minister for Interior and Defence, the latter was supposed to be given to Iraqiyya.[1778] Maliki rejected each candidate that Iraqiyya proposed for the Defence Ministry.[1779] Instead, Maliki presented other Iraqiyya candidates for the position. However, these Iraqiyya candidates were opposed by Allawi and Sadr. They believed that Maliki courted them into an alliance with Maliki, despite being Iraqiyya members.[1780] Thus, Maliki continued to occupy the Ministry for Defence until August 2011, when he appointed another acting minister that was a Sunni politician but not an Iraqiyya member.[1781] Iraqiyya could not launch any effective action to dissuade Maliki from breaking the power-sharing agreement. Given the secrecy around the deal and the absence of a public and legal binding agreement, it was difficult for Iraqiyya to claim that Maliki was breaking the power-sharing arrangement. Maliki already declared that 80% of the agreement was already implemented

[1771] 'Failing Oversight: Iraq's Unchecked Government', *International Crisis Group*, p.2
[1772] Stephanie McCrummen, '23 killed as Iraqis demand reforms in 'Day of Rage'', *Washington Post*, 26 Feb. 2011, A.9, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 14 June 2020.
[1773] 'Failing Oversight: Iraq's Unchecked Government', *International Crisis Group*, p.1.
[1774] Ibid. p.2.
[1775] Ned Parker and Raheem Salman, 'Activists attacked in Baghdad: Protesters say soldiers stood by as Maliki supporters beat them', *Los Angeles Times,* 11 June 2011, A.3, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 23 June 2020.
[1776] Ibid.
[1777] 'Iraq's Secular Opposition: The Rise and Decline of Al-Iraqiya', *International Crisis Group*, (31 July 2012), https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/127-iraq-s-secular-opposition-the-rise-and-decline-of-al-iraqiya.pdf, accessed 10 Feb. 2021.
[1778] Ibid.
[1779] Ibid.
[1780] Reidar Visser, 'Maliki's Baathists and Faysal al-Lami: Towards Another Confrontation?', *Iraq and Gulf Analysis* [website], (31 Mar. 2011), https://gulfanalysis.wordpress.com/2011/03/31/malikis-baathists-and-faysal-al-lami-towards-another-confrontation/, para. 6, accessed 19 July 2021.
[1781] Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* (London: Atlantic Books, 2012), p.667.

and the lingering demands of Iraqiyya were unconstitutional.[1782] Hence, in June, Iraqiyya and others called for the Irbil agreement to be published.[1783] However, Iraqiyya's only remaining option was to protest against Maliki's behaviour. Relations between Maliki and Iraqiyya further deteriorated. On 16 April, Iraqiyya called for a no-confidence vote in Maliki, with Allawi declaring Maliki the new Saddam.[1784] Also, in June, Maliki supporters publicly burned a portrait of Allawi.[1785] This led to a short-term boycott of parliament by Iraqiyya. Commenting on the demise of the Irbil Agreement, the Deputy Prime Minister, Saleh al-Mutlaq, told the Crisis Group that, "Maliki is heading toward a system run by one party and one man, with the Daawa Party replacing the Baath Party and Maliki taking the place of Saddam Hussein".[1786] Nevertheless, Iraqiyya's standing significantly declined in 2011.[1787] Given that Iraqiyya was a significant component of Maliki's government, they were equally blamed for the dismal state of the government's service delivery.[1788] Moreover, their public perception was tainted with the government's corruption.[1789] Furthermore, Maliki encouraged Shia members of Iraqiyya to defect in exchange for concessions, which led to additional fracturing of the party.[1790]

The demise of the power-sharing agreement and the decline of Iraqiyya unravelled the Obama administration's mitigation strategy to balance Maliki. As identified in the previous chapter, the power-sharing agreement was the administration's strategy to mitigate the risk of sticking with Maliki and allow for significant Sunni representation in the government. Allawi was supposed to chair the National Council for Strategic Policy, which was designed to restrict Maliki's control over ISF. Moreover, Iraqiyya's presence in Maliki's government was intended to limit the Sadrist and Iranian influence. Additionally, given Iraqiyya's significant Sunni constituency, the Irbil agreement was to ensure substantial Sunni representation and power in the government. Significant Sunni representation was envisioned as a prerequisite for stability in Iraq. However, with the demise of the power-sharing arrangement, the administration would not achieve its objectives. Unfortunately, the authoritative accounts such as the Gordon and Trainor's *Endgame* and the U.S. Army's official account do not reveal great insight into the

[1782] Reidar Visser, 'Time to Publish the Arbil Agreement?', *Iraq and Gulf Analysis* [website], 23 June 2011, https://gulfanalysis.wordpress.com/2011/06/23/time-to-publish-the-arbil-agreement/, para. 1, accessed 22 July 2021.
[1783] Ibid. para. 2.
[1784] Reidar Visser, 'Iraq's Never-Ending Process of Forming a Government', *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* [website], 20 July 2011, https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/45118, para. 4, accessed 11 Aug. 2021 and Schmidt and Tim Arango, 'Bitter Feud Between Top Iraqi Leaders Stalls Government', para. 19.
[1785] Schmidt and Arango, 'Bitter Feud Between Top Iraqi Leaders Stalls Government', para. 18.
[1786] 'Iraq's Secular Opposition: The Rise and Decline of Al-Iraqiya', *International Crisis Group*, p.22.
[1787] Ibid. p.24.
[1788] Ibid.
[1789] Ibid.
[1790] Marisa Sullivan, 'Maliki's Authoritarian Regime', *Institute for the Study of War*, (Apr. 2013), http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Malikis-Authoritarian-Regime-Web.pdf, accessed 21 Feb. 2021.

administration's perception and response. One can speculate that the administration was dismayed at the events unfolding. Yet, given the uprisings in Egypt and Libya as well as protests in Bahrain and Syria vis-à-vis the Arab Spring and the ongoing surge in Afghanistan, the administration's attention could not solely be centred on Iraq.

Status of Forces Agreement

The negotiations to extend the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) in 2011 were fraught with controversy. As identified in Chapter VI, the Obama administration's goals included renewing the existing SOFA to maintain a troop presence in Iraq after the December 2011 withdrawal deadline. Moreover, they believed that Maliki shared these goals and would extend the SOFA. This was a critical reason underpinning the administration's support for him in the 2010 election dispute. However, Chapter VI also indicated the likelihood that Iran brokered an agreement between Maliki and Sadr whereby Maliki conceded to not extending the SOFA or maintaining a U.S. residual force. The constraints of the Shia bloc on Maliki thus appeared to surface again. Nevertheless, the SOFA negotiations were contentious for two reasons. The Obama administration outlined conditions for maintaining U.S. troops in Iraq. Yet, speaking to Putnam's two-level game, these conditions made it impossible for both Maliki and the administration's win-sets to overlap to renew the SOFA. More significantly, however, it was alleged that Obama deliberately made these win-sets impossible to complement each other as he changed his preference of maintaining U.S. troops in Iraq. Thus, by October 2011, the SOFA negotiations collapsed without any extension, and U.S. troops would be withdrawn by December.

On 25 January 2011, the United States Forces-Iraq (USF-I) Commander, General Lloyd Austin, met with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael W. Mullen, and the CENTCOM commander, General James Mattis, to discuss renewing the SOFA.[1791] They proposed that a force of 24,000 would remain after December 2011. For Mullen, the residual force would have five key responsibilities. It would advise and assist ISF, protect Iraq's airspace, defuse tensions between Iraq's Arab and Kurdish population over disputed territories, maintain U.S. influence in the region and counter Iranian malign activities.[1792] The commanders agreed that the ISF could not fulfil all of Iraq's internal and external security

[1791] Joel D. Rayburn and Frank K. Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S Army War College Press, 2019), p.541 and Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.657
[1792] Ibid.

needs.[1793] Moreover, they would be operating U.S. tanks and aircraft, which required U.S. training.[1794] Also, Iraq's Special Forces, which remained under Maliki's control and conducted sectarian operations, required U.S. assistance and intelligence to continue to disrupt al-Qaeda networks.[1795] Furthermore, Austin believed that maintaining a residual force would allow a quick reaction to potential instability in Iraq.[1796] Additionally, the force could prevent a vacuum from emerging after the withdrawal of the bulk of U.S. forces that the Iranian regime might fill.[1797] Therefore, Austin thought that 20,000-24,000 troops would be enough to achieve these objectives.[1798] According to the U.S. Army's official account, Austin claimed that Maliki and Allawi privately supported the idea of maintaining a 24,000 troop presence. However, the report claims that the proposed number encountered resistance from the White House.[1799]

Although Obama and Biden previously expressed their desire to extend the SOFA, Obama was cognizant that his party could criticise him for breaking his campaign promise of ending the war in Iraq.[1800] Moreover, his administration was aware of the tough negotiations that would transpire given the difficulty the Bush administration experienced during its 2008 SOFA negotiations.[1801] Furthermore, the administration was working on Obama's signature deficit reduction plan, which planned to produce USD 4 trillion in savings.[1802] This entailed USD 1 trillion of savings from winding down the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.[1803] Hence, there was speculation that the debates around the deficit reduction plan shaped the discussion around the troop withdrawal in Iraq.[1804] According to Ambassador Jeffrey,

> …the White House was troubled by the cost (almost $1 million per year per soldier) and the optics of a president who had campaigned on getting all troops out of Iraq keeping a large ground force there seemingly in perpetuity, when violence had dropped off remarkably.[1805]

[1793] Robert K. Brigham, *The United States and Iraq Since 1990: A Brief History with Documents*,(United States: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), p.234-236.
[1794] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.654
[1795] Ibid.
[1796] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.541.
[1797] Ibid. 541-542
[1798] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.655.
[1799] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, pp.541-542.
[1800] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.653.
[1801] Robert Gates, *Duty: memoirs of a Secretary at war*, (U.S.A: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), p.238.
[1802] Liz Halloran, 'Obama Plan Aims For $4 Trillion In Deficit Cuts', *NPR*, 13 Apr. 2011, https://www.npr.org/2011/04/14/135382432/obama-plan-aims-for-4-trillion-in-deficit-cuts, accessed 25 July 2021.
[1803] 'Obama outlines $3 trillion debt plan; GOP slams tax component', *CNN*, 20 Sep. 2011, https://edition.cnn.com/2011/09/19/politics/obama-debt/index.html, para. 28, accessed 15 Aug. 2021
[1804] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.668.
[1805] James Jeffrey, 'The Iraq Troop-Basing Question and the New Middle East', *The Washington Institute*, (Nov. 2014), https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/media/2608, pp.2-3, accessed 1 July 2021.

The White House broadly endorsed the proposed roles and responsibilities of the envisioned residual force. However, Obama's National Security Advisor, Thomas Donilon, informed Austin that 24,000 troops was too high.[1806] Hence, Austin proposed a 16,000 residual force, which would decline to 175 over three years and culminate into an Office of Security Cooperation.[1807] This entity would be the remaining military presence in Iraq and would be charged with overseeing the sale and transfer of U.S. military equipment to ISF.[1808] Nonetheless, Austin stated that 10,000 troops was the absolute minimum number that could fulfil the residual force's responsibilities.[1809]

According to Gordon and Trainor, Donilon believed that the Pentagon was trying to constrain the administration's options.[1810] Thus, Donilon confronted the Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, on the number of troops. Gordon and Trainor claim that Gates conceded that the administration could achieve its objectives with 10,000 troops.[1811] Yet, in a stunning turn of events, the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff, James Cartwright, unilaterally proposed to Donilon and Biden's advisor, Anthony Blinken, that it was possible to achieve the minimum objectives with 3,500 troops.[1812] He argued this would offer the best value of U.S. taxpayers' money.[1813] Cartwright's proposal was remarkable given it undermined his superior, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael W. Mullen. However, Cartwright's proposal was not endorsed, but his idea would re-emerge later that year. Nevertheless, on 19 May, Obama decided on troop numbers.[1814] He declared that he would accept up to 10,000 troops as a residual force.[1815] This frustrated the Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, and the USF-I leadership.[1816] Yet, for Obama, it would signify that war was ending in Iraq and that the U.S.-Iraq relationship was entering a new stage where Iraq would no longer be dependent on

[1806] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.665.
[1807] Ibid. pp.655-656.
[1808] Michael S. Schmidt and Eric Schmitt, 'Weapons Sales to Iraq Move Ahead Despite U.S. Worries', *New York Times*, 28 Dec. 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/29/world/middleeast/us-military-sales-to-iraq-raise-concerns.html, para. 6, accessed 3 Aug. 2021.
[1809] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.656.
[1810] Ibid. p.657.
[1811] Ibid. p.658.
[1812] Ibid. p.659.
[1813] Ibid. p.660.
[1814] Ryan N. Mannina, 'How the 2011 US Troop Withdrawal from Iraq Led to the Rise of ISIS', *Small Wars Journal* [website], (23 Dec. 2018), https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/how-2011-us-troop-withdrawal-iraq-led-rise-isis, para. 15, accessed 14 Aug. 2021.
[1815] Ibid.
[1816] Gates, *Duty: memoirs of a Secretary at war*, pp.553-555 and Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.542.

the United States.[1817] Obama called Maliki on 2 June to inform him that he was prepared to keep U.S. troops in Iraq after 2011. However, this would require legal immunity for U.S. troops, and Iraq's parliament must approve the SOFA.[1818] These two requirements plagued the Bush administration's SOFA negotiations in 2008. Furthermore, Obama issued an ultimatum to Maliki stating that the process for a formal request for U.S. troops and agreement to obtain parliamentary approval needed to begin on 1 August.[1819]

Maliki and U.S. Troops

Maliki's position on U.S. troops remaining after 2011 is contested. Some claim that he didn't want to keep U.S. troops in Iraq after the December withdrawal.[1820] Nevertheless, on multiple occasions, he expressed to the Obama administration his desire to maintain a U.S. presence after 2011. Crocker claimed that "Maliki, in one of my last discussions with him before he left Baghdad in 2009, said: 'We are going to need your forces for decades. We're just going to have to figure out the right way to do it'".[1821] Moreover, in 2011, the commander of Iraq's Special Forces, Major General Fadhel al-Barwar, stated that "the Americans need to stay because we don't have control over our borders".[1822] Nonetheless, Maliki said publicly that "if a solid majority of Iraqi lawmakers and political leaders back a continuing American presence…he could support asking the United States to keep some of its remaining 45,000 troops in Iraq past the withdrawal deadline of this December".[1823] Additionally, he confidently projected that "realistically, there is no 100 percent consensus on such an issue…[yet] if 80 to 90 percent approved, or even 70 to 80 percent, the others should fall in line with them".[1824] Also, Maliki publicly stated that if this degree of consensus exists, the Sadrists should accept the extension of the U.S. troop presence.[1825] Furthermore, in 2011, Maliki told Congressman John Boehner and Senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham in the presence of General

[1817] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.664.
[1818] Ibid. pp.664-665.
[1819] Jeffrey, 'The Iraq Troop-Basing Question and the New Middle East', p.3
[1820] See Colin Kahl, 'No, Obama Didn't Lose Iraq', *Politico*, 15 June 2014, https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/06/no-obama-didnt-lose-iraq-107874, para. 2-3, accessed 7 Aug. 2021.
[1821] Ryan Crocker, 'Our National Security... Is At Stake Right Now', *Frontline* [website], (29 July 2014), https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/ryan-crocker-our-national-security-is-at-stake-right-now/, para. 96, accessed 15 Feb. 2021.
[1822] Tim Arango, 'Taking Lead, Iraqis Hope U.S. Special Operations Commandos Stay', *New York Times*, 2 July 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/03/world/middleeast/03iraq.html, para. 5, accessed 30 June 2021.
[1823] Jack Healy and Yasir Ghazi, 'Iraqis to Talk About Asking Some U.S. Troops to Stay', *New York Times*, 11 May 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/12/world/middleeast/12iraq.html, para. 2, accessed 26 June 2021 and Sahar Issa, 'Iraq's Maliki signals he may let US troops extend their stay', *Christian Science Monitor,* 12 May 2011, https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2011/0512/Iraq-s-Maliki-signals-he-may-let-US-troops-extend-their-stay, para. 1-2, accessed 21 June 2021.
[1824] Issa, 'Iraq's Maliki signals he may let US troops extend their stay', *Christian Science Monitor,* para. 9,
[1825] Aaron Davis, 'Shiite Struggle in Iraq May be Key to U.S. Troop Extension,' *Pittsburgh Post – Gazette*, 15 May 2011, A.4, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 25 July 2021.

Austin and Ambassador Jeffrey that Iraq needed U.S. forces.[1826] Yet, Maliki claimed that the Obama administration was vague and had not confirmed what sort of presence the administration envisioned.[1827] Nonetheless, informal negotiations for extending the SOFA began in April 2011. According to the U.S. Army's official account, both negotiating teams implicitly agreed that U.S. troops could remain past the December withdrawal date without a finalised SOFA if Iraq's government formally requested U.S. troops.[1828] Nevertheless, both sides understood the political challenges to renewing the SOFA. Echoing Moravcsik and Putnam, the USF-I leadership noted that Maliki would be restricted in negotiations given that Maliki's position as prime minister was dependent on the Sadrist bloc.[1829] If the Sadrists withdrew from Maliki's coalition, Maliki's government could collapse. Thus, there already appeared limited opportunities for Maliki's win-set to overlap with the U.S. win-set to extend the SOFA.

The USF-I observations of the constraints on Maliki were well-founded. In May and April, Muqtada al-Sadr organised protests against extending the SOFA.[1830] Sadr announced that "if that US presence remained it would mean two things: escalating the work of the military resistance and re-activating the Mahdi Army".[1831] Moreover, he told his followers to register at Sadrist party offices and continue to protest until U.S. forces withdraw.[1832] Additionally, the Iranian regime expressed its opposition to extending the SOFA.[1833] Iran's foreign minister stated that "based on the security agreement, the US forces should leave by the end of 2011".[1834] While another prominent regime figure, Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, threatened that "occupiers of Iraq will be forced to escape the quagmire of Iraq sooner or later".[1835] Furthermore, Maliki expressed to the USF-I leadership his concern that Iyad Allawi would politically attack him on nationalist grounds for extending the SOFA.[1836] Despite privately expressing his support for U.S. troops, Allawi stated he was not prepared to discuss troop

[1826] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.542.
[1827] Ibid.
[1828] Ibid. 542 and Gates, *Duty: memoirs of a Secretary at war*, pp.553-555.
[1829]Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.542.
[1830] Ibid. and Jane Arraf, 'On anniversary of Saddam's fall, Iraq's Sadr issues warning on US presence', *Christian Science Monitor,* 9 Apr. 2011, https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2011/0409/On-anniversary-of-Saddam-s-fall-Iraq-s-Sadr-issues-warning-on-US-presence, accessed 28 June 2021.
[1831] Arraf, 'On anniversary of Saddam's fall, Iraq's Sadr issues warning on US presence', *Christian Science Monitor,* 9 Apr. 2011, para. 6.
[1832] Ibid. para. 10.
[1833] Adam Mausner et al., 'The Outcome of Invasion: US and Iranian Strategic Competition in Iraq', *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, (16 Mar. 2012), https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/120308_Combined_Iraq_Chapter.pdf, p.75, accessed 1 Aug. 2021.
[1834] Ibid. p.75
[1835] Ibid.
[1836]Michael S. Schmidt and Tim Arango, 'Despite Difficult Talks, U.S. and Iraq Had Expected Some American Troops to Stay', *New York Times*, 21 Oct. 2011, para. 7, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 19 June 2021 and Rick Brennan Jr et al., *Ending the U.S. War in Iraq: The Final Transition, Operational Maneuver, and Disestablishment of United States Forces-Iraq*, (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2013), pp.104 and 107-108.

numbers until the power-sharing agreement was implemented.[1837] This was widely seen as an attempt to leverage the U.S. desire for a SOFA to advance his position in government.[1838] Therefore, to overcome the perceived absence of overlap between Maliki's and U.S. win-sets, Maliki presented an alternative option. He suggested to Jeffrey and State Department advisor Brett McGurk that an executive agreement between the Ministry of Defence and the Pentagon could be established. This would entail a memorandum of understanding to allow a residual U.S. troop presence.[1839] Also, it would enable the U.S. troop presence to continue without requiring parliamentary approval. McGurk agreed to Maliki's proposal and took it to the White House. Yet, according to Gordon and Trainor, the administration's legal counsel stated that the parliamentary approval was the precedent set by the Bush administration and needed to be followed.[1840] Additionally, the infamous Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court, Medhat al-Mahmoud, stated that it was a constitutional requirement for the SOFA to be approved by the parliament.[1841] Hence, the prospect of developing commonality in each win-sets appeared bleak.

In July, the new Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta, visited Iraq to meet with Kurdish President Jalal Talabani and Maliki to discuss the potential for a U.S. long-term presence. Panetta reinforced Obama's conditions that U.S. forces required legal protection and parliamentary approval of the SOFA.[1842] He told Maliki that if the Iraqi government was serious about maintaining U.S. assistance, they needed to formally request it as soon as possible.[1843] After Panetta's visit, Jeffrey and Austin reinforced Panetta's message to Iraqi political leaders.[1844] On 2 August, the day after Obama's 1 August deadline, the political blocs of Maliki's coalition met in the Council of Representatives to discuss the SOFA. Without the Sadrist's consent, they authorised Maliki to negotiate a memorandum of understanding for U.S. trainers.[1845] Yet, there was no agreement on legal immunity for U.S. troops. However, Gordon and Trainor claim that the administration was surprised that the political blocs

[1837] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.666.
[1838] Ibid.
[1839] Ibid. p.665.
[1840] Ibid. p.666.
[1841] Ibid.
[1842] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.548.
[1843] Jim Garamone, 'Panetta Calls for Iraqi Decision on Future U.S. Presence', *U.S. Department of Defense Information*, 11 July 2011, in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 23 July 2021.
[1844] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.549.
[1845] Micah Zenko, 'Iraq: U.S. Military Withdrawal II', *Council on Foreign Relations* [website], (3 Aug. 2011), https://www.cfr.org/blog/iraq-us-military-withdrawal-ii, para. 3, accessed 20 July 2021 and Kenneth Katzman, 'Iraq: Politics, Governance, and Human Rights', *Congressional Research Service*, (9 Aug. 2011), https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=687087, p.27, accessed 22 July 2021.

generated this consensus but did not pursue this opportunity.[1846] They state that Jeffrey and McGurk were expecting that they would receive an immediate green light from the administration to launch formal negotiations to extend the SOFA, given that the withdrawal deadline was only four months away.[1847] Yet, they were apparently met with an awkward silence from the White House.[1848] Consequently, the political blocs agreed to adjourn parliament for 30 days to celebrate Ramadan.[1849] Thus, with time rapidly disappearing, Jeffrey and McGurk updated the administration on the status of the SOFA talks. They stated that Maliki could fulfil all of the administration's requirements for an extended SOFA except for two components. Maliki could not generate parliamentary approval due to the Sadrists, and he could not guarantee the legal immunity for U.S. troops.[1850] Nonetheless, despite this slow progress, Panetta advocated for the negotiations to continue to maintain a 10,000 strong residual force in Iraq.[1851]

The End of SOFA Negotiations

The "awkward silence", that Gordon and Trainor mentioned, speaks to a stunning accusation towards Obama and his inner circle made by the U.S. Army's official account. Notwithstanding Panetta's advocacy for the troop presence, the U.S. Army's account claims that Obama changed his mind of maintaining a residual troop presence in Iraq. The account draws on interviews with the incoming director of the Office of Security Cooperation, Lieutenant General Robert Caslen, which was to replace the USF-I after the December withdrawal. According to his interview, Caslen claimed that administration officials warned him that he would not have any troops to command after 2011.[1852] Caslen argued that the officials stated that Obama did not intend to keep a residual force in Iraq. Instead, Caslen claimed,

> …the President would insist that the Iraqi Parliament approve the SOFA—a demand that would be a poison pill, since Maliki would not risk a no-confidence vote on his premiership. We know it is not going to happen . . . and it will look like the Iraqis were the ones that made it happen.[1853]

The U.S. Army's account further states that when Caslen arrived in Iraq in August 2011, he spoke to General Austin and Ambassador Jeffrey on the matter. Yet, they reassured him that

[1846] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.667.
[1847] Ibid.
[1848] Ibid.
[1849] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.549.
[1850] Ibid.
[1851] Ibid.
[1852] Ibid. pp.549-550.
[1853] Ibid. p.550.

Obama and his advisors were committed to leaving a force in the country after the withdrawal.[1854]

It is difficult to establish the accuracy of Caslen's claim that Obama changed his position on maintaining a residual force. However, Jeffrey presents the idea that for Obama, the absolute minimum conditions for a complete withdrawal were established. Hence, the administration could withdraw all troops. The 2010 election and formation of a government reinforced this notion. Jeffrey stated that,

> Politically, Iraq appeared fairly stable, having just put together a seemingly inclusive government of Shiite and Sunni Arabs and Kurds, and was benefiting from exports of about two million barrels of oil a day at close to $90 a barrel. Meanwhile, polls indicated that less than 20 percent of the Iraqi population wanted U.S. troops to remain, and that figure was tilted upward by the high "yes" answer from Kurds, in whose territory the United States had not stationed nor contemplated significant forces. Given the Arab Spring mood in the region, the Iraqi government was hypersensitive to public opinion.[1855]

Amidst this uncertainly, Obama convened a committee session on 13 August to finalise the number of troops that could remain in Iraq.[1856] He told the National Security Council that he would only allow a maximum of 3,500 troops to stay in Iraq after the withdrawal.[1857] This was the exact amount that Vice-Chairman James Cartwright suggested. For Obama, this would suit his and Maliki's win-sets. It would achieve the administration's essential security priorities in Iraq and show that the war in Iraq was finished.[1858] For Maliki and his allies, they would have the desired military relationship with the United States without dealing with a political backlash from acquiescing to a significant troop presence in Iraq.[1859] According to the U.S. Army's official account, Obama's revised figure caught the U.S. negotiators, McGurk and Jeffrey, by surprise. The new figure meant the capability of the residual would be severely downgraded.[1860] The CENTCOM Commander, James Mattis, and Austin and Mullen opposed this number, believing that a small amount of U.S. troops would be unable to protect themselves from rogue Shia militia attacks.[1861] They conceded that it was better to have no

[1854] Ibid.
[1855] Jeffrey, 'The Iraq Troop-Basing Question and the New Middle East', p.3.
[1856] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.669.
[1857] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.550.
[1858] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.670.
[1859] Ibid.
[1860] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.550.
[1861] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.657.

troops at all instead of 3,500.[1862] Furthermore, the smaller force would still need approval from Iraq's parliament and legal immunity from prosecution. McGurk and Jeffrey comprehended that given the proposed size of 3,500, many Iraqi politicians would not expend the political capital for such a small force, especially Maliki.[1863] This view was echoed by former ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad who stated in an interview,

> I think [Maliki] tried, in my own view, to find the middle path, to have his cake and eat it too, and to manage the various constituencies, which was that he would give executive branch immunity from prosecution in Iraq to the Americans but not to take it to Parliament, where he thought his rivals would score political points against him and put him in a difficult position vis-à-vis Iran as well…I think as these issues were being discussed, the numbers were coming down of how many troops we would really keep in Iraq. And based on my conversation with some Iraqis, they came to a view that for this few a number, should the prime minister pay the political price of going to Parliament to fight it out, and that we weren't really working very hard to help him in getting support from the other political forces.[1864]

Therefore, speaking to Caslen's accusations, it remains uncertain if Obama's revised number was a deliberate attempt to sabotage the SOFA negotiations. Nevertheless, the idea that Maliki would not expend the necessary political capital for maintaining 3,500 troops has currency. Deputy Secretary of State William Burns visited Maliki in September and reinforced that parliament needed to approve the legal immunity for the 3,500 U.S. troops.[1865] Apparently, Maliki told Burns that this was impossible and stated: "that you don't understand my country".[1866] Therefore, when Iraq's parliament commenced after the Ramadan holiday in early September, negotiations over the SOFA faded.[1867] Consequently, on 1 October, Austin informed Panetta that Maliki could not find a way to overcome the anticipated political backlash if he pushed parliament to vote on extending the U.S. military presence in Iraq.[1868] Accordingly, he began ordering USF-I forces to start its plans to withdraw from Iraq while informing Caslen to establish the Office of Security Cooperation.[1869] On 21 October, Obama told Maliki that the U.S. troops would be reduced to zero at the end of 2011, and it was time to forge a new partnership with a sovereign Iraq.[1870] After his conversation with Maliki, Obama announced to

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[1862] Ibid.
[1863] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.550.
[1864] Sarah Childress, 'Zalmay Khalilzad: Maliki and the "Unmaking of Iraq"', *Frontline* [website], (29 July 2014), https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/zalmay-khalilzad-maliki-and-the-unmaking-of-iraq/, para. 124-125, accessed 16 May 2021.
[1865] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.670.
[1866] Ibid.
[1867] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.550.
[1868] Ibid.
[1869] Ibid.
[1870] Ibid. and Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.670.

the American public that “as promised, the rest of our troops in Iraq will come home by the end of the year…After nearly nine years, America's war in Iraq will be over”.[1871]

Regardless of the allegation implicit in the U.S. Army’s account, the collapse of the SOFA negotiations exemplifies the difficulties in Putnam’s two-level game. Although Obama wanted to maintain a residual force after the December 2011 withdrawal, he did not want to commit a large number of U.S. troops. A large troop presence would undermine his campaign promises of ending the war in Iraq and undermine his fiscal policies vis-a-vis the remnants of the Global Financial Crisis and the deficit-reduction bill. Hence, the proposed 3,500 force would mitigate these concerns. Furthermore, it was anticipated that Obama’s proposed 3,500 troops would satisfy Maliki’s preferences given the unpopularity of allowing a sizeable foreign troop presence in Iraq. However, this anticipation was a misperception. Although it is difficult to determine what U.S. troop level Maliki wanted, he did convey that he wanted to keep a substantial U.S. troop presence. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Biden believed Maliki needed to keep U.S. troops for his political survival and prevent Iraq from falling into Iran’s orbit. Additionally, former ambassador Chris Hill argued that “Maliki sees potential enemies surrounding Iraq and believes Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Syria, and Iran, seek to keep Iraqi fractured, weak, and divided…This is one reason he seeks tangible signs of a long-term security relationship with the United States”.[1872] Furthermore, the former Defence Minister, who was now Maliki’s advisor on defence, Abdel Qader Obeidi, consistently stated that ISF would require U.S. troops until 2018.[1873]

Despite wanting U.S. troops, Maliki probably comprehended that simultaneously gaining parliamentary approval for a SOFA and immunity for U.S. troops was impossible given the influence of the Sadrists in his government and Iran. Moreover, both Jeffrey and Khalilzad argued that if Maliki were to expend the political capital to keep this force, it would need to be worth it. Thus, 3,500 did not fulfil these expectations. In short, there was no apparent overlap of win-sets between the Obama administration and Maliki to extend the SOFA. Hence, there was no renewal of the agreement. The consequence of not extending the SOFA to maintain troops would profoundly undermine the administration’s objectives of a “stable, and self-reliant” Iraq.[1874] The administration was effectively dependent on Maliki to support its

[1871] ‘Barack Obama announces total withdrawal of US troops from Iraq’, *Guardian*, 22 Oct. 2011, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/oct/21/obama-us-troops-withdrawal-iraq, para. 4, accessed 14 July 2021.
[1872] Ibid. para. 9.
[1873] Gregg Carlstrom, ‘Leaving Iraq: Debating Obama's Withdrawal Timeline’, *World Politics Review* [website], 4 May 2010, https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/5490/leaving-iraq-debating-obamas-withdrawal-timeline, para. 6, accessed 15 July 2021.
[1874] ‘Obama’s Speech at Camp Lejeune, N.C.’, para. 14.

objectives. The power-sharing arrangement between Maliki and Iraqiyya, which was to steer Maliki to support U.S. objectives, was non-existent. Now U.S. troops, which would provide some form of influence over Maliki and be a bulwark against Iranian influence in Iraq, were leaving.

Withdrawal

After the collapse of the SOFA negotiations and Obama's announcement that U.S. forces would withdraw, political chaos descended on Iraq. Maliki effectively began to somewhat coup-proof his power as prime minister through destabilising activities. Consequently, the stability the administration sought with Maliki started to erode. In October 2011, Maliki undertook several measures which caused alarm in Washington. Maliki began replacing officers in Iraqi units partnered with the U.S. military.[1875] Additionally, Maliki's government arrested 600 people, mostly Sunnis.[1876] Maliki alleged that the arrests were dismantling a Ba'athist coup plot.[1877] Caslen attributed Maliki's actions to his fear and paranoia that he would no longer have the support of the U.S. military and would be vulnerable to his political enemies in Iraq. Caslen stated that this became even more prevalent after the Libyan dictator, Muammar Ghaddafi, was killed by rebel forces. Caslen recalled a meeting with Austin, Jeffrey, and Maliki. He narrated that, "all Maliki could talk about was that better not happen to me . . . there better not be a coup, or I will be dragged through the streets".[1878] Nonetheless, the consequences of Maliki's actions were dire. The USF-I stated that the arrests roused "the ire of Sunni officials and tribal sheikhs".[1879] In response to Maliki's crackdowns, the Sunni majority provincial councils in Salahadin, Ninewa, Diyala, and Anbar voted to become a federal-semi autonomous region based on the Kurdistan Regional Government.[1880] The move was intended to insulate the provinces from Maliki's consolidation of power in Baghdad.[1881] Maliki's inner circle responded to the councils' vote by preventing the Independent High Electoral Commission from engaging with the provincial councils.[1882] The commission was the entity that would supervise any referendum for autonomy.[1883] Thus, Maliki declared the councils'

[1875] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.551.
[1876] Sullivan, 'Maliki's Authoritarian Regime', p.32.
[1877] Andrew E. Kramer, 'Iraq Arrests More in Wake of Tip About Coup', *New York Times,* 31 Oct. 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/01/world/middleeast/iraq-arrests-more-in-wake-of-libyan-tip-about-coup.html, para. 1, accessed 28 July 2021.
[1878] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.551.
[1879] Ibid.
[1880] Waleed Ibrahim, 'Provincial autonomy risks sectarian rift in Iraq', *Reuters,* 24 Nov. 2011, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-politics-autonomy-idUSTRE7AN0NR20111124, accessed 30 July 2021 and 'Iraqi Shi'ite rally against autonomy push in Diyala', *Reuters*, 16 Dec. 2011, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-autonomy-diyala-idUSTRE7BE1F920111215, accessed 20 July. 2021.
[1881] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.551.
[1882] 'Iraq's Secular Opposition: The Rise and Decline of Al-Iraqiya', *International Crisis Group*, p.24.
[1883] Ibid.

vote as unconstitutional given that a region could only request semi-autonomy, not unilaterally declare it.[1884] Hence, he sent troops to Salahadin to quell protests and dispatched troops to arrest Diyala's provincial governor.[1885]

Maliki's visit to Washington DC

As the troop withdrawal was nearly complete, Maliki visited Washington DC on 12 December 2011 to mark the occasion. Maliki and Obama laid wreaths at Arlington National Cemetery for the troops killed in the Iraq war.[1886] Accordingly, they conducted a joint press conference to discuss the relationship moving forward.[1887] Obama welcomed Maliki as "the elected leader of a sovereign, self-reliant, and democratic Iraq".[1888] He further declared that "what we have now achieved is an Iraq that is self-governing, that is inclusive, and that has enormous potential".[1889] He further ventured into the claim that "the Prime Minister leads Iraq's most inclusive government yet…[and]…a model for others that are aspiring to create democracy in the region".[1890] Furthermore, Obama declared that "there should be no doubt, the drawdown in Iraq has allowed us to refocus our resources, achieve progress in Afghanistan, put al Qaeda on the path to defeat".[1891] Maliki echoed Obama's comments by triumphally claiming that "Iraq had a political process established, a democratic process, and adoption of the principles of elections and the transfer -- peaceful transfer of authority".[1892] He also reaffirmed the desire to maintain a long term strategic relationship with the United States. He stated that Iraq "remains in need of cooperation with the United States of America in security issues and information and combating terrorism, and in the area of training and the area of equipping, which is needed by the Iraqi army".[1893] Obama affirmed the relationship stating that, "our goal is to have a comprehensive relationship with Iraq".[1894] This would be "based on equal partnerships of

[1884] Ahmed Rasheed, 'Iraq PM criticises autonomy move by local province', *Reuters*, 31 Oct. 2011, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-politics-maliki-idUSTRE79S2JM20111029, para. 5, accessed 14 July 2021.
[1885] Michael Knights, 'Iraq's Political Crisis: Challenges for U.S. Policy', *Washington Institute for Near East Policy* [website], (21 Dec. 2011), https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/iraqs-political-crisis-challenges-us-policy, para. 5, accessed 17 July 2021.
[1886] Adam Brookes, 'Obama and Maliki lay wreaths at Arlington national cemetery', *BBC*, 12 Dec. 2011, https://www.bbc.com/news/av/business-16152064, accessed 23 July 2021.
[1887] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.569.
[1888] 'Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister al-Maliki of Iraq in a Joint Press Conference', *Office of the Press Secretary,* 12 Dec. 2011, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/12/12/remarks-president-obama-and-prime-minister-al-maliki-iraq-joint-press-co, para. 3, accessed 5 Aug. 2021
[1889] Ibid. para. 62.
[1890] Ibid. para. 4 and 6.
[1891] Ibid. para. 15.
[1892] Ibid. para. 21.
[1893] Ibid para. 24.
[1894] Ibid para. 65.

mutual interest and mutual respect".[1895] Yet, it would not entail "stationing American troops there or with U.S. bases in Iraq -- those days are over".[1896]

According to Gordon and Trainor, Obama and Maliki privately discussed the Syrian conflict and the prospect of Iranian influence in Iraq after the withdrawal.[1897] These two issues were inter-connected given that Iraq is positioned between Syria and Iran, the latter maintaining a strong stake in the conflict through supporting the Assad regime.[1898] Hence, there was concern that the Iranian regime would pursue its goals in Syria through Iraq.[1899] Nonetheless, Gordon and Trainor state that Maliki reassured Obama that Iran's influence would be limited. Maliki cited Iraq's September purchase of U.S. F-16 warplanes, which he said displeased the Iranian regime.[1900] Additionally, speaking implicitly to Iranian influence in the press conference, Maliki declared that "Iraq is following a policy, a foreign policy…[that]…does not allow the others to intervene in its own affairs".[1901] Regarding Syria, Obama attempted to convince Maliki to join the international efforts that called for the Syrian President, Bashar al-Assad, to step down from power.[1902] Yet, Maliki declined, stating that Iraq was neutral in the conflict, and he was concerned that chaos would spill into Iraq if the Assad regime fell.[1903] However, these differences, similar to Bush and Maliki's division over the Israel-Hezbollah conflict in 2006, did not cause alarm. In their press conference, Obama calmly stated,

> …there are tactical disagreements between Iraq and the United States at this point in how to deal with Syria, I have absolutely no doubt that these decisions are being made based on what Prime Minister Maliki believes is best for Iraq, not based on considerations of what Iran would like to see… And everything that we've seen in our interactions with Prime Minister Maliki and his government over the last several years would confirm that.[1904]

[1895] Ibid para. 3.
[1896] Ibid para. 14.
[1897] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.670.
[1898] Alireza Nader, 'Iran's Goals in Syria', *RAND Corporation* [website], (26 Jan. 2015), https://www.rand.org/blog/2015/01/irans-goals-in-syria.html, accessed 11 July 2021.
[1899] Nader Uskowi, 'The Evolving Iranian Strategy in Syria: A Looming Conflict with Israel', *Atlantic Council*, (Sep. 2018), https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/The_Evolving_Iranian_Strategy_in_Syria.pdf, pp.1-3, accessed 16 July 2021.
[1900] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.670 and Suadad al-Salhy, 'Iraq signs deal to buy 18 F-16 warplanes', *Reuters*, 27 Sep. 2011, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-warplanes-idUSTRE78P5KN20110926, accessed 7 July. 2021.
[1901] 'Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister al-Maliki of Iraq in a Joint Press Conference', *Office of the Press Secretary,* para. 22.
[1902] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* pp.673-674.
[1903] Ibid. p.673.
[1904] 'Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister al-Maliki of Iraq in a Joint Press Conference', *Office of the Press Secretary,* para. 41 and 43.

Unfortunately, media reporting did not indicate if Obama or Biden raised with Maliki the issue of the Irbil Agreement and improving relations with Iraqiyya. Yet, one can assume they did, to little avail. Nonetheless, the Obama administration used Maliki's visit to showcase that Obama had fulfilled his campaign promise of ending the war in Iraq.[1905] Moreover, it illustrated that Iraq was on a positive trajectory and would remain a key U.S. regional partner.[1906]

Targeting the Iraqiyya leadership

On 15 December, four days after Maliki's visit, Panetta and Austin presided over the ceremony to close Camp Victory, the leading U.S. base in Iraq.[1907] Interestingly, the front seat reserved for Maliki was empty; he did not attend.[1908] After the ceremony, Austin and the remaining elements of USF-I began to depart from Iraq.[1909] Hence, the new Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq (OSC-I) would be the only vehicle that the U.S. military could use to exercise in influence in Iraq. After the departure of the last U.S. troops on 17 December, political chaos ensued in Iraq. Maliki began targeting the Iraqiyya leadership. On the day Maliki was absent from the closing ceremony for Camp Victory, Maliki went to the Iraqi Parliament and called for the sacking of the Sunni Deputy Prime Minister, Saleh al-Mutlaq.[1910] Maliki's targeting of Mutlaq was prompted by Mutlaq's comments about Maliki in a CNN interview during Maliki's visit to Washington.[1911] Mutlaq told CNN that he "was shocked to hear U.S. President Barack Obama greet al-Maliki at the White House on Monday as the elected leader of a sovereign, self-reliant and democratic Iraq".[1912] Commenting on the troop withdrawal, Mutlaq stated,

> Washington is leaving Iraq "with a dictator" who has ignored a power-sharing agreement, kept control of the country's security forces and rounded up hundreds of people in recent weeks….America left Iraq with almost no infrastructure. The political process is going in a very wrong direction, going toward a dictatorship. . . . People are not going to accept that, and most likely they are going to ask for the division of the country. And this is going to be a disaster . . . There will be a day whereby the Americans will realize that they were deceived by al-Maliki . . . and they will regret that.[1913]

[1905] Ibid. para. 1-2.
[1906] Ibid. para. 13-17.
[1907] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.556.
[1908] Ibid.
[1909] Ibid.
[1910] Mohammed Tawfeeq and Arwa Damon 'Political turmoil flares in Iraq as U.S. pulls out', *CNN,* 18 Dec. 2011, https://edition.cnn.com/2011/12/17/world/meast/iraq-politics/index.html, para. 1, accessed 7 Aug. 2021.
[1911] Ibid. para. 2-3.
[1912] Arwa Damon and Mohammed Tawfeeq, 'Iraq's leader becoming a new 'dictator,' deputy warns', *CNN,* 13 Dec. 2011, https://edition.cnn.com/2011/12/13/world/meast/iraq-maliki/index.html, para. 2, accessed 3 Aug. 2021.
[1913] Ibid. para. 2-5.

Maliki's attack on the Iraqiyya leadership continued. On 20 December, Maliki ordered the arrest of Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi.[1914] Also, Maliki deployed security forces around several Sunni politicians' homes in the Green Zone.[1915] Most notably, this included Iraq's Finance Minister and former Deputy Prime Minister, Rafi al-Issawi.[1916] According to Sky, both Issawi and Mutlaq's house had tanks parked outside with its turret facing their residence.[1917] Hashimi's bodyguards were arrested, yet, Hashimi escaped to Irbil in Kurdistan, where he eventually fled to Turkey.[1918] Furthermore, on the same day, Maliki charged the Sunni governor of Diyala for holding its December vote to become a semi-autonomous region.[1919] He ordered security forces, with elements of Sadr's Promised Day Brigade and Badr, to take over the provincial government building.[1920] Accordingly, the governor, a member of Hashimi's Iraqi Islamic Party, and the majority of the provincial council fled to Kurdistan.[1921] Responding to Maliki's actions, Iraqiyya withdrew from Maliki's cabinet.[1922] Its remaining leadership, Allawi, Issawi and the parliamentary speaker, Osama al-Nujaifi, wrote an op-ed in *the New York Times*. They called for the "United States to protect the political process, [and] to prevent violations of the Constitution".[1923] Additionally, they wanted the Obama administration to force Maliki to give up control over ISF and compel him to implement the power-sharing agreement.[1924] The administration's goal of a "stable, and self-reliant" Iraq began to unravel immediately after the troop withdrawal.[1925]

[1914] 'Arrest warrant for Iraq Vice-President Tariq al-Hashemi', *BBC*, 20 Dec. 2011, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-16256830, accessed 8 Aug. 2021.
[1915] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.570.
[1916] Emma Sky, *The Unravelling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, (London: Atlantic Books, 2015), pp.347-348.
[1917] Ibid and Kenneth M. Pollack, 'Iraq Back on the Brink: Maliki's Sectarian Crisis of His Own Making', *Daily Beast* [website], (23 Dec. 2011), https://www.thedailybeast.com/iraq-back-on-the-brink-malikis-sectarian-crisis-of-his-own-making), para. 2, accessed 23 July 2021.
[1918] 'Iraq VP Tariq al-Hashemi sentenced to death', *BBC*, 9 Sep. 2012, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-19537301, para. 5, accessed 10 Aug. 2021.
[1919] Jack Healy, 'Clash Over Regional Power Spurs Iraq's Sectarian Rift', *New York Times*, 23 Dec. 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/24/world/middleeast/iraqi-sunnis-and-shiites-clash-over-regional-power.html, para. 1-2, accessed 15 Aug. 2021.
[1920] Liz Sly, 'Iraqi political crisis erupts as U.S. leaves', *Washington Post*, 18 Dec. 2011, A.10, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 28 July 2021.
[1921] Ibid.
[1922] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.571.
[1923] Ayad Allawi, Osama Al-Nujaifi and Rafe Al-Essawi, 'How to Save Iraq From Civil War', *New York Times,* 27 Dec. 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/28/opinion/how-to-save-iraq-from-civil-war.html, para. 7, accessed 26 July 2021.
[1924] Ibid. para. 12.
[1925] 'Obama's Speech at Camp Lejeune, N.C.' para. 14.

Post-Withdrawal

The withdrawal of U.S. forces in December 2011 increased the intensity of the mutual dependence in the U.S-Iraq relationship and limited the influence the Obama administration had over Maliki. The administration remained dependent on Maliki to support its stability objectives and prevent an increase in Iranian influence. Yet, it had limited ability to influence Maliki into compliance with its goals. The targeting of Iraqiyya's leadership vis-à-vis Hashimi and Mutlaq alarmed Washington.[1926] It represented a grave threat to the administration's stability objectives through the political inclusiveness of Iraq's Sunni population. Yet, the Hashimi affair was only the beginning of a series of tumultuous events. After the withdrawal of U.S. forces, Iraq was rocked by large-scale protests in response to Maliki's targeting of Iraqiyya. This prompted a heavy-handed response from Maliki, which further inflamed the protests and encouraged some Sunni tribal forces to revolt against the central government. Additionally, the underlying Sunni contempt for Maliki's government was exacerbated with the demise of the Sons of Iraq initiative. Furthermore, other U.S. objectives were compromised. Iran was able to substantially increase its influence in Iraq and over Maliki to support its objectives in the Syrian conflict. Also, rogue Shia militias re-surfaced and flourished in the post-withdrawal period. Consequently, in a year, all the objectives the United States had sought through its relationship with Maliki would falter. Given the demise of the power-sharing agreement and the absence of U.S. troops, there were few avenues to influence Maliki. It could not deter Maliki's behaviour that was fuelling the instability in Iraq or influence him to prevent the expansion of Iranian influence. The remaining U.S. Defense entity, the Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq, only had 157 Defence personnel and was hamstrung by Maliki's government. As a consequence, it could not do anything to stem Maliki's destabilising behaviour. Equally, the embassy appeared powerless. They were paralysed while watching the chaos unfold.

The Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq

The Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq (OSC-I), under the leadership of Lieutenant General Robert Caslen, was established as the primary U.S. military entity after the withdrawal. However, it broadly fell under the jurisdiction of the U.S. embassy in Iraq.[1927] The OSC-I's

[1926] 'Biden urges Iraq leaders to resolve sectarian disputes', *BBC*, 21 Dec. 2011, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-16279889, accessed 10 Aug. 2021.
[1927] Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report and SemiAnnual Report to the United States Congress* (2011), https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=685204, p.41, accessed 18 May 2021.

mission was to ambiguously protect the security gains since the Surge.[1928] It was to facilitate ISF training and assist them, where possible, in operations against insurgent groups and rogue Shia militias.[1929] The latter factor was intended to limit malign Iranian activities.[1930] Additionally, the office would facilitate the sale of U.S. military equipment to the ISF.[1931] Nevertheless, the OSC-I was simply overwhelmed by the prospects it faced after the withdrawal and the Hashimi affair.[1932] Caslen told the Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction that in November 2011, it had to re-evaluate all of its plans "in light of the withdrawal of U.S. troops" from the collapse of the SOFA negotiations.[1933] It only had 157 personnel, supplemented with 3,000 contractors, to carry the responsibilities of the former 40,000 troop presence.[1934] In addition to the limited personnel, Maliki's government frustrated its efforts. They delayed issuing visas for the incoming military personnel for the OSC-I and thousands of contractors who were to provide transportation for the OSC-I.[1935] These visas had to be granted by Maliki's office, exacerbating the delay.[1936] Additionally, the government prevented OSC-I from using 1,200 U.S. military vehicles left behind by the USF-I, stating they could not be registered with the government.[1937] Moreover, any new vehicles the OSC-I brought in had to be registered, which the government indicated could take nine months.[1938] It appeared that every move of the OSC-I was subjected to Iraqi law.[1939] Hence, the OSC-I's ability to intervene in the chaos that unfolded in Iraq was limited. Also, in contrast to the previous military presence, they were in no position to exert influence over Maliki.

[1928] Brennan Jr et al., *Ending the U.S. War in Iraq: The Final Transition, Operational Maneuver, and Disestablishment of United States Forces-Iraq*, p.166 and Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.571.
[1929] Kenneth Katzman and Carla E. Humud, 'Iraq: Politics, Governance, and Human Rights', *Congressional Research Service*, (9 Mar. 2016), https://sgp.fas.org/crs/mideast/RS21968.pdf, p.14, accessed 4 Aug. 2021.
[1930] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.571.
[1931] Michael S. Schmidt and Eric Schmitt, 'Weapons Sales to Iraq Move Ahead Despite U.S. Worries', *New York Times*, 28 Dec. 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/29/world/middleeast/us-military-sales-to-iraq-raise-concerns.html, para. 6, accessed 3 Aug. 2021.
[1932] Brennan Jr et al., *Ending the U.S. War in Iraq: The Final Transition, Operational Maneuver, and Disestablishment of United States Forces-Iraq*, p.170.
[1933] Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report and SemiAnnual Report to the United States Congress* (2012), https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Report_-_January_2012.pdf, p.48, accessed 14 July 2021.
[1934] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.571.
[1935] Ibid. p.572.
[1936] Brennan Jr et al., *Ending the U.S. War in Iraq: The Final Transition, Operational Maneuver, and Disestablishment of United States Forces-Iraq*, p.51.
[1937] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.571.
[1938] Ibid. p.573
[1939] Ibid.

Sunni Protests and the Sons of Iraq

2012 witnessed the collapse of the Bush and Obama administrations' longstanding goals of reconciliation and integration of the Sons of Iraq. As stated in the previous chapter, Obama and Biden did not hold high hopes for genuine political reconciliation. Yet, they comprehended that the alienation of the Sunni community and the failure to incorporate the Sons of Iraq could lead to instability. This transpired in 2012 with the continued attack on Iraqiyya's leadership and further alienation of the Sons of Iraq. After the Hashimi crisis, Iraqiyya maintained its boycott of Maliki's cabinet. The boycott risked the collapse of Maliki's government as it would make the government dysfunctional.[1940] Consequently, Maliki threatened to strip Allawi's ministers of their posts by appointing acting ministers loyal to him.[1941] This forced Allawi to end the boycott and return to cabinet in February 2012.[1942] Furthermore, Deputy Prime Minister Saleh al-Mutlaq apologised for his comments and negotiated a deal with Maliki to return to cabinet.[1943] According to Cordesman and Khazai, Maliki arranged for his return out of concern for the growing crisis with the Sunni community.[1944] Moreover, they claim that Mutlaq was becoming politically isolated and appeared less threatening to Maliki.[1945] Nevertheless, this reconciliation with Iraqiyya was brief. On 19 December 2012, Iraq's Special Forces surrounded the home of the Iraqiyya Finance Minister, Rafi al-Issawi, in the Green Zone. A Maliki spokesperson claimed that Issawi was being charged for supporting terrorism and maintaining connections to Sunni militant groups.[1946] As mentioned in the previous chapter, Maliki made the same allegation in the 2010 election dispute, which General Odierno firmly refuted. Nonetheless, Issawi was able to flee from Baghdad to the Sunni city of Ramadi in the Anbar province.[1947] However, the backlash from the Sunni community in response to the arrest was intense. Issawi was very popular amongst the Sunni community and came from the prominent Albu Issa tribe.[1948] Issawi found sanctuary in his tribe's territory and publicly

[1940] Anthony H. Cordesman and Sam Khazai, 'Iraq in Crisis', *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, May 2014, https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/140513_Cordesman_IraqInCrisis_Web.pdf, accessed 1 June 2021.p.103,
[1941] Ramzy Mardini, 'Iraq's Recurring Political Crisis', *Institute for the Study of War* [website], (16 Feb. 2012), https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iraqs-recurring-political-crisis, para. 20, accessed 5 July 2021.
[1942] Cordesman and Khazai, 'Iraq in Crisis', p.103 and Sullivan, 'Maliki's Authoritarian Regime', p.30.
[1943] Sullivan, 'Maliki's Authoritarian Regime', p.29 and Tim Arango, 'Iraq's Political Crisis Eases as Sunni Ministers Rejoin the Government', *New York Times,* 7 Feb. 2012, https://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/08/world/middleeast/crisis-in-iraq-lulls-as-sunni-ministers-return-to-cabinet.html, accessed 16 Aug. 2021.
[1944] Cordesman and Khazai, 'Iraq in Crisis', p.98.
[1945] Ibid.
[1946] 'Iraq Sunni protests in Anbar against Nouri al-Maliki', *BBC*, 28 Dec. 2012, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-20860647, para.11, accessed 30 June 2021.
[1947] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.583.
[1948] Carter Malkasian, *Illusions of Victory: The Anbar Awakening and the Rise of the Islamic State*, (U.S.A: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.169.

condemned Maliki as a dictator.[1949] Consequently, mass protests and demonstrations against Maliki's government occurred in Sunni regions. Tens of thousands protested in Sunni cities, including Ramadi, Tikrit, Fallujah, Mosul and Hawijah.[1950] By January 2013, every major Sunni city had a protest camp in its centre.[1951]

Maliki responded to these protests and deployed security forces to surround the protest camps.[1952] Moreover, Shia militias established checkpoints around the cities.[1953] Additionally, Maliki sent Saleh al-Mutlaq to begin mediation with the protesters.[1954] Yet, this did not succeed. Protesters threw stones at Mutlaq, and skirmishes between ISF and protesters transpired.[1955] Furthermore, in Fallujah, protesters threw rocks at the security forces who returned fire, killing nine protesters and injuring 60.[1956] Afterwards, Sunni gunmen attacked an army checkpoint and killed two soldiers.[1957] After this episode of violence, the Awakening Council chairman, Sheikh Ahmed Abu Risha, stated on behalf of the Sunni tribal leaders that the government had one week to deliver the soldiers responsible for the demonstrators' deaths.[1958] He threatened the Maliki government, stating that "if the government has not heeded our demand, we will launch jihad against army units and posts in Anbar".[1959] Nonetheless, sporadic violence continued to occur between the protesters and ISF. Notably, the black flags of the so-called Islamic State (IS),[1960] which emerged from al-Qaeda in Iraq[1961], were surfacing at the protests.[1962] The conflict between the Sunni protest movement and Maliki's government significantly escalated in April 2013. On 21 April, unknown gunmen

[1949] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.583.
[1950] 'Make or Break: Iraq's Sunnis and the State', *International Crisis Group*, (14 Aug. 2013), https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/make-or-break-iraq-s-sunnis-and-the-state.pdf, pp.1-2, accessed 15 July 2021.
[1951] Ibid.
[1952] Ibid. p.2
[1953] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.676.
[1954] Salma Abdelaziz, Yousuf Basil and Mohammed Lazim, 'Clashes erupt at Iraqi protest as sectarian tensions flare', *CNN*, 30 Dec. 2012, https://edition.cnn.com/2012/12/30/world/meast/iraq-protests/index.html, para. 1-4, accessed 17 July 2021.
[1955] Ibid.
[1956] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, pp.583-584.
[1957] Ibid.
[1958] Mohammed Tawfeeq and Chelsea J. Carter, 'Sunni sheikh to al-Maliki: Hand over soldiers behind shootings or "face losses"', *CNN*, 26 Jan. 2013, https://edition.cnn.com/2013/01/26/world/meast/iraq-protests/index.html, para. 3-4 accessed 19 July 2021.
[1959] Ahmed Maher, 'Iraq Sunnis threaten army attacks after protest deaths', *BBC*, 26 Jan. 2013, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-21206163, para. 7, accessed 17 July 2021.
[1960] Although the entity at this time was often referred in English as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the author has chosen to consistently use the most recent title, Islamic State (IS), to refer to the entity.
[1961] Naser Ghobadzdeh and Shahram Akbarzadeh, 'Sectarianism and the prevalence of "othering" in Islamic thought', *Third World Quarterly*, 36/4 (2015), pp.692-693.
[1962] Joel Rayburn, *Iraq after America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance*, (U.S.A: Hoover Institution, 2014), p.273; see footnote 1 in Michael Knights, 'The ISIL's Stand in the Ramadi-Falluja Corridor', *CTC SENTINEL*, 7/15(2014), https://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/CTCSentinel-Vol7Iss5.pdf, p.8 accessed 2 Aug. 2021; and 'Exploiting Disorder: al-Qaeda and the Islamic State', *International Crisis Group*, pp.17-19.

attacked a security checkpoint close to the largest protest camp in Hawijah near Kirkuk and killed Iraqi soldiers.[1963] The commander of the Iraqi forces demanded that the protesters turn over the gunmen.[1964] When this did not transpire, security forces raided the camp, which led to a breakout of gunfire between the security forces and protesters. It should be noted that there are strong claims that units that engaged in the firefight were deemed as Maliki's henchmen while other Iraqi army units helped protesters flee the violence.[1965] Nonetheless, the casualties included 40 civilians and 3 Iraqi soldiers and over 100 civilians wounded. [1966] Hours after the incident, a Sunni militant group, the Naqshbandi Army, overran Iraqi troops to take control of towns in southern Kirkuk.[1967] Furthermore, on 25 April, a large gunfight occurred in Mosul and left 41 people dead.[1968] Additionally, on 27 April, Sunni militants in Fallujah executed five ISF personnel.[1969] Finally, four bombings in Shia towns in April brought the month's death toll to 700.[1970] This was the highest amount of casualties since 2008.[1971]

Compounding the tensions between the Sunni community and Maliki's government was the demise of the Sons of Iraq initiative. The program was suffering the same issues since 2009. Maliki's government publicly set the objective of absorbing the remaining Sons of Iraq members and disbanding the project by the time U.S. forces left.[1972] However, the integration continued to be slow. In 2011 and 2012, there were still complaints that Sons of Iraq groups were not receiving their salary and were continually being harassed and arrested.[1973] Nonetheless, Ambassador Jeffrey testified on 1 February 2011 that no payment difficulties existed as of that time.[1974] Yet, in October and November 2011, there were more reports on

[1963] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.584.
[1964] Ibid.
[1965] Kirk Sowell, 'Maliki's Anbar Blunder', *Foreign Policy* [website], (15 Jan. 2014), https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/01/15/malikis-anbar-blunder/, para. 11, accessed 13 May 2021.
[1966] Priyanka Boghani, 'In Their Own Words: Sunnis on Their Treatment in Maliki's Iraq', *Frontline* [website], (28 Oct. 2014), https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/in-their-own-words-sunnis-on-their-treatment-in-malikis-iraq/, para. 34, accessed 17 July 2021.
[1967] 'Iraqi Sunni protest clashes in Hawija leave many dead', *BBC*, 23 April. 2013, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-22261422, para. 10, accessed 19 July 2021.
[1968] Sinan Salaheddin, 'Clashes kill 41 in northern Iraq city of Mosul', *Washington Post*, 25 Apr. 2013, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/clashes-kill-41-in-northern-iraq-city-of-mosul/2013/04/25/b403e7d4-adcc-11e2-98ef-d1072ed3cc27_story.html, accessed 2 Aug. 2021.
[1969] 'Iraq bans al-Jazeera and nine other TV channels over "sectarian bias"', *Guardian*, 29 Apr. 2013, https://www.theguardian.com/media/2013/apr/28/al-jazeera-banned-iraq-sectarian, para. 11, accessed 11 Aug. 2021.
[1970] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.585.
[1971] Ibid.
[1972] Lara Jakes, 'In Iraq, a debate about fighters', *Herald Tribune,* 17 Dec. 2010, https://www.heraldtribune.com/article/LK/20101217/News/605228565/SH, para. 1-4 accessed 9 Aug. 2021.
[1973] Kenneth Katzman, 'Iraq: Politics, Governance, and Human Rights', *Congressional Research Service*, (27 Dec. 2011), https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc84121/m1/1/high_res_d/RS21968_2011Dec27.pdf, pp.17-18, accessed 16 July 2021.
[1974] United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Iraq: The Challenging Transition to a Civilian Mission* (2007), https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/020111_Transcript_Iraq%20The%20Challenging%20Transition%20to%20A%20Civilian%20Mission.pdf, p.48, accessed 20 Aug. 2021.

delayed payments to Sons of Iraq units.[1975] Furthermore, in December 2011, only half of the 95,000 Sons of Iraq members were integrated into the security forces or civilian government jobs.[1976] Also, the U.S. Army's account echoed these allegations that salaries were unpaid and that Sons of Iraq members were not being integrated into ISF. The account states that the Interior Ministry was bypassing the Sons of Iraq when hiring new police in local Sunni provinces.[1977] The USF-I attempted to convince local police commanders to hire Sons of Iraq members as temporary contractors, but they were rebuffed. The USF-I attributed this to the "Shia dominance" within the Interior Ministry.[1978] Consequently, USF-I continued the approach identified in the previous chapter of trying to find other work for the Sons of Iraq. Yet the U.S. Army's account admitted that these were "unsuccessful".[1979]

Relations between the Sons of Iraq and the Maliki government continued to deteriorate. In 2011, there were multiple arrests against the Sons of Iraq.[1980] The arrest of the head of the Tribal Council of Shaykhs in Ninawa sparked massive protests from the tribes.[1981] Also, a prominent Sahwa member, Mulla Nazam al-Jibburi, who originally defected from al-Qaeda and was instrumental in building the Sons of Iraq, was assassinated by gunmen in Baghdad in 2012.[1982] Additionally, there were accusations against ISF in the Sunni region.[1983] Sons of Iraq groups alleged that al-Qaeda insurgents who were arrested bribed the security forces to be released.[1984] Moreover, they claimed that the security forces were extorting local businesses.[1985] Furthermore, in May 2011, Maliki's government proposed laws prohibiting tribes and tribal forces from carrying firearms.[1986] This law was part of the government's intention to disband the Sons of Iraq entity by the time U.S. forces departed.[1987] Yet, it was strongly rebuked by the Sunni tribes given the uncertainty of their future after the U.S. withdrawal. Unsurprisingly, weapon purchases in tribal areas rapidly increased as the December withdrawal date approached.[1988]

[1975] Katzman, 'Iraq: Politics, Governance, and Human Rights', p.18.
[1976] Ibid.
[1977] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.538.
[1978] Ibid.
[1979] Ibid.
[1980] Norman Cigar, *Al-Qaida, The Tribes, and the Government: Lessons and Prospects for Iraq's Unstable Triangle,* (Quantico: Marine Corps University Press, 2019), p.73.
[1981] Ibid.
[1982] Reidar Visser, 'The State of the Union and the Iraqi Enfant Terrible', *Iraq and Gulf Analysis* [website], (25 Jan. 2012), https://gulfanalysis.wordpress.com/2012/01/, para. 2, accessed 4 May 2021.
[1983] Cigar, *Al-Qaida, The Tribes, and the Government: Lessons and Prospects for Iraq's Unstable Triangle,* p.73.
[1984] Ibid.
[1985] Ibid.
[1986] Ibid.
[1987] 'Iraq disarms Sunni tribal militias', *Al-Jazeera*, 6 June 2010, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2010/6/6/iraq-disarms-sunni-tribal-militias, para. 1, accessed 26 July 2021.
[1988] Norman Cigar, *Al-Qaida, The Tribes, and the Government: Lessons and Prospects for Iraq's Unstable Triangle,* 78.
[1988] Ibid.

The government repression and the decline of Iraqiyya led to the final disenfranchisement of the Sons of Iraq group and the symbolic end of the Sahwa awakening. In an interview, a Sunni Imam declared that "we participated in the parliamentary elections and won, but we were unable to achieve our constitutional due and we are now calling for the establishment of a special zone, since we got nothing from the government except arrests and attacks".[1989] In May 2011, Sons of Iraq leaders called for the end of the Sahwa movement and told remaining fighters to leave their posts and let government forces fight al-Qaeda insurgents.[1990] One of the tribal Sheikhs declared, "let us see how powerful the security forces are against this [Al-Qaida] challenge without the support of the Sahwa".[1991] Furthermore, the conflict in Syria altered the dynamics of the Sunni tribes. According to Colonel Joel Rayburn, witnessing Syrian Sunnis fighting against a Shia-Alawi[1992] minority government supported by the Iranian regime spoke to their grievances.[1993] Additionally, the U.S. Army account alleges that they saw the Syrian conflict as an opportunity to "reverse their own fortunes…if Syria were to become a Sunni power".[1994] Consequently, Iraq's Sunni tribes provided support to the Syrian opposition against the Alawi-Shia Assad regime.[1995]

The isolation of the Sahwa awakening and Sunni protest movements laid the conditions for the successful invasion of the so-called Islamic State (IS). The final straw was the attempted arrest of another prominent Sunni politician, Ahmad al-Alwani, and Maliki's actions against the Ramadi protest camp in December 2013.[1996] The camp had consistently operated since it was established in 2012, yet, Maliki ordered ISF to shut down the camp.[1997] When the security forces entered the camp, a gunfight emerged, leaving 13 dead.[1998] Moreover, the camp was bulldozed.[1999] A few hours after the operation, over 40 Sunni lawmakers offered their resignations to the parliament's speaker.[2000] Also, Saleh al-Mutlaq called for all Sunnis in the

[1989] Ibid.
[1990] Ibid. pp.80-81.
[1991] Ibid. p.73.
[1992] The Assad regime is dominated by individuals from the same Alawite Islamic sect that Bashar al-Assad identifies with. This is broadly considered an extension of the Shia sect of Islam. For further information on the Alawite sect and the Alawi community in Syria see Fabrice Balanche, 'The Alawi Community and the Syria Crisis', *Middle East Institute* [website], (14 May 2015), https://www.mei.edu/publications/alawi-community-and-syria-crisis, accessed 6 Aug. 2021 and 'Syria's Alawites, a secretive and persecuted sect', *Reuters*, 1 Feb. 2012, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-alawites-sect-idUSTRE80U1HK20120131, accessed 19 Aug. 2021.
[1993] Rayburn, *Iraq after America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance*, p.231.
[1994] Phillip Smyth, 'From Karbala to Sayyida Zaynab: Iraqi Fighters in Syria's Shi'a Militias,' *CTC Sentinel*, 6/84 (2013), https://ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/CTCSentinel-Vol6Iss84.pdf, p.28, accessed 7 Aug. 2021.
[1995] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.580.
[1996] Katzman and Humud, 'Iraq: Politics, Governance, and Human Rights', p.24.
[1997] Kamal Namaa, 'Fighting erupts as Iraq police break up Sunni protest camp', *Reuters*, 30 Dec. 2013, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-violence-idUSBRE9BT0C620131230, para. 1-2, accessed 1 Aug. 2021.
[1998] Ibid.
[1999] Knights, 'The ISIL's Stand in the Ramadi-Falluja Corridor', p.8.
[2000] Kamal Namaa, 'Fighting erupts as Iraq police break up Sunni protest camp', *Reuters*, para. 12.

Iraqiyya bloc to resign immediately.[2001] Maliki, who appeared in crisis mode, withdrew ISF from areas of Sunni resistance such as Fallujah and Ramadi.[2002] Yet, consequently, pockets of IS and al-Qaeda in Iraq took over parts of these provinces and started to expand towards Anbar and Mosul.[2003] Maliki attempted to mediate the crisis by providing cash and weapons to the Anbar tribes to woo them and convince them to fight against IS and al-Qaeda.[2004] He also stated that tribal fighters would be offered permanent government positions.[2005] Additionally, he undertook amendments to provincial power laws that gave more authority to provincial councils.[2006] Yet, these initiatives were too late. Sporadic attacks against ISF continued in Sunni provinces.[2007] Furthermore, Sunni tribal fighters mobilised to fight the security forces.[2008] Several tribes formed the General Military Council for Iraqi Revolutionaries (GMCIR) and took over most of Anbar, Ramadi, and Fallujah.[2009] A Sunni politician declared to the *Washington Post* that, "we reject our sons being rentals… they are used like a disposal tissue, to wipe up the problems and then thrown away".[2010] Nonetheless, IS was able to recruit certain Sunni tribes through cash and coercion to join their organisation.[2011] It was only a few months after the establishment of the GMCIR that IS, with the support of some Sunni tribes, captured Mosul in June 2014.[2012] After Mosul, IS captured more territory and reached its peak territorial control of 41,000 squared miles in Iraq and Syria in 2014.[2013] The fall of Mosul and the expansion of IS in Iraq represented the total reversal of the limited gains of the Bush and Obama

[2001] Cordesman and Khazai, 'Iraq in Crisis', p.113.
[2002] Ibid. and Yasir Ghazi and Tim Arango, 'Al-Qaeda-Aligned Militants Threaten Key Iraqi Cities', *New York Times,* 2 Jan. 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/03/world/middleeast/Al-Qaeda-threatens-Iraqi-cities.html, para. 11, accessed 18 Aug. 2021
[2003] Cordesman and Khazai, 'Iraq in Crisis', p.113.
[2004] Loveday Morris, 'In Iraq, seeking a second awakening', *Washington Post,* 31 Jan. 2014, A. 12, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 25 June 2021.
[2005] Tim Arango and Kareem Fahim, 'Iraq Again Uses Sunni Tribesmen in Militant War', *New York Times*, 19 Jan 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/20/world/middleeast/iraq-again-uses-sunni-tribesmen-in-militant-war.html, para. 6, accessed 29 June 2021.
[2006] Reidar Visser, 'Provincial Powers Law Revisions, Elections Results for Anbar and Nineveh: Is Iraq Headed for Complete Disintegration?', *Iraq and Gulf Analysis* [website], (27 June 2013), https://gulfanalysis.wordpress.com/2013/06/27/provincial-powers-law-revisions-elections-results-for-anbar-and-nineveh-is-iraq-headed-for-complete-disintegration/, accessed 21 July 2021.
[2007] Namaa, 'Fighting erupts as Iraq police break up Sunni protest camp', *Reuters*, 30 Dec. 2013, accessed 1 Aug. 2021.
[2008] Knights, 'The ISIL's Stand in the Ramadi-Falluja Corridor', p.8.
[2009] Tallha Abdulrazaq and Gareth Stansfield, 'The Enemy Within: ISIS and the Conquest of Mosul', *The Middle East Journal,* 70/4 (2016), p.539.
[2010] Loveday Morris, 'In Iraq, seeking a second awakening'.
[2011] Knights, 'The ISIL's Stand in the Ramadi-Falluja Corridor', p.10. For a detailed account of ISIL's action in Iraq and ability to capitalise on Sunni tribal discontent, see Chapter VIII of Cordesman and Khazai, 'Iraq in Crisis', and Malkasian, *Illusions of Victory: The Anbar Awakening and the Rise of the Islamic State*, pp.170-185.
[2012] Abdulrazaq and Stansfield, 'The Enemy Within: ISIS and the Conquest of Mosul', p.539.
[2013] 'ISIS After the Caliphate', *Wilson Center* [website], (28 Nov. 2017), https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/isis-after-the-caliphate-0, para. 1, accessed 2 Aug. 2021 and Ned Parker et al., 'Special Report: How Mosul fell - An Iraqi general disputes Baghdad's story', *Reuters*, 14 Oct. 2014, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-gharawi-special-report-idUSKCN0I30Z820141014, para. 6, accessed 2 Aug. 2021.

administration. It was the complete collapse of its long-standing objectives. Additionally, it would see Maliki step down from power.[2014]

Shia Militias

After remaining dormant since the 2008 Charge of the Knights operations, rogue Shia militias re-surfaced after the U.S. withdrawal. Yet, as identified in the previous chapter, this resurgence was no longer a viable factor to examine Maliki's compliance. There was no concentrated effort from the Obama administration to confront these militias, given that there were no U.S. troops left in Iraq. However, there were several notable developments after 2011 that should be highlighted. After the new government's inauguration, Muqtada al-Sadr returned to Iraq in January 2011 and renewed his militia's attacks against remaining U.S. forces.[2015] Additionally, Kataib Hezbollah (KH), a militia established and trained by the Iranian Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), launched attacks on U.S. forces.[2016] In fact, on 6 June, KH, supplied with Iranian rockets, conducted an attack that killed five U.S. soldiers.[2017] According to Katzman, after the attack, the administration demanded the Iraqi government pressure Iran to cease supporting and coordinating these attacks.[2018] This proved somewhat successful as there was no significant attack launched against U.S. troops until an attack on OSC-I personnel in late 2012.[2019] Nevertheless, Katzman claims that in 2011 rogue Shia militias were a tool for the Iranian regime to ensure U.S. forces withdrew.[2020] Hence, militia attacks ceased after it became clear that there would be no remaining U.S. troops in Iraq after December 2011.[2021] There was no gain to risk provoking the United States through militia attacks if they were leaving the country.[2022] Nevertheless, after the withdrawal of U.S. forces, Maliki was able to successfully make an alliance with Asa'ib Ahl al-Haqq (AHH) to remove his dependence on the Sadrists.[2023] The alliance included dropping all charges against AHH in exchange for operating as a political party. Moreover, Maliki gave AHH's leader, Qais al-Khazali, permission

[2014] Parker et al.,'Special Report: How Mosul fell - An Iraqi general disputes Baghdad's story', *Reuters*, para. 6.
[2015] Cordesman and Khazai, 'Iraq in Crisis', p.153.
[2016] 'Mapping Militant Organizations: "Kata'ib Hezbollah", *Stanford University* [website], (Sep. 2020), https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/kataib-hezbollah#text_block_24071, accessed 26 July 2021.
[2017] Muhanad Mohammed, 'Five U.S. troops killed in Iraq attack', *Reuters*, 6 June 2011, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-violence-us-idUSTRE7551QG20110606, accessed 19 Aug. 2021.
[2018] Kenneth Katzman, 'Iraq: Politics, Governance, and Human Rights', *Congressional Research Service*, (17 Dec. 2013), https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/52cff0d64.pdf, p.21, accessed 5 Aug. 2021.
[2019] Ibid. p.22.
[2020] Ibid.
[2021] Ibid.
[2022] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, pp.555-557.
[2023] Ibid. p.557

to hold a victory rally on 1 January 2012 to celebrate the withdrawal of U.S. troops.[2024] Hours after the rally, a gunfight broke out between the Sadr's Promised Day Brigade and AHH.[2025]

Despite the continual efforts of the USF-I as well as those of the previous Bush administration to tackle the militia problem, their position remained entrenched after the December withdrawal. Furthermore, the militias expanded their position in Iraq's politics - prevalent still in 2022.[2026] However, militias were no longer an ideal factor to investigate Maliki's compliance after the December withdrawal. Given that there were no U.S. troops in Iraq, there was no feasible way for Maliki to confront these militias. Even if Maliki felt threatened by the influence of militias in Iraq, there was nothing that Maliki could do to degrade their presence. ISCI and the Sadrists, which oversaw Badr and the Promised Day Brigade, were in Maliki's government. Additionally, the militias had substantial monetary and material backing from the IRGC.[2027] A *Guardian* interview with a senior Iraqi official from Iraq's intelligence apparatus summed up the situation for Maliki. He stated that,

> The government has given them [militias] cover for their political and security life… [The Iraqi prime minister Nouri] al-Maliki is wary of them, but what can he do? His nature is that if he cannot deal with the issue he will turn his head away. He tried to set up a cell to monitor them in late 2010, but they found out and he was embarrassed. He paid them money and said sorry. They don't respect him now.[2028]

Iran's influence in Iraq

One of the most significant setbacks for the Obama administration was the influence of the Iranian regime in Iraq after the December withdrawal. According to Katzman, the Iranian leadership achieved one of its main priorities: the removal of U.S. troops in Iraq.[2029] Maliki had repeatedly assured the Obama administration that there would be limited Iranian influence after U.S. troops withdrew,[2030] but the Iranian leadership was able to increase its influence economically and politically. Iran's senior leadership viewed Iraq as an avenue to escape U.S. economic sanctions. By 2012, Iran's exports to Iraq reached USD 10 billion, while Iraqi exports to Iran paled in contrast due to Iran's deliberate tariffs on Iraqi exports to maintain a favourable

[2024] Rayburn, *Iraq after America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance*, p.12.
[2025] Ibid.
[2026] Shia militia's status and power increased after the establishment of the Popular Mobilisation Unit in response to the invasion of the so-called Islamic see Renad Mansour, 'Networks of power: The Popular Mobilization Forces and the state in Iraq', *Chatham House*, (Feb. 2021), https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/2021-02-25-networks-of-power-mansour.pdf, accessed 5 Aug. 2021.
[2027] Katzman, 'Iraq: Politics, Governance, and Human Rights', (2013), p.21
[2028] Martin Chulov, 'Controlled by Iran, the deadly militia recruiting Iraq's men to die in Syria', *Guardian*, 13 Mar. 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/12/iraq-battle-dead-valley-peace-syria, para. 21, accessed 26 July 2021.
[2029] Kenneth Katzman, 'Iraq: Politics, Governance, and Human Rights', (2013), p.28.
[2030] Ibid.

trade imbalance.[2031] Furthermore, the Iranian regime established an extensive economic network to avoid U.S. sanctions involving real estate investments, businesses, and banks in southern Iraq.[2032] Also, Iran consistently secured deals with Maliki's government to supply electricity and refined oil products to parts of Iraq and build large infrastructure projects.[2033] Although Iran's economic influence in Iraq had matured in 2011 before the U.S. troop withdrawal, its financial network significantly expanded after the U.S. departure.[2034]

The Iranian regime was able to expand its political influence in Iraq. Iran's senior leadership was presented with an opportunity to establish some influence over Maliki. In April 2012, Saleh al-Mutlaq, the Kurdish KDP[2035] leader Masoud Barzani, Allawi, Sadr, and the parliamentary speaker, Osama al-Nujaifi, gathered in Irbil. They produced a written demand that Maliki undo his recent consolidation of control over government agencies and consent to a two-term limit as prime minister.[2036] Furthermore, they threatened a no-confidence vote if Maliki did not implement the Irbil agreement.[2037] Maliki claimed that their demands were part of a foreign coup attempt.[2038] Yet, this temporary alliance against Maliki expanded to include ISCI. They presented the Kurdish President Jalal Talabani a list of 173 Iraqi parliamentarians who would support a no-confidence vote.[2039] However, this list fell into the hands of Maliki,[2040] who, with the help of the Iranian regime, began to attack and disrupt the opposition.[2041] According to Pollack and Wicken, the Iranian regime successfully pressured Sadr and Talabani to withdraw from the no-confidence vote.[2042] Without the support of Sadr, there was no prospect of a

[2031] Cordesman and Khazai, 'Iraq in Crisis', p.205 and Michael Eisenstadt, Michael Knights, and Ahmed Ali, 'Iran's Influence in Iraq: Countering Tehran's Whole-of-Government Approach', *Washington Institute for Near East Policy,* (Apr. 2011), https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/media/3364, p.12, accessed 10 Aug. 2021.
[2032] Eisenstadt, Knights and Ali, 'Iran's Influence in Iraq: Countering Tehran's Whole-of-Government Approach', p.12 and Tim Arango, 'Iran Dominates in Iraq After U.S. 'Handed the Country Over', *New York Times*, 15 July 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/15/world/middleeast/iran-iraq-iranian-power.html, accessed 15 Aug. 2021.
[2033] Mausner et al., 'The Outcome of Invasion: US and Iranian Strategic Competition in Iraq',pp.82-83.
[2034] Eisenstadt, Knights and Ali, 'Iran's Influence in Iraq: Countering Tehran's Whole-of-Government Approach', p.12 and Mausner et al., 'The Outcome of Invasion: US and Iranian Strategic Competition in Iraq', pp.82-85.
[2035] Kurdistan Democratic Party.
[2036] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.579.
[2037] Reidar Visser, 'Endgame for the Prime Minister?', *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* [website], (29 May 2012), https://carnegieendowment.org/2012/05/29/endgame-for-prime-minister/b0g1, para. 5, accessed 14 June 2021.
[2038] 'Déjà Vu All Over Again: Iraq's Escalating Political Crisis', *International Crisis Group*, 30 July 2012, https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/126-deja-vu-all-over-again-iraq-s-escalating-political-crisis.pdf, accessed 15 Aug. 2021.
[2039] Ibid. pp.7-8.
[2040] Ibid. p.9 and Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.579.
[2041] Andrew Parasiliti, 'Muqtada Al-Sadr Resurgent, Key to Maliki's Future', *Al-Monitor* [website], (11 May 2012), https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2012/al-monitor/muqtada-sadr-resurgent-key-to-wh.html?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter, accessed 4 Aug. 2021.
[2042] Kenneth M. Pollack, 'Iraqi Elections, Iranian Interests', *Brookings Institution* [website], (4 Apr. 2014), https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2014/04/04/iraqi-elections-iranian-interests/, para. 2, accessed 17 Aug. 2021 and Stephen Wicken, 'Sadr's Balancing Act on Maliki', *Institute* for the Study of War, (21 June 2012), https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Backgrounder_SadrsBalancingActonMaliki.pdf, accessed 16 Aug. 2021.

successful no-confidence vote.[2043] Iran's actions may have signalled to Maliki that it could protect him from his domestic opponents. Alternatively, it could have signalled that Tehran controlled Sadr and hence could determine Maliki's fate in government.[2044]

After dismantling the no-confidence vote, the Iranian regime received some benefits from Maliki on its priorities in Syria. Maliki withstood Obama's attempts to convince him to join U.S. led efforts to call for Assad to step down and transition power.[2045] Additionally, Maliki's government began tacitly providing the Assad regime with economic and military aid.[2046] Also, many militia members from AHH, KH and Badr began flowing from Iraq to Syria to fight for the Assad regime.[2047] Furthermore, to the displeasure of the Obama administration, Iran was able to use Iraq's airspace to fly resources, military aid and troops to Syria.[2048] Moreover, a week after Sadr withdrew from the no-confidence vote, Maliki's government released a senior Hezbollah member, Ali Musa Daqduq, from custody.[2049] Daqduq led the IRGC's training of its proxy Shia militia members in Iraq.[2050] Additionally, he confessed his involvement in the kidnapping and killings of five U.S. soldiers in Iraq in 2007.[2051] Daqduq was transferred from U.S. custody to Iraq after the December withdrawal.[2052] Hence, his release was an affront to the Obama administration.[2053] In sum, the Iranian regime was able to pursue its goals in Iraq at the expense of U.S. objectives.

The U.S. Response: Limited Influence

The regression of U.S. goals in Iraq prompts the need to discuss the U.S. response. Secondary sources suggest that the administration exhibited limited influence over Maliki. They could not dissuade him from his destabilising behaviour and supporting Iranian objectives in Syria. It wasn't until the fall of Mosul in 2014 that the administration decided that Maliki had to go. Nevertheless, after the withdrawal of U.S. combat forces, the Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq (OSC-I), the primary U.S. military entity, did not have the capability

[2043] Parasiliti, 'Muqtada Al-Sadr Resurgent, Key to Maliki's Future', *Al-Monitor*, para. 6 and 8, and Visser, 'Endgame for the Prime Minister?', para. 4.
[2044] Visser, 'Endgame for the Prime Minister?', *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, para. 7.
[2045] Cordesman and Khazai, 'Iraq in Crisis', *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, p.205.
[2046] Rayburn and Sobchak (eds*), The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal 2007-2011*, p.579.
[2047] Suadad al-Salhy, 'Iraqi Shi'ite militants fight for Syria's Assad', *Reuters*, 16 Oct. 2012, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-iraq-militias-idUSBRE89F0PX20121016, accessed 18 Aug. 2021.
[2048] Michael Gordon, 'Against U.S. Wishes, Iraq Releases Man Accused of Killing American Soldiers', *New York Times,* 12 Nov. 2012, https://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/17/world/middleeast/iraq-said-to-release-hezbollah-operative.html, para. 16, accessed 14 Aug. 2021.
[2049] Parasiliti, 'Muqtada Al-Sadr Resurgent, Key to Maliki's Future', *Al-Monitor*, para. 7.
[2050] Ibid.
[2051] Ibid.
[2052] Ibid.
[2053] Gordon, 'Against U.S. Wishes, Iraq Releases Man Accused of Killing American Soldiers', para. 16.

to deal with Maliki's destabilising activities. In 2013, the Special Inspector General for Special Plans and Operations reported that "the Departments of State and Defense disagreed on the OSC-I mission…[and] did not have sufficiently trained persons".[2054] Consequently, its role was to serve "as the [Department of Defense] DoD official in the Embassy and as the principal military advisor on defense and national security issues" for the head of the U.S. embassy.[2055] Hence, in contrast to previous strong interventions from former U.S. commanders, such as General Odierno and General Petraeus, the military presence was relatively passive and deferred to the U.S. embassy.[2056] Also, the U.S. embassy's response to Maliki's defiance was equally limited. Addressing the arrest of Hashimi, Ambassador Jeffrey stated that he attempted to persuade Maliki to retract the arrest warrant.[2057] Yet, he claimed that Maliki told him, "this is a one-off thing. We have evidence. The courts processed this. They issued the actions".[2058] Nonetheless, Jeffrey and former MNF-I[2059] commander, General David Petraeus, used back channels to help Hashimi flee to Kurdistan.[2060] Furthermore, according to Parker et al., "there was a lot of concern" from the embassy on the arrest warrant for the Finance Minister Rafi al-Issawi.[2061] An embassy official told Parker et al. that they attempted to stop Maliki from "inflaming sectarian tensions" and "prevented them from doing some things, but some things (we) haven't been able to".[2062] Regarding Iran's use of Iraq's airspace, a Republican report to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations alleged that "Ambassador Jeffrey did not condemn the Prime Minister, nor see any great gain in" encouraging Maliki to call for "an end to Assad".[2063]

Commentary on Maliki's visit to Washington in 2013 also suggests a passive response from the administration to Maliki's behaviour. Before Maliki's visit, Secretary of State John Kerry visited Iraq in March 2013. Kerry's trip centred on convincing Maliki to prohibit the Iranian

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[2054] Office of the Special Inspector General for Special Plans and Operations, *Assessment of the Office of Security Cooperation–Iraq Mission Capabilities* (2013), https://media.defense.gov/2013/Sep/18/2001713308/-1/-1/1/DODIG-2013-136.pdf, p.i, accessed 5 Aug. 2021.

[2055] Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report and SemiAnnual Report to the United States Congress* (2011), p.41.

[2056] Malkasian, *Illusions of Victory: The Anbar Awakening and the Rise of the Islamic State*, p.173.

[2057] Priyanka Boghani, 'James Jeffrey: Iraq Was a "Historic, Dramatic" Failure for Bush and Obama', *Frontline* [website], (29 July 2014), https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/james-jeffrey-iraq-was-a-historic-dramatic-failure-for-bush-and-obama/, para. 94, accessed 28 July 2021 and Kenneth M. Pollack, 'Iraq Back on the Brink: Maliki's Sectarian Crisis of His Own Making', *Daily Beast* [website], (23 Dec. 2011), https://www.thedailybeast.com/iraq-back-on-the-brink-malikis-sectarian-crisis-of-his-own-making, para. 7, accessed 23 July 2021.

[2058] Boghani, 'James Jeffrey: Iraq Was a "Historic, Dramatic" Failure for Bush and Obama', para. 94.

[2059] Multi-National Force Iraq

[2060] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.676.

[2061] Parker et al.,' Special Report: How Iraq's Maliki defined limits of U.S. power', para. 64.

[2062] Ibid. para. 61

[2063] United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Iraq Report: Political Fragmentation and Corruption Stymie Economic Growth and Political Progress* (2012), https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Trip%20report.pdf, p.5 accessed 5 Feb. 2021.

regime from using Iraq's airspace, which was "helping to sustain President Assad and his regime".[2064] Yet, these talks did not produce any change. U.S. officials admitted that only two Iranian planes were inspected flying back to Iran after it had unloaded its cargo in Syria.[2065] Nonetheless, Maliki visited Washington in October and November 2013 due to the renewed insurgency and instability in Iraq. He sought urgent military supplies and support to fight the growing al-Qaeda led tribal insurgency in Iraq.[2066] On his arrival, Maliki received substantial criticism from both Democratic and Republican lawmakers. Democrat Senator Carl Levin stated, "he's got a lot of work to do in terms of pulling together diverse elements of his country…He's not done a particularly good job of it".[2067] He further criticised Maliki for allowing "Iranian planes to supply Syria" via Iraqi airspace.[2068] Also, Republican Senator Bob Corker criticised Maliki by stating, "what he's done is create a situation where the population is more accepting of what Al Qaeda is doing there because of his lack of inclusiveness".[2069] Moreover, a bipartisan letter was sent to Obama that critiqued Maliki by stating that, "Maliki's mismanagement of Iraqi politics is contributing to the recent surge of violence. By too often pursuing a sectarian and authoritarian agenda, Prime Minister Maliki and his allies are disenfranchising Sunni Iraqis…[which]…is driving many Sunni Iraqis into the arms of Al-Qaeda".[2070] The senators urged Obama "to press him to formulate a comprehensive political and security strategy that can stabilise the country…[and]…address Iraq's serious problems of governance".[2071] Additionally, the letter advocated for Obama to "make clear to Prime Minister Maliki that the extent of Iran's malign influence in the Iraqi government is a serious problem for our bilateral relationship".[2072] In particular, Iran's use of "Iraqi airspace to transit military assistance in Syria to support the Assad and his forces".[2073]

[2064] Anne Gearan, 'Kerry asks Iraq to stop flow of Iranian arms into Syria', *Washington Post*, 25 Mar. 2013, A.12, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 23 July 2021 and Howard Lafranchi, 'John Kerry urges Iraq to inspect Iranian overflights to Syria', *Christian Science Monitor,* 25 Mar. 2013, https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Foreign-Policy/2013/0325/John-Kerry-urges-Iraq-to-inspect-Iranian-overflights-to-Syria, para. 8, accessed 26 July 2021.
[2065] Michael S. Schmidt and Tim Arango, 'In 'Spirited' Talks, Kerry Tells Iraq to Help Stop Arms Shipments to Syria', *New York Times*, 24 Mar. 2013, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/25/world/middleeast/baghdad-kerry-iraq-arms-shipments-to-syria.html, para. 11-13 accessed 6 Aug. 2021 and Scott Stearns, 'Kerry in Baghdad for Talks with Maliki on Iraq, Syria', *VOA News*, 24 Mar. 2013, https://www.voanews.com/a/kerry-iraq/1627497.html, para. 5, accessed 15 Aug. 2021.
[2066] Ahmed Rasheed, 'Iraq's Maliki to seek U.S. arms, role on Iran and Syria', *Reuters*, 30 Oct. 2013, https://www.reuters.com/article/iraq-usa-maliki-idCNL5N0IJ1E120131029, para. 1, accessed 27 July 2021.
[2067] Michael R. Gordon and Eric Schmitt,'Senators Warn Obama Before Iraq Leader's Visit', *New York Times*, 29 Oct. 2013, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/30/world/middleeast/senators-warn-obama-before-iraq-leaders-visit.html, para. 6, accessed 5 Aug. 2021
[2068] Ibid. para. 7
[2069] Ibid. para. 8
[2070] 'Senators' Letter to President Obama on Iraq', *New York Times,* 29 Oct. 2013, https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/10/30/world/middleeast/senators-letter-to-obama-on-iraq-violence.html, para. 4, accessed 4 Aug. 2021.
[2071] Ibid. para. 1 and 9.
[2072] Ibid. para. 6.
[2073] Ibid.

Maliki visited Congress and the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Senator McCain commented that, "frankly, he is not very happy about that letter…[yet]…(if) he expects this kind of assistance that he's asking for, then we need a strategy and we need to know exactly how that's going to be deployed, and we need to see some changes in Iraq".[2074] Moreover, Senator Corker stated that, "I don't think he seemed to internalize the concerns that we have about what's happening there. He didn't seem to digest that they are important to us, and I don't think it was a particularly healthy meeting".[2075] Furthermore, Maliki wrote an op-ed in the *New York Times* and gave a speech at the United States Institute for Peace calling for weapons and attributing the surge of violence in Iraq to al-Qaeda in Iraq and the Syrian conflict.[2076] He further declared that "Iraq has matured into a country with democratic institutions".[2077] Nevertheless, according to Cordesman and Khazai and Katzman, Maliki's discussion with Obama involved issues of military aid and weapons sales to counter the violence in Iraq resulting from the Syrian conflict.[2078] Moreover, it discussed counter-terrorism strategies while drawing Sunni tribes back to the government to fight al-Qaeda.[2079] Yet, their discussions would most likely have involved pressing Maliki to reach out to the Sunni tribal leaders and make political concessions to get Sunni politicians back into parliament.[2080] The latter point was important given that national elections were conducted in 2014. Hence, echoing the previous U.S. strategy, it was critical to get the Sunni population to participate in the electoral process. Finally, their meeting would undoubtedly have addressed Iran's use of Iraq's airspace.

The administration's public remarks after their meeting, however, were restrained. It presented the argument that the resurgence of al-Qaeda in Iraq was a consequence of the Syrian conflict without attributing any responsibility to Maliki's government.[2081] At the press conference after Obama and Maliki's meeting, Obama stated,

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[2074] Patricia Zengerle and Lesley Wroughton, 'UPDATE 1-Iraqi PM Maliki struggles to convince U.S. lawmakers to back more aid', *Reuters,* 31 Oct. 2013, https://www.reuters.com/article/iraq-usa-maliki/update-1-iraqi-pm-maliki-struggles-to-convince-u-s-lawmakers-to-back-more-aid-idINL1N0IK1UN20131030, para. 8, accessed 3 Aug. 2021.
[2075] Ibid. para. 14.
[2076] Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, 'Have Patience With Us', *New York Times,* 29 Oct. 2013, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/30/opinion/international/have-patience-with-us.html, para. 1-5, accessed 11 Aug. 2021 and Thomas Omestad, 'Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki Urges Greater U.S. Support', *United States Institute for Peace* [website], (31 Oct. 2013), https://www.usip.org/publications/2013/10/iraqi-prime-minister-maliki-urges-greater-us-support, accessed 14 Aug. 2021.
[2077] al-Maliki, 'Have Patience With Us', *New York Times,* 29 Oct. 2013, para. 13.
[2078] Cordesman and Khazai, 'Iraq in Crisis', p.276 and Katzman and Humud, 'Iraq: Politics, Governance, and Human Rights', p.6.
[2079] Cordesman and Khazai, 'Iraq in Crisis', p.278.
[2080] 'Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Maliki of Iraq after Bilateral Meeting', *Office of the Press Secretary,* 1 Nov. 2013, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/11/01/remarks-president-obama-and-prime-minister-maliki-iraq-after-bilateral-m, para. 9, accessed 3 June 2021.
[2081] Michael R. Gordon and Eric Schmitt, 'As Security Deteriorates at Home, Iraqi Leader Arrives in U.S. Seeking Aid', *New York Times,* 31 Oct. 2013, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/01/world/middleeast/iraqi-leader-on-fighting-terrorism.html, para. 6, accessed 4 Aug. 2021.

> …we appreciate Prime Minister Maliki's commitment to … ensuring a strong, prosperous, inclusive, and democratic Iraq…[and]…we were encouraged by the work that Prime Minister Maliki has done in the past to ensure that all people inside of Iraq—Sunni, Shia, and Kurd—feel that they have a voice in their government.[2082]

Additionally, a government spokesperson stated that the number of Iranian flights to Syria had decreased through an Iraqi inspection regime. They said that "right now, I don't think the inspection regime is airtight, but it is much better than what it was six months ago".[2083] However, Gordon and Trainor argue that the Iranian regime began to use Syrian aircraft as, unlike Iranian airlines, they weren't subjected to UN sanctions.[2084] Hence, they could transport military aid between Iran and Syria uninterrupted. They further claim this tactic was proposed by Iraq's Minister for Transport, Hadi al-Amiri, who, as of 2022, is the current leader of Badr and maintains a long-term relationship with the Iranian regime.[2085] Nevertheless, with the uptick of violence in Iraq stemming from the al-Qaeda led tribal insurgency; the Obama administration sent an array of Hellfire missiles and drones to ISF.[2086]

The U.S. response illustrated the limited influence it had over Maliki. This appeared to stem from three primary reasons. First, the administration's priority shifted towards the Syrian conflict. The White House's preoccupation with the deteriorating conditions in Syria, especially the Ghouta chemical weapon attack in August 2013, led to a diminished focus on Iraq and Maliki's actions.[2087] An embassy official told Parker et al. that Rafi al-Issawi's arrest warrant had "barely registered publicly in Washington, where the White House was focused on the worsening conflict in Syria".[2088] Also, the lack of public visits to Iraq, in contrast to the Bush administration, illustrate that Iraq was not the main priority for the Obama administration. John Kerry's visit in March 2013 was the first visit of a Secretary of State since 2009.[2089] Additionally,

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[2082] 'Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Maliki of Iraq after Bilateral Meeting', *Office of the Press Secretary,* para. 2 and 4.
[2083] Zengerle and Wroughton, 'UPDATE 1-Iraqi PM Maliki struggles to convince U.S. lawmakers to back more aid', para. 10-11.
[2084] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama,* p.678.
[2085] Ibid. and 'Iraqi pro-Iranian politician Amiri rejects election results as fabricated', *Reuters,* 12 Oct. 2021, https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iraqi-pro-iranian-politician-amiri-rejects-election-results-fabricated-tv-2021-10-12/, para. 1, accessed 15 Oct. 2021.
[2086] Michael R. Gordon and Eric Schmitt, 'U.S. Sends Arms to Aid Iraq Fight With Extremists', *New York Times,* 25 Dec. 2013, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/26/world/middleeast/us-sends-arms-to-aid-iraq-fight-with-extremists.html, para. 1, accessed 4 Aug. 2021.
[2087] Joby Warrick, 'More than 1,400 killed in Syrian chemical weapons attack, U.S. says', *Washington Post*, 31 Aug. 2013, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 19 Aug. 2021.
[2088] Parker et al., 'Special Report: How Iraq's Maliki defined limits of U.S. power', para. 64.
[2089] Michael S. Schmidt and Tim Arango, 'In "Spirited" Talks, Kerry Tells Iraq to Help Stop Arms Shipments to Syria', *New York Times*, 24 Mar. 2013, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/25/world/middleeast/baghdad-kerry-iraq-arms-shipments-to-syria.html, para. 4, accessed 6 Aug. 2021

Vice President Biden, the architect of the administration's Iraq policy, only visited Iraq three times during his tenure.[2090]

The second reason speaks to Moravcsik's domestic interest groups and Putnam's two-level game. There was an understanding in Washington that Maliki's destabilising actions and providing support to Iran's objectives in Syria were consequences of the political configuration – the Sadrists and Iran – in which he operated. Thus, according to this perception, although Maliki desired to maintain his partnership with the United States, his undesirable actions were a by-product of manoeuvring within the political constraints of Iran and the Shia bloc. A Republican report to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations observed that,

> American diplomats judge that Prime Minister Maliki is under competing political pressures yet is a master navigator of political winds. They feel he is competent in holding his own and backing down the Iranians when necessary, and he does this particularly by building and maintaining a visible strategic relationship with the United States and the West. When asked about Maliki's continued support for the Assad regime in Syria, for example, Ambassador Jeffrey did not condemn the Prime Minister, nor see any great gain in Maliki's calling for an end to Assad. It would make no difference to Assad's longevity and would only hurt what Maliki views is an essential relationship with Iran.[2091]

The third primary reason relates to Emerson's concept of mutual dependence. Given the administration's perception of Maliki and the Shia bloc, the administration was concerned that using tactics, such as coercion and the leveraging of economic and security support, to influence Maliki risked pushing him closer to the Shia bloc and, by extension, Iran. Hence, the Obama administration was dependent on keeping Maliki aligned to the United States instead of Iran. This dependence prevented the administration from undertaking pressure or coercive influence attempts to bring Maliki into compliance. Jeffrey outlined this thinking to the Republican report, which stated,

> Prime Minister Maliki is also accused of being a pawn of Iran, a charge U.S. Ambassador to Iraq James Jeffrey disputes. He sees Mr. Maliki as a master politician, a man who has friends in Tehran, but also one who wants a relationship with the U.S. and other Western powers. Such relationships provide Prime Minister Maliki with an alternative to Iranian influence, the Ambassador argues, and empower him to say no to his Iranian friends, particularly when it is not in Iraq's best interests.[2092]

[2090] James Franklin Jeffrey, 'Behind the U.S. Withdrawal From Iraq', *Wall Street Journal*, 3 Nov. 2014, A.15, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 23 July 2021.
[2091] United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Iraq Report: Political Fragmentation and Corruption Stymie Economic Growth and Political Progress* (2012), p.5.
[2092] Ibid. p.v.

Furthermore, Jeffrey demonstrates the notion that the United States had limited influence over Maliki. In an interview, he states,

> We couldn't say, We're going to stop our aid programs. We were giving them almost no aid, other than boutique programs, typically for democracy and rule of law. And they had plenty of money to purchase what they needed to develop their country at that point. So our leverage, if they didn't, quote, behave was very, very limited. And I was painfully aware of that…We didn't have those tools, we didn't have those threats, even if we wanted to make it. And, as I said, we had a world full of people who were acting pretty much like Prime Minister Maliki. So essentially, what we were urging was Washington to use whatever influence it could to narrow Maliki's options and to put him under as much pressure as possible.[2093]

Additionally, citing Iraq's purchases of Russian military helicopters and missiles in 2012, a U.S. official argued that "Iraq has needs, and it also has resources…We don't actually gain leverage over the Iraqis by withholding these systems. We tend to cede that leverage to our strategic competitors".[2094] Hence, the administration conceded that traditional methods of influence such as using military and economic aid to entice desired behaviour were not applicable. In short, it acknowledged that it had a limited ability to influence Maliki to dissuade him from his undesirable behaviour.

The fall of Maliki

Notwithstanding the empathetic view of the conflicting pressures on Malik, the fall of Mosul was the last straw for the administration. Akin to the Jaafari period, when violence escalated, the administration concluded that Maliki had to go.[2095] In contrast to positive rhetoric in November 2013, after the fall of Mosul, the administration publicly blamed Iraq's leader for the crisis. Obama stated at a press conference on 13 June 2014,

> Unfortunately, Iraq's leaders have been unable to overcome too often the mistrust and sectarian differences that have long been simmering there, and that's created vulnerabilities within the Iraqi government as well as their security forces…So this should be a wake-up call. Iraq's leaders have to demonstrate a willingness to make hard decisions and compromises on behalf of the Iraqi people in order to bring the country together.[2096]

[2093] Boghani, 'James Jeffrey: Iraq Was a "Historic, Dramatic" Failure for Bush and Obama', para. 71,72 and 101.
[2094] Loveday Morris and Ernesto Londono, 'Iraq's Maliki says he has asked for weapons from U.S., will also seek training for troops', *Washington Post*, 2 Jan. 2014, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 23 June 2021 and 'Russia to become Iraq's second-biggest arms supplier', *BBC*, 9 Oct. 2012, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-19881858, accessed 13 Aug. 2021.
[2095] Martin Chulov and Spencer Ackerman, 'How Nouri al-Maliki fell out of favour with the US, *Guardian,* 20 June 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/19/how-nouri-al-maliki-fell-out-favour-with-us-iraq, accessed 19 Aug. 2021.
[2096] 'Remarks on the Situation in Iraq and an Exchange With Reporters', *The American Presidency Project,* 13 June 2014, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-situation-iraq-and-exchange-with-reporters-2, para. 4-6, accessed 18 Aug. 2021.

Similar to the Jaafari period, the April 2014 national elections in Iraq were viewed as a chance to see the removal of Maliki. Surprisingly, his State of Law coalition won the most votes.[2097] However, most Sunni provinces under IS control did not participate.[2098] Nonetheless, Maliki's State of Law won 95 seats out of 163 to form a government.[2099] Iraqiyya had broken into three separate lists and no longer existed as a formidable coalition.[2100] Nevertheless, Maliki needed to engage with other parties, including the Sadrists, ISCI, Badr, and the Kurdish parties, to form government.[2101] Moreover, Maliki indicated his intention to remain as prime minister for a third term.[2102] Yet, this was unacceptable to the Obama administration. Also, Iraq's highest religious cleric, Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani, wrote a letter to Maliki indicating he should step down from power.[2103] For Obama, this was the ideal opportunity to see a transition from Maliki. The administration hoped a new leader could project a more conciliatory government towards Iraq's Sunni community.[2104] According to Lake, Obama instructed the new ambassador, Robert Beecroft, and Brett McGurk to find an alternative candidate for prime minister.[2105] At the same time, ironically, Iran's interest coincided with that of the United States. Iranian military officers in Iraq, coordinating the Shia militias fighting IS, and Iranian diplomats in Baghdad were also negotiating an alternative to Maliki.[2106] It is likely the Iranian regime accepted that Maliki could not remain as prime minister after the publicity surrounding al-Sistani's letter.[2107]

Between April and August 2014, the Shia bloc, consisting of Badr, ISCI, the Sadrists, Maliki's State of Law and AHH's new political party, gathered. They continued to negotiate a compromise for the prime minister with interference from both the United States and Iran.[2108]

[2097] 'Iraq elections: Maliki's State of Law "wins most seats"', *BBC,* 19 May 2014, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27474518, para. 2, accessed 28 July 2021.
[2098] Ibid. para. 15.
[2099] Ibid. para. 2.
[2100] Reidar Visser, 'Iraq's New Politics', *Foreign Affairs* [website], (28 Apr. 2014), https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2014-04-28/iraqs-new-politics, para. 3, accessed 5 Aug. 2021.
[2101] 'Iraq elections: Maliki's State of Law "wins most seats"', *BBC,* para. 18.
[2102] 'Iraq crisis: Maliki quits as PM to end deadlock', *BBC,* 15 Aug. 2014, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28798033, para. 10, accessed 4 Aug. 2021.
[2103] 'Iraqi Leader Maliki Loses Backing of Shiite Figure and Iran for New Term', *Dow Jones Institutional News,* 22 July 2014, available in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 25 July 2021.
[2104] Ibid.
[2105] Eli Lake, 'Exclusive: Inside Obama's Push for Regime Change in Iraq', *Daily Beast* [website], (11 Aug. 2014), https://www.thedailybeast.com/exclusive-inside-obamas-push-for-regime-change-in-iraq, para. 5, accessed 28 July 2021.
[2106] 'Iraqi Leader Maliki Loses Backing of Shiite Figure and Iran for New Term', *Dow Jones Institutional News* and Tim Arango, 'Maliki Agrees to Relinquish Power in Iraq', *New York Times*, 14 Aug. 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/15/world/middleeast/iraq-prime-minister-.html, accessed 2 Aug. 2021.
[2107] 'Iraqi Leader Maliki Loses Backing of Shiite Figure and Iran for New Term', *Dow Jones Institutional News,* and Pollack, 'Iraqi Elections, Iranian Interests'.
[2108] Mansour, 'Networks of power: The Popular Mobilization Forces and the state in Iraq', p.20; Anthony H. Cordesman, 'The Islamic State War: No Clear U.S. Strategy', *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, (10 Nov. 2014), https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/141110_Islamic_State_War_No_Clear_US_Strategy_1.pdf, p.6, accessed 6 Aug. 2021; 'Iraqi Parliament Approves New Government Led By Abadi', *NPR*, 8 Sep. 2014, https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-

By 11 August, the bloc accepted the candidate Haidar al-Abadi as prime minister.[2109] Abadi was from Maliki's Dawa party; hence it reflected the continuation of a Dawa member as the compromise candidate for prime minister. Dawa still did not have an armed military entity and paled in size to the Sadrists, ISCI and Badr.[2110] Hence, a Dawa prime minister would most likely be unable to undermine the interests of these bigger parties, notwithstanding Malik's Charge of the Knights with U.S. support. Additionally, given that rivalries existed between these bigger parties, none of their members could be proposed as prime minister without triggering a veto from the others.[2111] Furthermore, Abadi was acceptable to the Obama administration, with one official stating that "he's not our guy, but he is someone we can work with who is not the current guy... We think he will govern more inclusively and govern more with an eye with what is better for Iraq than the current situation".[2112]

After one last failed attempt to remain as prime minister,[2113] Maliki agreed to withdraw his bid for the premiership and announced that Abadi would be the new prime minister.[2114] Yet, Maliki would be given one of the three vice presidencies.[2115] Abadi immediately made many symbolic gestures to reverse specific trends under Maliki. In contrast to the conflict between Maliki and Saleh al-Mutlaq, Abadi deliberately sat next to the deputy prime ministers.[2116] Additionally, he ordered that the prime minister's portrait not be displayed in military buildings.[2117] Also, he abolished the Office of Commander in Chief.[2118] Furthermore, he allocated more ministries to

way/2014/09/08/346894792/iraqi-parliament-approves-new-government-led-by-abadi, accessed 7 Aug. 2021; and Kenneth Katzman, 'Iraq: Politics, Governance, and Human Rights', *Congressional Research Service*, (30 Jan. 2015), https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=762074, p.20, accessed 22 July 2021.

[2109] 'Iraq president asks Abadi to succeed PM Nouri Maliki', *BBC*, 11 Aug. 2014, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28739975, para. 1, accessed 13 Aug. 2021.

[2110] Borzou Daragahi, 'Iraqi PM walks tightrope in campaign to reform military', *Financial Times*, 6 Dec. 2014, https://www.ft.com/content/6418787c-7ba0-11e4-b6ab-00144feabdc0, para. 13, accessed 4 Aug. 2021.

[2111] See section 'Primary factors influencing relation-and coalition-building' in Erwin van Veen, Nick Grinstead & Floor El Kamouni-Janssen, 'A house divided Political relations and coalition-building between Iraq's Shi'a', *Clingendael Conflict Research Unit* [website], (Feb. 2017), https://www.clingendael.org/pub/2017/a_house_divided/, accessed 19 Aug. 2021 and Renad Mansour, 'Iraq After the Fall of ISIS: The Struggle for the State', *Chatham House,* (4 July 2017), https://www.chathamhouse.org/2017/07/iraq-after-fall-isis-struggle-state-0/3-state-building-iraq-after-isisthe-myth-monolithic, accessed 20 Aug. 2021.

[2112] Lake, 'Exclusive: Inside Obama's Push for Regime Change in Iraq', para. 10.

[2113] Maliki initially rejected Abadi's nomination stating it was unconstitutional and would present the case to Iraq's Constitutional Court. However, he eventually receded on this initiative. See Tim Arango, Alissa J. Rubin and Michael R. Gordon, 'Iraqis Nominate Maliki Successor, Causing Standoff', *New York Times*, 11 Aug. 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/12/world/middleeast/iraq.html, para. 1 accessed 7 Aug. 2021 and 'Iraq president asks Abadi to succeed PM Nouri Maliki', *BBC*, para. 2.

[2114] 'Iraq's al-Maliki gives up prime minister post to rival', *CBS News*, 14 Aug. 2014, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/iraqs-al-maliki-gives-up-prime-minister-post-to-rival-state-tv-reports/, para. 1-2, accessed 5 Aug. 2021.

[2115] Jomana Karadsheh, 'Iraqi lawmakers approve new government; al-Maliki becomes VP', *CNN*, 9 Sep. 2014, https://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/08/world/meast/iraq-government/index.html, para. 1, accessed 5 Aug. 2021.

[2116] Reidar Visser, 'The New Iraqi Prime Minister: A Change in Style or Substance?', *Middle East Institute* [website], (17 Sep. 2014), https://www.mei.edu/publications/new-iraqi-prime-minister-change-style-or-substance, para. 1, accessed 3 Aug. 2021.

[2117] Ibid. para. 2

[2118] Katzman, 'Iraq: Politics, Governance, and Human Rights', (2015), p.21.

Sunni leaders and appointed a prominent Sunni politician, Khaled al-Obeidi, to minister for Defence.[2119] Hence, he was already fulfilling the Obama administration's primary objectives vis-à-vis sharing power and Sunni inclusion.

Conclusion

The IS invasion epitomised the failure of the administration's gamble on Maliki after the disputed 2010 election. It thought that Maliki would support its goals vis-à-vis stability and extending the SOFA. Moreover, it believed the Irbil agreement and the National Council for Strategic Policies would limit Maliki's authoritarian and destabilising behaviour. Also, Iraqiyya's involvement in government would balance the Sadrist and Iranian influence. Nonetheless, as demonstrated using Putnam's two-level game, both Obama and Maliki's win-sets did not overlap to extend the SOFA. Keeping U.S. combat troops in Iraq was considered politically unfavourable for Obama and politically unacceptable for Maliki due to Iraq's domestic interest groups. Thus, U.S. combat troops left after the December 2011 withdrawal date. The U.S. withdrawal saw the collapse of its objectives amidst heightened instability as a result of Maliki's actions. Yet, with the departure of U.S. troops, the administration had limited avenues of influence in Iraq. This resulted from the administration's divided attention, split between competing priorities, including the Syrian conflict and the other uprisings from the Arab Spring. Only after the IS invasion did the administration's priority return to Iraq, and it was able to exercise some influence to remove Maliki from power. Nonetheless, it was too late. The administration's long-term objectives of stability and a self-reliant Iraq were degraded.

A further cause of limited influence speaks to Emerson's mutual dependence. After U.S. combat forces withdrew from Iraq, the Obama administration became more dependent on Maliki to achieve its objectives in Iraq. Also, it was dependent on keeping Maliki more aligned to the United States instead of the Shia bloc and Iran. This increased dependency limited the ability of the United States to influence Maliki to stop his destabilising behaviour. Confronted with Maliki's non-compliance, the Obama administration did not employ common statecraft tactics such as coercion through leveraging U.S. economic and security support. Echoing Moravcsik's theory, the administration continued to attribute Maliki's defiance to the Shia bloc. Moreover, it calculated that any attempts at coercion or leveraging U.S. support would push Maliki towards the Shia bloc and Iran at the expense of U.S. objectives. As Ambassador Jeffrey succinctly put it, "our leverage, if they didn't, quote, behave was very, very limited".[2120]

[2119] Muhamed H. Almaliky, 'Mending Iraq', *Foreign Affairs* [website], (16 Jan. 2015), https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2015-01-16/mending-iraq, para. 6, accessed 6 Aug. 2021.
[2120] Boghani, 'James Jeffrey: Iraq Was a "Historic, Dramatic" Failure for Bush and Obama', para. 71,72 and 101.

Therefore, the Obama administration was hamstrung in its response to Maliki. It was unable to influence Maliki to bring him into compliance. Consequently, it watched the unravelling of its strategic objectives.

"I am a friend of the United States, but not America's man in Iraq"-Nouri al-Maliki[2121]

Conclusion

This thesis sought to answer two questions. First, why did Nouri al-Maliki undermine U.S. objectives in Iraq? Second, why was the United States unable to influence Maliki to pursue its objectives? The latter question was pertinent given that the United States possessed a structural asymmetrical-power advantage in its relationship with Iraq. Yet, the United States struggled to translate this power into influence. Hence, the thesis explored the paradox of how two administrations continued to support Nouri al-Maliki, notwithstanding his mixed compliance that eventually saw U.S. objectives disintegrate in Iraq. Despite considerable literature on the U.S. experience in Iraq, which this thesis heavily drew on, this paradox has not been sufficiently analysed in existing literature. Furthermore, this thesis implemented a nuanced approach drawn from the Political Science and International Relations disciplines, as discussed in **Chapter I**, to study influence between states in circumstances of mutual dependence and multi-level bargaining. Informed by Richard Emerson's theoretical work and Andrew Moravcsik and Robert Putnam, the thesis argued that U.S. influence was limited for two primary reasons. The win-sets of Nouri al-Maliki were too small due to domestic interest groups, the Shia bloc. This prevented Maliki from supporting U.S. objectives. The second factor was that the United States was trapped in a mutual-dependent relationship through its dependence on Maliki to navigate these domestic interests groups to support its goals. By virtue of this dependency, the Bush and Obama administrations could not use its asymmetrical-power capabilities to influence Maliki to implement its desired policies when the contradictive interests of the Shia bloc limited Maliki's win-sets. Moreover, when Maliki defied the administration's wishes, as a result of his own preferences independent of the Shia bloc, the U.S. dependency on Maliki prevented it from influencing him to conform to its desired behaviour.

This paradox was also evident throughout Ibrahim al-Jaafari's tenure. However, Jaafari's tenure was only one year, while Maliki remained in power for eight years. This produced sufficient data to investigate Maliki's compliance and behaviour towards U.S. objectives as well as examine the U.S. response. The thesis established three salient research themes that spoke to the broader U.S. stability goals in Iraq, which required Maliki's cooperation and support. The first research theme was the role played by Shia militias. The second research

[2121] Borzou Daragahi, 'In private, al-Maliki criticizes U.S. policy', *Los Angeles Times*, 28 Oct. 2006, https://www.sfgate.com/news/article/In-private-al-Maliki-criticizes-U-S-policy-2548569.php, para. 5, accessed 19 Aug. 2021.

theme was political reconciliation vis-à-vis Sunni political inclusion and the Sons of Iraq. The third theme was the settlement of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). These three research themes predominantly remained consistent from the Jaafari government in 2005 until Maliki withdrew his final bid for prime minister in June 2014. In addition, the thesis acknowledged that other contextual factors, though less consistent, spoke to the stability goals as well. These included Maliki's consolidation of power and Iranian influence. Nonetheless, to analyse Maliki's behaviour, the research established the Shia bloc as the Independent Variable and Maliki's behaviour towards U.S. goals, defined by the three salient research themes, as the Dependent Variable. Maliki himself was treated as a Condition Variable, accounting for the non-compliance that emerged from within Maliki himself instead of the Shia bloc. This thesis, in short, sought to illuminate influence in one critical international relationship by investigating U.S. attempts to change Maliki's behaviour to suit its preferences. predilections

Pre-War Planning & The Occupation

The thesis demonstrated how the divided U.S. pre-war planning led to the eventual emergence of the Shia bloc and transformed the relationship from one of asymmetrical dependency to mutual dependency. This significantly curtailed U.S. influence in Iraq. **Chapter II** detailed the goals and pre-war planning of the Bush administration. It illustrated Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's intention to exercise U.S. influence via an interim authority. For the civilian defence leadership in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), the Iraqi National Congress (INC) – an array of exiled opposition parties – would form the bulk of this interim authority and the first elected government. The OSD planned to put the INC into power, using Iraq's existing state institutions and bureaucracy to govern immediately. The interim authority was intended to be self-reliant and pro-western, given that many of the exiled parties previously lived in Europe and the United States. Hence, it would be the vehicle to support U.S. objectives in Iraq. Nonetheless, the administration's goals and pre-war planning were not unanimously agreed on. Bush held grand plans to build a democratic government. This would require a long-term U.S. presence and commitment to Iraq. Rumsfeld did not share Bush's goal and continually planned for a quick handover to an interim authority and prompt withdrawal of U.S. troops. The division within the administration continued throughout the pre-war planning. Moreover, it added significant delays to the planning, which contributed to the disastrous outcome of the invasion.

Chapter II also detailed how Rumsfeld's plan to use the interim authority and immediately transfer power to the entity could not be implemented after the invasion. Iraq descended into

chaos, which entailed looting of Iraq's state ministries and institutions. Consequently, Bush's democratic goals replaced Rumsfeld's plan by virtue of Paul Bremmer and the CPA. Bremer attempted to fulfil Bush's vision with a long-term occupation and nation-building project. Yet, after the Bush administration saw dismal progress, it believed Bremer's CPA project would take too long to complete. Although Bremer attempted to fulfil Bush's vision, it appeared to be too much for Bush himself. As a result, Bremmer was instructed to wind up the CPA project and hand over power to a sovereign entity. This entity was the Iraqi Interim Authority, presided over by Iyad Allawi, which governed for six months until Iraq's first elections in 2005. Nonetheless, the CPA period represented the high point of U.S. influence in Iraq. Iraq was entirely reliant on U.S. economic, military, and humanitarian aid. Additionally, the interim authority leadership's future and status were dependent on U.S. preferences. This asymmetrical dependence of the U.S.-Iraq relationship in this period resembled a pattern of dominance where influence flowed in a unilateral direction. Furthermore, the interim authority's leader, Iyad Allawi, was pro-U.S. and supported the administration objectives in Iraq. However, Allawi's tenure was only six months. Notwithstanding the administration's hopes for Allawi to continue as prime minister after the 2005 election, the election saw the emergence of the Shia bloc, which soon became the main obstacle to U.S. influence.

The Shia bloc: Moravcsik and Putnam on Domestic Preferences

Chapter III detailed the emergence of the Independent Variable, the Shia bloc, and how it transformed the U.S.-Iraq relationship to one of mutual dependence. The Shia bloc, which consisted of the dominant Iraqi National Alliance,[2122] was essential to examine as it followed Andrew Moravcsik's and Robert Putnam's theoretical logic. Moravcsik argues domestic interests groups frequently pressure central decision-makers to "pursue policies consistent with their preferences".[2123] Accordingly, Putnam builds on Moravcsik by situating the influence of domestic interest groups as Level II of his two-level game.[2124] Putnam states that at this level, "the national level, domestic groups pursue their interests by pressuring the government to adopt favorable policies".[2125] Putnam argues that the national leader is impacted by this level, influencing its behaviour at Level I, the international level.

[2122] The alliance changed its name from the United Iraqi Alliance to the Iraqi National Alliance for the 2010 elections. The thesis used each name for the relevant time period.
[2123] Andrew Moravcsik, 'Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics', *International Organization*, 51/4 (1997), p.518.
[2124] Robert D. Putnam, 'Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of two-level games', *International Organization,* 42/3 (1998), pp.434-436.
[2125] Ibid.

The Shia bloc was an array of political parties mixed with various levels of internal competition, antipathy towards the United States and alliances with the Iranian regime. However, the thesis predominantly centred on the two dominant parties in the coalition, the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI)[2126] and the Sadrists. The Shia bloc became problematic for the United States as this political configuration influenced both Jaafari and Maliki's dealings with the Bush and Obama administrations. It influenced Nouri al-Maliki's non-compliance towards U.S. preferences and objectives. In particular, U.S. objectives towards Shia militias, political reconciliation, and the Status of Forces Agreement. Both Jaafari and Maliki were reluctant to support U.S. operations against Shia militias as two of the most prominent militias belong to ISCI and Muqtada al-Sadr. Hence, they often prevented these desired operations from occurring. Moreover, the bloc restricted Maliki from supporting the political reconciliation goals, most notably the integration of the Sons of Iraq into Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). Also, it frustrated the Status of Forces Agreement negotiations for both the Bush and Obama administrations.

Mutual Dependence and the Bush administration

The emergence of the Shia bloc transformed the relationship into one of mutual dependence. According to Emerson, this mutual dependence can prevent the stronger actor's asymmetrical capabilities from influencing the subordinate actor.[2127] Both Bush and Obama administrations struggled to influence Maliki when he was undermining U.S. objectives as a result of the pressure from the Shia bloc. Moreover, U.S. influence was equally limited when Maliki exhibited destabilising behaviour that was independent of the priorities of the Shia bloc. Maliki continued to show mixed compliance with U.S. objectives surrounding militias, Sunni political inclusion and consolidated power vis-à-vis the Office of Commander in Chief.

The thesis detailed the U.S. perception and its response to Maliki's mixed compliance. **Chapter IV** described how the Bush administration initially believed Maliki shared U.S. goals and would support its objectives. Hence, they hoped that Maliki would take a proactive stance against the Shia bloc. Although there were some positive indicators at the start of Maliki's tenure, he began exhibiting mixed compliance with U.S. objectives regarding Shia militias and political reconciliation. Maliki launched security operations to counter the surge of violence in Iraq. Yet, these primarily targeted Sunni insurgents and al-Qaeda. He did not target Shia militias conducting sectarian attacks and equally fuelling the civil war. Moreover, he prevented

[2126] Until May 2007 the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) was previous known as the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). The thesis used each name for the respected time-period.
[2127] Linda D. Molm, 'Power and Social Exchange', in Dean Tjosvold and Barbara Wisse (eds), *Power and Interdependence in Organisations*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.154-155.

coalition forces from going after Sadr's militia. Furthermore, militia infiltration of the ISF continued. Diplomatic reporting and intelligence assessments stated that Maliki "genuinely wants to reduce violence"[2128] and "is trying to stand up to the Shia hierarchy and force positive change".[2129] Yet, consequently, "Maliki's approach remains governed by his critical need to retain Shia support within the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA), particularly from the Sadrists".[2130] Hence, the Bush administration devised a new strategy intended to break the constraint that the Shia bloc had on Maliki – the Surge. It wanted Maliki to defy the interests of the Shia bloc by curtailing the power of the Shia militias that were contributing to the sectarian conflict while at the same time maintaining operations against the al-Qaeda led Sunni insurgency. Coinciding with the Surge, the Bush administration attempted to deflate the insurgency with the Sons of Iraq initiative, which required the support of Maliki's government to be successful.

Chapter V detailed the implementation of the Surge to break up the Shia bloc. Although the Surge significantly reduced violence, it did not achieve the Bush administration's objectives. Maliki, with U.S. support, launched the Charge of the Knights operation, which degraded Sadr's Mahdi Army. However, the police and army remained heavily infiltrated by militia members "affiliated with Badr or the Sadrists".[2131] Moreover, Sadr's political influence, albeit weakened, remained. Additionally, the administration's Surge strategy did not confront ISCI and its Badr militia but, instead, tacitly acknowledged congruent interests and thus supported them in the fight against Sadr's Mahdi Army. Consequently, the Shia bloc remained somewhat intact. This became evident in the 2008 SOFA negotiations where the bloc's presence restricted Maliki's win-set. Public demonstrations were organised by the Sadrists, and *fatwas* issued against the SOFA negotiations. Moreover, ISCI and the Sunni Tawafuq political bloc publicly opposed the agreement while privately supporting it. As a result, the Bush administration made several concessions to Maliki in the anticipation that he would secure parliamentary approval for the agreement.

Chapter V also demonstrated Maliki's pursuit of his own objectives that undermined those of the United States. These appeared to emerge from Maliki himself instead of the Shia bloc.

[2128] 'Iraq: Tackling Shia Militias' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 24 Jan. 2007, *The National Archives,* https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122912/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/233340/2007-01-24-jic-assessment-iraq-tackling-shia-militias.pdf, p.1, accessed 10 Feb. 2021.

[2129] Stephen J. Hadley, 'Text of U.S. Security Adviser's Iraq Memo', *New York Times*, 29 Nov. 2006, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/29/world/middleeast/29mtext.html, para. 5, accessed 3 Oct. 2020.

[2130] 'Iraq: Risk of Deepening Sectarian Division' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 15 Nov. 2006, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123123415/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/211333/2006-11-15-jic-assessment-iraq-risk-of-deepening-sectarian-division.pdf, p.3, accessed 1 Oct. 2020.

[2131] 'Iraqi Security Forces: Mixed Abilities' [assessment], Joint Intelligence Committee, 18 Dec. 2008, *The National Archives*, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122455/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/230805/2008-12-18-jic-assessment-iraqi-security-forces-mixed-abilities.pdf, pp.1-2, accessed 25 Feb. 2021.

Maliki attempted to make political alliances with the so-called special groups – militias that targeted U.S. forces – to reduce his dependence on ISCI and the Sadrists. His contradictive policy towards the Sadrists around the 2009 provincial election – the Charge of the Knights operation against the militia and courting of the political Movement – also served his agenda rather than the U.S. goal of breaking up the Shia bloc. Furthermore, he began consolidating power into his Office of Commander in Chief by taking control of the ISF. Also, Maliki exhibited mixed compliance with the administration's initiatives to promote political reconciliation. At times, Maliki acted as a roadblock to the Sons of Iraq program.

The Bush administration's response to Maliki's mixed compliance was muted. There were no direct influence attempts, such as threatening to leverage economic and military aid and making military support conditional on Maliki meeting specific benchmarks. This limited influence resulted from the mutual-dependent relationship the United States was in. The Bush administration remained dependent on Maliki to support its goals, most notably the SOFA, which required Maliki to navigate the competing interests of the Shia bloc. This dependence became pronounced given that there was no alternative to Maliki as prime minister. The administration could not afford to reset the political clock in Baghdad by withdrawing its support for Maliki. There was a risk that removing Maliki would create too much instability in the final year of the Bush administration. In addition, removal risked producing an unfriendly prime minister who would be less supportive of U.S. goals and more inclined to the Shia bloc. Therefore, the administration stuck with Maliki and remained locked in dependence on him as the only leader to support its goals. Despite 170,000 U.S. troops in Iraq throughout the Surge and the additional military and economic aid the United States provided, the administration could not influence Maliki's compliance with U.S. preferences.

The Obama Period

Chapter VI demonstrated how Maliki continued this mixed compliance with U.S. objectives throughout the Obama administration. However, the administration directly attributed this mixed compliance to a by-product of the Shia bloc. It assumed Maliki shared its goals but remained constrained by the bloc. This perception was reinforced with Maliki's decision to run his own State of Law coalition independently of the Shia bloc in the 2009 provincial and 2010 national elections. The Obama administration expected that the 2010 national elections would produce a more inclusive and nationalist government, the ideal precursor for the U.S. troop withdrawal in 2011. Nevertheless, Iyad Allawi's Iraqiyya won more votes than Maliki's State of Law coalition in the 2010 election. Moreover, Iraqiyya and the main Shia alliance indicated that if they entered a partnership with Maliki, he would not be their candidate for prime minister.

Maliki's refusal to accept this result put the Obama administration in a complex dilemma. It threatened its stability goals and risked delaying the withdrawal of U.S. troops and renegotiating the SOFA. Thus, the administration's strategy was to promote a power-sharing agreement between Maliki and Allawi with Maliki as prime minister. The decision to support Maliki as prime minister was contentious given his history of mixed compliance and the destabilising sectarian behaviour witnessed throughout the election dispute. Ultimately, the administration concluded that Maliki was the only candidate to deliver on the stability goals and would agree to maintain a U.S. military presence in Iraq by extending the SOFA. It calculated that he was dependent on U.S. support to remain as prime minister and prevent Iraq from falling into Iran's orbit after most U.S. troops withdrew from Iraq. Furthermore, the administration feared that if it did not support Maliki to retain his premiership, he would make a deal with the Shia bloc, undermining U.S. interests in Iraq – for example, excluding Allawi's Iraqiyya and thereby limiting Sunni representation in the new government. Nonetheless, Maliki did make an alliance with the Shia bloc that was brokered by the Iranian regime. Moreover, it was alleged that Maliki made concessions to Sadr in return for his support. This included not extending the SOFA, not permitting U.S. troops to remain after the December 2011 withdrawal deadline and allocating the Sadrists an array of cabinet positions in the new government.

After this Iranian brokered agreement became public, the administration doubled down on the power-sharing agreement. It needed Iraqiyya in an alliance with Maliki to counter the influence of the Shia bloc and ensure that there was substantial Sunni representation. However, it also needed a strategy to deal with the future anticipated mixed compliance from Maliki. The administration proposed the establishment of a National Council for Strategic Policies to limit Maliki's consolidation of power over the military and prevent his ability to authorise sectarian-motivated raids. Additionally, the defence minister would be an Iraqiyya member. However intended as a restraint on Maliki, this policy reaffirmed that, in Washington's calculus, there was no alternative to him. The administration would thus remain dependent on him to continue to navigate the domestic interest group, predominantly the Shia bloc, to support its objectives. However, the prospect was not promising given Iranian influence, as exemplified by the brokered agreement between Maliki and the Shia bloc.

Chapter VII illustrated how the administration's strategy to deal with the anticipated mixed compliance from Maliki began to disintegrate just before the U.S. troop withdrawal. Maliki began to isolate Iraqiyya and did not implement the key components of the power-sharing agreement. The defence ministry was not allocated to Iraqiyya and the National Strategic Policy Council was not established. Additionally, because the anticipated extension of the

SOFA did not transpire, there would be a complete withdrawal of U.S. combat troops. Consequently, the administration was effectively dependent on Maliki to support its stability objectives and counter Iranian influence in Iraq. After the U.S. troop withdrawal, these goals disintegrated. Maliki's targeting of the Iraqiyya leadership and failure to integrate the Sons of Iraq produced enormous consequences. It provoked protests from the Sunni populations and encouraged some Sunni tribes to take arms against the government. Consequently, this laid the foundations for the invasion of the so-called Islamic State. Additionally, Iran was able to expand its influence in Iraq and pursue its objectives in Syria via Iraq.

The Obama administration was unable to influence Maliki for three primary reasons. The first factor was the ongoing Syrian conflict in 2013 and 2014, which became the central focus of the administration and prevented meaningful engagement with Iraq. Second, the withdrawal of U.S. troops and the demise of the power-sharing agreement created the impression that the administration had limited ability to influence Maliki. Ambassador James Jeffrey hinted at this by stating that "our leverage, if they didn't, quote, behave was very, very limited".[2132] Furthermore, there was a concern that trying to coerce Maliki to be more supportive of U.S. objectives would most likely push him closer to Iran at the expense of U.S. goals and further cede "[U.S.] leverage to [its] strategic competitors".[2133] Jeffrey's admission epitomises the mutual dependency of the U.S.-Iraq relationship and highlights the limits of U.S.-asymmetrical capabilities. Only after the invasion of the so-called Islamic State did the administration's focus return to Iraq and led to the end of Nouri al-Maliki's rule.

[2132] Priyanka Boghani, 'James Jeffrey: Iraq Was a "Historic, Dramatic" Failure for Bush and Obama', *Frontline* [website], (29 July 2014), https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/james-jeffrey-iraq-was-a-historic-dramatic-failure-for-bush-and-obama/,para. 71 accessed 28 July 2021.

[2133] Loveday Morris and Ernesto Londono, 'Iraq's Maliki says he has asked for weapons from U.S., will also seek training for troops', *Washington Post*, 2 Jan. 2014, in ProQuest Central [online database], accessed 23 June 2021 and 'Russia to become Iraq's second-biggest arms supplier', *BBC*, 9 Oct. 2012, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-19881858, accessed 13 Aug. 2021

Thesis' Contribution

Power and Influence

This thesis has made several contributions. In particular, it has showcased the limitation of a state's asymmetrical-power capabilities from realising its goals. It has illustrated how a global super-power could not achieve its objectives in a country that it occupied. Despite a pronounced disparity of military and economic abilities between the United States and Iraq, both the Bush and Obama administrations could not influence Iraq's government. Often these material capabilities are viewed as a source of power for one actor to realise its goals by making another actor "do something that [they] would not otherwise do".[2134] Scholars, mainly in the Realist school of thought, have frequently shown how these forms of hard power can modify a state's preferences to conform to the wishes of another state.[2135] They have often exemplified the notion that Thucydides put forth: "the strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must".[2136] However, this thesis has demonstrated how mutual dependence can limit the effectiveness of these material power capabilities from translating into influence. Rather than assuming that power solely comes from these physical attributes, Emerson postulates that dependency's role in a relationship "provides the basis for power".[2137] For Emerson, mutual dependence implies "that each party is in a position, to some degree, to grant or deny, facilitate or hinder, the other's gratification".[2138] Accordingly, this mutual dependence balances an asymmetrical power-dependence relationship "which tend[s] to reduce power advantage[s]" of a stronger actor's material capabilities.[2139] Therefore, despite an actor's asymmetrical advantage in power capabilities, influence over a smaller or weaker actor is not guaranteed.

[2134] Robert A. Dahl, 'The Concept of Power', *Behaviour Science*, 2/3 (1957), p.203.
[2135] See for example John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001); Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, 3rd edn*., (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960); Jongryn Mo, 'Domestic Institutions and International Bargaining: The Role of Agent Veto in Two- level Games', *American Political Science Review*, 89 (1995), pp.914-924; and Robert Powell, *In the Shadow of Power: States and Strategies in International Politics*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).
[2136] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. and ed. Sir Richard Livingstone (London: Oxford University Press, 1960).
[2137] Molm, 'Power and Social Exchange', p.154.
[2138] Ibid.
[2139] Richard M. Emerson, 'Power-Dependence Relations', *American Sociological Review,* 27/1 (1962), p.34 and Molm, 'Power and Social Exchange', p.154.

Mutual Dependence

The conceptual use of mutual dependence is a novel way to examine influence in asymmetrical state relationships and the "big influence of small powers".[2140] This construct arises from Emerson's theory of Power-Dependence Relations. As discussed in Chapter I, the most common forms of analysing influence between states are the Patron-Client construct, the Bargaining model, Dependency theory and idiosyncratic accounts.[2141] These theories and models have assisted this thesis in guiding its theoretical and methodological approach. However, these constructs were limited in their application to the U.S.-Iraq relationship for several reasons. First, Dependency and Bargaining's theoretical propositions assume that a state's dependency frequently produces influence for the state it is dependent on. For example, State B's dependence on State A allows State A to influence State B. As mentioned, this did not transpire or produce the intended effects in the U.S-Iraq relationship. Thus, these theories would expect that the United States should have been able to exercise influence over Maliki as a result of Iraq's dependency. Hence, they do not account for mutual dependency. While the Patron-Client construct does consider the paradox of State B's dependence on State A not allowing State A to influence State B, it does not offer a consistent model to determine when this can occur. In contrast, Putnam points to the structuring of international interactions when domestic political realities impinge on negotiating capabilities, and Emerson outlines conditions when dependency can enable or restrict influence. Although Emerson's theory falls under the broader Social Exchange Theory, its contributions to this thesis' findings illustrate Baldwin's claim that theories from Social Exchange Theory can make "valuable contributions to understanding efficiency, power, reciprocity, foreign aid, dependency, institutions, and bargaining in international relations".[2142]

Applications to other case studies

Beyond the case of Iraq, this thesis points to the insights of power-dependence relations and two-level games as explanatory avenues for other asymmetrical relationships. The most relevant case study would be to reverse this thesis' topic and explore the relationship between Iran and the Shia bloc in Iraq. In particular, how Iran sought to realise its objectives in Iraq vis-

[2140] Jacob Bercovitch, 'Superpowers and Client States: Analysing Relations and Patterns of Influence', M. Efrat and J. Bercovitch (eds.), *Superpowers and Client States in the Middle East: The Imbalance of Influence*, (London: Routledge, 1991), p.4.

[2141] Alvin Z. Rubinstein, *Red Star on The Nile: The Soviet-Egyptian Influence Relationship since the June War*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977); Stephen M. Walt*, The Origins of Alliances*, (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1987); and see Chapter 'Relations, Alternatives, and Bargaining' in Robert Jervis, *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

[2142] David A. Baldwin, 'Exchange Theory and International Relations', *International Negotiation*, 3/2 (1998), p.147.

à-vis the Shia bloc in Maliki's governing coalition. Other additional case studies can include the U.S.-Afghanistan relationship, U.S.-Pakistan relationship, and the Russia-Syrian relationship appear to be ideal candidates to study influence and dependence. The first is widely recognised as another strategic defeat for the United States. For example, it is argued that there was a breakdown of relations between former president Hamid Karzai and the Bush and Obama administrations due to tensions between U.S. objectives and Karzai's "power balancing" of domestic interest groups.[2143] Yet, despite Afghanistan's dependence on the United States, both administrations struggled to overcome the influence of Afghan politics on Karzai's preferences towards U.S. objectives. Equally, this framework is applicable to the U.S.-Pakistan relationship. The latter has been a long-term recipient of U.S. aid despite its varying connections and support of the Taliban that has undermined U.S. interests in Afghanistan.[2144] Accordingly, the Russia-Syria relationship is worth noting given the asymmetrical-power capabilities that Russia enjoys and the dependency of the Syrian regime on Russia. Yet, noting these characteristics, it may be worth exploring the ability of Russia to influence the Assad regime when there are conflicting preferences. A pertinent example might be if Russian grand geostrategic ambitions are inconsistent with the Assad regime's regional interests.[2145]

Contribution to Literature

Although the general narrative of the U.S. experience in Iraq is well detailed, this thesis has helped fill in a lacuna in our understanding of the enterprise. There are numerous accounts that describe the pre-war planning, the civil war of 2005-2007, the Surge, the 2010 disputed election and withdrawal. This thesis heavily drew on these accounts but has generated new insight into these periods by exclusively focusing on the U.S.-Maliki relationship. This new research has detailed the U.S. perception and thinking on Maliki, his mixed compliance with U.S. objectives, and the U.S. attempts to develop mitigating strategies. Drawing on Moravcsik and Putnam, the thesis has zeroed in on Maliki's domestic constraints, which conditioned, to a very considerable extent, both his behaviour and the limitations of U.S. influence over him. Although a considerable amount of literature analyses the Shia bloc, it does not extensively

[2143] Ronald E. Neumann, 'Failed Relations between Hamid Karzai and the United States: What Can We Learn?', *United States Institute of Peace*, (May 2015), https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR373-Failed-Relations-between-Hamid-Karzai-and-the-United-States.pdf, accessed 18 Dec. 2021.
[2144] Moeed W. Yusuf, 'The U.S.-Pakistan Relationship and Finding an End State in Afghanistan', *Combating Terrorism Center,* 3/9 (2010), https://ctc.usma.edu/the-u-s-pakistan-relationship-and-finding-an-end-state-in-afghanistan/, accessed 5 Jan. 2022 and 'Pakistan helping Afghan Taliban – Nato', *BBC News*, 1 Feb. 2012, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-16821218, accessed 29 Dec. 2021.
[2145] Aron Lund, 'From Cold War to Civil War: 75 Years of Russian-Syrian Relations', UI Paper No. 7, (May 2019), https://www.ui.se/butiken/uis-publikationer/ui-paper/2019/from-cold-war-to-civil-war-75-years-of-russian-syrian-relations/, pp.47-48, accessed 18 Dec. 2021.

detail the Shia bloc's influence on Maliki's behaviour towards U.S. goals during the Bush and Obama administrations. Moreover, it does not reveal the U.S. perception of Maliki within this political landscape and its strategies to mitigate this political configuration. The thesis has produced this new research by drawing on an extensive amount of raw primary material such as intelligent assessments, memoranda, and diplomatic correspondence from both the United States and the United Kingdom. This material is underutilised in existing scholarly works.

The Shia Bloc

An additional benefit of this thesis is that it provides more understanding of the emergence of Shia militias and the dynamics of the Shia bloc. The emergence of the Shia bloc and the dominance of militias after 2005 was a new phenomenon that influenced the current trajectory of Iraqi politics. Although focused on a specific period in a particular relationship, the thesis' research on the Shia bloc points to further and broader work. For analysis on Iraq, given the recent dominance of Shia forces such as the Sadrists, Badr, and Asa'ib Ahl al-Haqq, the primary material covered could assist in contextualising the current political scene especially after the formation of the supposedly pan-sectarian Popular Mobilisation Units. As mentioned at the start of this thesis, the dynamics between the prime minister and political parties in Iraq, as demonstrated with Maliki, continue to permeate the Iraqi political scene. Moreover, many individuals from the Maliki period, including Muqtada al-Sadr, Qais al-Khazali, Hadi al-Amiri of Badr, still vie for political power in Iraq.[2146] Moreover, these domestic groups, and their connections to the Iranian regime, remain a source of frustration for the United States which remains in competition with the regime to limit Iranian influence in Iraq.

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