

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

حزب البعث العربي الاشتراكي

أمة عربية واحدة
ذات رسالة بالخالده

قطر العراق

مكتب أمانة ستر القطر

Boston University

Institute for Iraqi Studies



التاريخ ١٢ / ٥ / ١٩٩٩ م

سرى للمغايه

السى : مديوره الامن العام - مكتب المدير العام

الموضوع : زياره

IISBU Occasional Paper | No. 1 | June 2013

الصدر والتي عثر عليها في منطقه الشعله من قبل الجهاز الحزبي
الوارد الينا رفته كتاب قياده فرع موسى الكاظم المرقم ب/ ٢٧٢٩ في
١٩٩٩/٥/٤

للتفضل بالاطلاع مع التقدير

المرفقات

The Hawza Under Siege

A Study in the Ba'th Party Archive

٢ / نصوص زياره

Abbas Kadhim

الوفيق

٥

مديور عام مكتب اماده سوا القطر
١٩٩٩/٥/١٢

IISBU Occasional Paper | No. 1 | June 2013

The Hawza Under Siege

A Study in the Ba'th Party Archive

Abbas Kadhim

Boston University
Institute for Iraqi Studies



The Occasional Papers feature inter-disciplinary scholarship focusing on Iraq by leading and emerging scholars. All papers are refereed.

Series Editor: Professor Augustus Richard Norton

The Institute for Iraqi Studies at Boston University serves as a catalyst for research on contemporary Iraq. The Institute was founded in 2010 and periodically sponsors workshops, visiting fellowships, lectures, film series and conferences, in addition to the Occasional Papers.

The Institute for Iraqi Studies at Boston University

232 Bay State Road

Boston, Massachusetts 02215

Tel: +1 (617) 358-4648

Fax: +1 (617) 358-4650

<http://www.bu.edu/iis/>

Email: IraqBU@gmail.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Institute-for-Iraqi-Studies-at-Boston-University/353124494699062>

Twitter: [@IISBU](https://twitter.com/IISBU)

Google+: <https://plus.google.com/b/111085246710214157780/111085246710214157780/posts>

Cover photo courtesy of Mustafa Al-Kadhimi

The views expressed in this paper represent those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Institute for Iraqi Studies or the Trustees of Boston University.

Produced by IIS at Boston University

© 2013 Institute for Iraqi Studies

ISBN 978-0-9895097-3-2 (PDF)

ISBN 978-0-9895097-1-8 (Kindle)

 *Printed on recycled paper*

About the Author

Abbas Kadhim is a Senior Fellow at the Boston University Institute for Iraqi Studies. He is also a Visiting Scholar at Stanford University since 2005. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley in 2006.

His recent publications include: “Reclaiming Iraq: the 1920 Revolution and the Founding of the Modern State,” Austin: The University of Texas Press (2012); *Handbook of Governance in the Middle East and North Africa*, London: Routledge (2013); “Efforts at Cross-Ethic Cooperation: the 1920 Revolution and Iraqi Sectarian Identities,” *International Journal of Contemporary Iraq Studies*, vol. 4, issue 3, 2010; “Forging a Third Way: Sistani’s Marja’iyya between Quietism and Wilāyat al-Faqīh, in *Iraq, Democracy and the Future of the Muslim World*, edited by Ali Paya and John Esposito, Routledge, July 2010; “Beyond the Oil Curse,” *Iraq’s Wealthy State and Poor Society*,” in Bob Looney (ed.), *Handbook of Oil Politics*, London: Routledge, 2012; and “Opting for the Lesser Evil: US Foreign Policy Toward Iraq, 1958-2008,” in Bob Looney (ed.) *Handbook of US Middle East Relations*, London: Routledge, 2009.

His book translations include *Shi’a Sects (Firqat al-Shi’a): A Translation with an Introduction and Notes*, London: Islamic College for Advanced Studies Press (2007); *Wahhabism: A Critical Essay*, by Hamid Algar (Arabic Translation), Köln, Germany: Dar al-Jamal (2006); and *Runaway World: How Globalization is Reshaping our Lives*, by Anthony Giddens (Arabic Translation), with Dr. Hassan Nadhem, Beirut: (2003).

He is currently engaged in a long-term project documenting the 1991 Uprising in Iraq, and a research project examining the Ba’ath Party Archives hosted by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.



To the memory of my father-in-law, Nadhem Abed al-Isawi, and his two sons, Haider and Salih, whose lives were taken away by a Ba 'thist whim.

Salih was arrested in 1989 and executed a few weeks later, after his name was mentioned in the investigation of an Iraqi dissident group as a friend of one of the members. Haider, who participated bravely in the 1991 uprising, and was shot in the leg while engaging the regime's security forces in Kufa, was arrested with his father by the Republican Guards, weeks later. Their date of execution and place of burial remain unknown as of the writing of these lines.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments.....	8
Introduction.....	9
The Containment of Ayatullah Al-Khoei	16
The Regime and “the Vocal Hawza”	36
Conclusion	52
Appendices.....	57
Glossary	69
Bibliography	71

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is the first complete section of a larger project that is still in progress. Many friends and colleagues provided me with invaluable advice and assistance. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Richard Sousa, Senior Associate Director of the Hoover Institution's Archive, Stanford University, and his staff, who provided me with great help during my many months of research. I would like to acknowledge the special assistance from Ahmed Dhia and Haidar Hadi at the Iraqi Archive, for their exceptionally helpful effort and positive attitude. My friend, Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, Director of the Oral History Division of the Iraq Memory Foundation, was very helpful and generously supportive of my research.

I also owe special thanks my friends at the Al-Khoei Foundation in London (particularly, Hayder and Yousif al-Khoei), and the Center for Academic Shi'a Studies, for allowing me the opportunity to present my early findings to a distinguished audience during the two events the Foundation hosted in September 2012. Fouad Jabir Kadhem, the project coordinator and researcher at the Centre for Academic Shi'a Studies, spent exceptional effort in making the events academically rewarding. As'ad Turki, Secretary General of al-Sadrain Institution for Strategic Studies, provided me with valuable help and information, for which I am very thankful.

Professor Augustus Richard Norton took a special interest in the project and allowed me another excellent opportunity to make a presentation at the Boston University Institute for Iraqi Studies. He also offered his comments on an earlier version of the manuscript and helped my research by providing partial funding for the study and arranged for the publication of this study to become the first paper published by the Institute. In this effort, Professor Roger Owen of Harvard University and Professor Betty Anderson of Boston University provided invaluable comments on the content and structure of the manuscript. They deserve my deepest gratitude. My sincere thanks are due to Ann Fisher for her exemplary effort in copyediting the manuscript and making invaluable suggestions regarding terminology and style.

My lifelong friend and prominent academic, Hassan Nadhem, continued to offer his usual candid critique of everything I write and think about. And, finally, my family deserves special thanks for sacrificing the most as I continue to spend most of my time on research, writing, and travel.

INTRODUCTION

The Ba‘th Party archive was captured in various times and Iraqi locations. A significant part of this archive—about ten million documents of various levels of importance—is currently housed at Stanford University’s Hoover Institution, for a limited time according to an agreement between the Institution and the Iraqi Memory Foundation. While it is not perfectly clear as to who owns the documents, it is most reasonable to assume that the new government of Iraq has the best claim to ownership of everything that belonged to the old regime. Meanwhile, interested researchers are allowed access to these highly-important documents, which provide a unique view into the structure of the Ba‘th Party, its decision making processes, the scope of its power, and most importantly, its atrocious conduct throughout the decades of its rule.

Although the documents are not perfectly indexed and the search tools hardly provide easy access to the relevant materials, the small and overworked team in charge of making the documents accessible, is very helpful and is continuously trying new ways to improve the search tools that help researchers navigate the more than ten million documents in the collection. The good news is that, once you find a certain document of interest, all other directly-related documents are generally located in the same place. The documents in the collection represent different levels of importance, and some are not important at all (merely scratch papers, pages from textbooks, other written materials, the handwritten originals of officially generated documents, or duplicates of other documents). In many cases, more than one copy of a certain document exists in the archive, because of the wide circulation of each document to the relevant officials and offices. Often times, duplicate documents represent unique iterations, in a sense, because they carry various remarks and side notes, written by hand, every time an official received them or ordered an action to be taken on the basis of their content. Sometimes, these handwritten remarks on the margins are more important than the text of the documents themselves because they represent the orders given by high officials and a great deal of information that would not be found otherwise. They also reveal, in many cases, the involvement of certain officials whose names are not mentioned in the distribution list or the contents of the documents. This is true with Saddam’s involvement in many cases, as he read and left handwritten remarks on many documents, indicating that he was continuously updated on the progress of certain cases.

While most of the correspondence was typed or produced on the computer in recent years, almost all of the reports of Ba‘th Party members, the party internal studies, and minutes of party meetings are handwritten. As the protocol of Ba‘th Party communication dictates, the correspondence is well defined and painstakingly distributed to the many recipients in the hierarchy, no matter how

remotely relevant. In addition, the proper lateral levels of the organization's branches, receive copies of correspondence whenever necessary. The documents were highly classified as *sirri wa shakhsi* (secret and personal) or *sirri lil-ghayah wa shakhsi* (top secret and personal),¹ and each document clearly indicates the originating office, the addressee (a person or an office), the subject, the document number, and date. Each document carries the name, title, and signature of its sender. The documents also include a detailed list of all copied recipients. Most of the official memoranda were produced on a typewriter, with an attached original, handwritten copy of the same contents. A few documents of this type were sent in handwritten form, with the proper signatures and seals. The documents meticulously observe the protocol of greetings and ending phrases used by the Ba'th Party, such as beginning each letter with the phrase, "*tahiyyah rifaqiyyah*" (comradely greeting), and ending it with "*wa dumtum lil-nidhal*" (Live long for the [patriotic] struggle).

With an archive of this large size, I could only start the search by following my curiosity to see what was available on Najaf, my home town. There I found two batches of documents which were worthy of careful examination: one concerning Ayatullah al-Khoei (d. 1992) and the Shi'a religious schools in Najaf and Karbala, and another on the Friday Prayers led by Ayatullah Muhammad M. Sadiq al-Sadr (al-Sadr II, d. 1999) during 1998-1999. The archive team kindly brought to my attention a third batch of documents dealing with the cleansing of the marsh regions in southern Iraq in the 1980s, which is not part of this monograph. My main focus here will be on the relationship between the Ba'th Party and the religious resistance that was represented by the popular defiance to the regime's ban on certain Shi'a rituals. These include the commemoration of the annual events related to the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (d. 681 AD) and the involvement of the Hawza (the Shi'a seminary) in encouraging the popular participation, as well as the active role taken by the leader of the Hawza, Ayatullah al-Khoei, in the rituals in the 1980s.² Also representative of this defiance was the position of Ayatullah al-Sadr II between 1997 and 1999. During that politically critical time in Iraqi history, he reinstated the Friday Prayer in the Kufa Grand Mosque and, for the first time in Ba'thist Iraq, a weekly Shi'a prayer was attended by more than 10,000 worshippers to listen to sermons that were unfriendly to the regime, to say the least.

1. "Personal," in the Iraqi document classification system, means that the correspondence must be opened by the addressee personally. It is forbidden for secretaries, deputies, and any other office personnel to open any document classified as "personal."

2. For a definition and brief history of the Hawza, see Appendix I.

Although the documents cover two different periods with a decade between the date of the last document in al-Khoei's case and the first document in al-Sadr's case, these documents represent an established pattern of how the Ba'ath Party thought of, and acted toward, the Hawza and its figures and the religious figures who acted outside the Hawza establishment. Al-Sadr II was an independent Ayatullah who was not effectively part of the traditional Najaf Hawza. This monograph intends to show similarities in the language, the assessment of the threat, and the response by the Ba'ath Party in both cases, indicating that nothing has changed in two decades of Ba'athist rule as far as the Shi'a state relations were concerned.

Another aspect of this research is to shed light on the background of the Ba'athists involved in these cases. Whether at the local level, or, in certain settings, at the national level, most of the key Ba'athists who were affiliated with the effort to combat the Shi'a resistance, were party members who came from Shi'a families. Therefore, I make the argument that the regime's inclusion of Shi'a members in its advanced cadre should not be construed as a case of sectarian and demographic inclusiveness. Indeed, under the status quo ante, and up to 2003, Iraqi Shi'a were less disheartened when their fate brought them near most of the Sunni officials, despite the latter's callousness, than appearing before any of the regime's Shi'a henchmen.³ The Shi'a problems were not going to be solved by the regime's appointment of Shi'a torturers. They would have only done well under a regime that did not torture—then, and only then. It did not matter who was in charge of the political and administrative leadership.

The Documents Concerning Ayatullahs al-Khoei and al-Sadr II

This monograph consists of two case studies, based on two collections of documents in the captured Ba'ath Party archive. The first case study is based primarily on several months of archival research at the Hoover Institution. It also draws on other primary and secondary sources, including interviews and personal knowledge that I have acquired as an Iraqi living in Najaf during the years when these documents were generated. The documents include well-classified, and clearly cross-referenced, correspondence from the local Ba'ath Party to the highest level of party leadership including Saddam Hussein. As indicated in several documents, Saddam Hussein gave general directives about the handling of salient issues, addressed by the task force formed to decide the fate of Grand Ayatullah al-Khoei, and the Shi'a religious schools in Najaf and Karbala in the 1980s. The archive also include several important studies prepared by

3. Although this statement seems counterintuitive to non-Iraqis, it is based on my twenty-four years of experience of living under the Ba'athist rule in Iraq.

local Ba‘th Party branches and regional command offices, detailing the history of the Hawza, including highlights of Shi‘a beliefs and practices, prominent religious scholars throughout the past centuries, and the financial and organizational affairs of the Hawza. The studies include standing challenges to the Ba‘th Party and the regime, the potential harmful developments of Shi‘a activities, and the inability of the local party branches to handle these increasingly rising challenges.

The documents I examined in this case study date back to the early 1980s and extend to sometime around late 1987. They involve the highest levels of the Ba‘th Party leadership. Most of the work was directly supervised by Saddam Hussein’s deputy, Izzet al-Duri, and important feedback was often given to him by Saddam Hussein personally or through proper means of communication. In this case, as in other high-profile cases, Saddam Hussein left many handwritten comments on the correspondence and on other paperwork, and passed formal instructions through his secretary.⁴

The work that was conducted at the pinnacle of the Ba‘thist leadership carefully examined the main questions about the fate of Grand Ayatullah al-Khoei’s continued residence in Iraq and, by extension, the continuation of the existence of the Hawza in the country. Alternatively, they explored the possibility of expelling him if it was determined that the Ba‘th could not control its inner working, or at least influence it to the point of rendering the institution harmless to the Ba‘thist ideology and plans for Iraq. Also prominent in the debates was the way to end dominance of “Persian” clerics and pave the way for an Arab element instead, as a measure to be considered before opting for the unpopular, confrontational actions of co-opting the entire Shi‘a religious education system into the state-controlled education or eliminating it altogether.

The archive includes a few studies associated with the effort that are stupefying—typical Ba‘thist plotting. The studies detail the complaints of Ba‘thists against the Grand Ayatullah in a way that challenges the conventional wisdom about al-Khoei’s relationship with the regime. The same goes for certain representatives of al-Khoei, whose names and activities were reported all the way up the Ba‘thist chain of command. There are also minutes of top Ba‘th Party command

4. When reviewing the documents, including the detailed and lengthy studies, I found many of them with extensive remarks, instructions, and other marks (such as underlining and question marks) written by Saddam himself, which indicates that he was personally following the progress of the committees to evaluate the perceived threat of the religious schools and the activities of Ayatullah al-Khoei and his network. His involvement, and the remarks he made, often directed the committee work and caused it to expand its scope and the depth of its investigations, as well as the following policies that were taken afterwards.

meetings (chaired by Izzat al-Duri) to consider several questions with existential consequences for the Hawza, in the midst of political events perhaps not seen since the last days of al-Shaykh al-Tusi in Baghdad nearly a millennium ago.

The second case study examines the frantic, internal correspondence among the various ranks of the Ba‘th Party about Ayatullah Muhammad M. Sadiq al-Sadr (al-Sadr II) and the Friday Prayer he was leading at the Grand Mosque of Kufa, as well as the correspondence between the Ba‘th organization and the other government institutions, particularly the Directorate of General Security. As in the previous case study, the research on al-Sadr II and the Friday Prayer is based on the captured Ba‘th Party Archive, as well as other primary and secondary sources. The documents include detailed, weekly correspondence from the local Ba‘th Party officials in Najaf, addressed to their superiors at the Middle Euphrates, who forwarded the weekly reports to the highest level of party leadership—including Saddam Hussein himself. The documents show that Saddam had already given his general directives about the handling of al-Sadr’s activities, which were referenced in several documents. The archive also includes an important study prepared by the Najaf Branch of the Ba‘th Party describing what the study calls “al-Sadr’s phenomenon.” The study includes a list of challenges to the local Ba‘th Party officials, the potential harmful developments of the “phenomenon,” and the inability of the local party branch to handle the increasingly rising threats. Finally, the study proposes a list of solutions, urging the top leadership to authorize their implementation in order to contain al-Sadr and his followers. From the volume of hierarchical and lateral correspondence about this study within the party organization, it seems that the Ba‘th Party was overwhelmed by the activities of Ayatullah al-Sadr and the rising numbers of his followers in many Iraqi provinces.

Research Plan and Method

For this research, I began examining the contents of these documents to shed light on the events that took place in the time when the documents were generated, and how the Ba‘th Party correspondence resulted in government policies that had significant impact of the state-society relations. It was very enlightening to see how a report written by a Ba‘th Party member in a remote town, perhaps to prove his active participation, often resulted in major discussions at the highest levels of party leadership, involving Saddam Hussein or his deputy, Izzat Al-Duri, and an individual, or a group of individuals, were jailed or killed, or a number of villages were erased as a result.

My examination of the documents involves several tasks: first, I obviously examine the text of each document and try to put it in the context of the historical narratives that are known to

us and reconstruct, in light of the document's content, the missing facts that were not revealed before. Second, I try to place each document in the context of the entire relevant dossier to see how the Ba'ath Party communicated important information among the various branches, how widespread the sharing of information was among various offices, and how fast the information was communicated. Finally, I examine the handwritten notes, the seals, and the signatures that were placed on the documents, which often provide important information on the involvement of certain personalities, and trace the movement of the document from one office to another and from one desk to another. In many cases, these additional marks on the documents represent a more important narrative than what is contained in the original text of the documents, depending on what they contain and who generated them.

Another examination of the documents involves the language of the Ba'athists and the norms of expression, as it was phrased by the senders and interpreted, or understood, by the target audience, who then acted upon the messages. Can we interpret these documents on the basis of their language and terminology, or should we take into consideration the actions that were based on them? For example, in the articulation of the views about the threat, the Ba'athist leadership was more focused on the Arab-Persian conflict than on the internal Iraqi (Sunni-Shi'a) disputes. But it is also true that hundreds of thousands of the Shi'a had been accused of being, or suspected to be, Iranian agents or sympathizers and they lost their lives for it. For those Shi'a, who were put to death, it did not matter what motivated the Ba'athist regime to execute them. They are just as dead.

In reviewing the documents, I pay special attention to whether they support or refute what has been written about the Ba'athist era in Iraq. Many analysts and scholars presented a series of narratives about the inner workings of the Ba'ath Party and the government in Iraq during this time, depending either on open sources or the unfolding events, but without the benefit of reviewing such highly-classified documents. Now that these documents are accessible, this monograph will seek to open the discussion as to the extent to which many previous accounts of Iraqi political and social history need to be revised.

In terms of organizing the study on the above-mentioned batches of documents, I opted for writing case studies examining the details of each dossier and how the Ba'ath Party and the government handled the perceived threat from the regime's diagnosis of the problem to the policies of implementing the solution, including a review of the personalities and institutions involved in the process, and the strategies used to implement the policies. Once the case studies were accomplished, I concluded the study by providing a conceptual framework for the nature

of the Ba‘th Party’s *modus operandi* concerning the perceived internal threats emanating from the Shi‘a opposition, whose spearhead was the clerical leadership.

Drawing on personal experience from living more than two decades in Ba‘thist Iraq, and building on my past research on relevant questions I have done, as well as the work of other scholars, I placed these documents in the general context of Iraqi history, and, in the meantime, used them to provide a context for certain accounts in the previous literature. While the research was still in progress, I took advantage of several opportunities to present partial results to various audiences in the U.S. and London, where I received considerable feedback and had helpful discussions before the preparation of the final narrative that captures the content of these documents.

THE CONTAINMENT OF AYATULLAH AL-KHOEI

The Shi'a Seminary in the Ba'ath Party Documents 1983-1988

At the height of the Iran-Iraq War, between 1983 and 1987, the highest echelons of the leadership of the Ba'ath Party of Iraq engaged in a comprehensive series of appraisals of the Shi'i seminary institution of Iraq, the Hawza, and in the position of its leading figure, Grand Ayatullah Abu'l-Qasim al-Khoei. Following the fall of the Ba'ath regime in 2003, and the subsequent transfer of a considerable portion of its internal archives to the United States over the following years, the details of these appraisals have most recently been made available to researchers. These disclosures present for the first time, the opportunity for the provision of critical insight into the internal workings of the Ba'athists, and their fears and motivations regarding the Shi'i clerical classes during the crisis hit years of 1980-1990.

A high-level task force, consisting of many Ba'ath Party country-command council members, was led by Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri, Saddam Hussein's own deputy, and with considerable feedback from Saddam himself, through the provision of handwritten notes and direct instructions. The appraisal sought to provide a strategic insight as to the tumultuous and often antagonistic relationship between the two major centers of authority in Iraqi society: the Shi'i clerical leadership of Najaf, and the centralized Iraqi state, at the cusp of which stood the Ba'ath Party. Among the questions considered in the report were:

- Should Grand Ayatullah al-Khoei, and the Hawza itself, stay in Iraq or be expelled?
- Alternatively, could a pro-Ba'ath "Arab" replacement be prepared to take over the Hawza? If so who could lead it, and how?
- What steps might be followed to close the religious schools? Could they be incorporated into the official educational system and therefore come under the purview of the state?

The studies prepared by the leadership of the Ba'ath detail the considerable degree of antagonism and outright hostility manifested by the circles around Saddam toward the leadership of the Hawza of Najaf, including Ayatollah al-Khoei and his assorted representatives, whose roles and functions were discussed at the highest levels of the Ba'athist state.

In the past, analysts and historians of Iraq presented a series of narratives about the inner workings of the Ba'ath Party and the government in Iraq during this period of time, and evaluated the roles of some Iraqi political and social leaders, depending either on open-source materials or the unfolding events, but without the benefit of reviewing such highly-classified documents.

Now that these documents are accessible, this monograph will seek to open the discussion as to the extent to which many previous accounts of Iraqi political and social history need to be revised to account for these revelations.

In light of the content of these Ba‘th Party documents, this monograph attempts to revisit the following questions: Was Ayatullah Khomeini’s quietism a political philosophy or a matter of necessity? And concerning his relationship with the regime, was he cooperative, accommodating, or resistant? And, thirdly, was the Iraqi government’s onslaught on the Hawza, and by extension on the Iraqi Shi‘a? Or, was it an effort to create the foundation for an Arab nationalist version of Shi‘ism that enjoys no relations or sympathies with non-Arab Shi‘a entities, especially those of Persian origins?

The Content of the Archive

Although the Hawza was always in the eye of the Ba‘thist storm, the regime’s intensified focus on Ayatullah al-Khomeini and the religious schools in Karbala and Najaf came, somehow by accident, as a byproduct of the Ba‘thist phobia of Shi‘a annual, religious rituals and the large gatherings associated with them; a phobia of large gatherings shared by all Middle East dictators. The first warning we encounter about Ayatullah al-Khomeini came in a report prepared by a committee to study the commemoration of Imam Hussein’s martyrdom in ‘Ashura and Arba‘in.⁵ On 15 October 1983, the Ba‘th Party Organizational Committee (*al-Lajnah al-Tandhimiyya*), which was chaired by Izzat al-Duri, designated Ali Hassan al-Majid to evaluate the potential threats of the Shi‘a activities during ‘Ashura and Arba‘in.⁶ He was helped by the Director of General Security, Fadhil al-Barrak, Abdulkhaliq Abdulaziz, Director General of Police, Subhi Ali al-Khalaf, Khalid Abdulhamid Tabrah, Adnan Dawud Salman, and Fawzi Rashid Abdullah. The last four members represented the Ba‘th Party Regional Organizations of Baghdad, Central Iraq, the Euphrates and the South, respectively. After several meetings, the committee prepared a final report, which was presented to Izzat al-Duri, who forwarded it to Saddam Hussein on 20

5. ‘Ashura is the tenth day of Muharram, which is the day of Imam Hussein’s martyrdom in AD 681. The Arba‘in (lit. forty and fortieth) is the date marking the passage of forty days after ‘Ashura. The Shi‘a commemorate the latter date every year by visiting Imam Hussein’s shrine in Karbala, many of them arrive walking on foot for tens or hundreds of kilometers. It is believed that Imam Hussein’s family returned to Karbala on that day from Damascus, where they had been taken as captives, to visit the tomb for the first time.

6. Ali Hassan al-Majid was Saddam Hussein’s cousin and one of the cruelest members of the Ba‘th Party. He was internationally known as “Chemical Ali” for his leading involvement in using chemical weapons against the Kurds in the 1980s. After the collapse of the Iraqi regime in 2003, he was captured, tried, and executed by hanging in January 2010, after being found guilty of many crimes against humanity.

August 1984.⁷

The report begins with a description of what was considered “positive observations,” focusing mainly on the reduction of the scope of rituals and the decreasing number of participants, which was attributed to the deportation of tens of thousands to Iran in the previous years. The numbers were given as 120,000 participants in ‘Ashura—reported as half of the average for previous years—while the number of participants in the Arba‘in was 450,000, slightly higher than the previous year, an increase the report attributes to the occasion coinciding with the weekend holiday, Thursday and Friday.⁸ The report also highlighted the initiative of certain individuals who contributed the collection of money to the Iraq-Iran War effort, instead of spending it on the religious rituals (food and shelter for the pilgrims).

While it was listed as a positive phenomenon, the decrease in participation by clerics and students of religious schools carried a sharp reference to Ayatullah al-Khoei, whose “Iranian, Afghani, and Pakistani followers” were exceptions to the rule. This heavy participation of al-Khoei’s followers then became the meat of the report’s following section: the “negative observations.” Here the report presents “a number of phenomena, which must be followed in order to put in place the necessary measure to contain them.” We find in this section of the report twelve points about the activities of al-Khoei, his sons, and his followers to challenge the regime in Basra, al-Faw, al-Zubair, Baghdad, al-Hindiyya, Maysan, Samarra, al-Mishkhab, al-Hamza, and Kirkuk. Among such activities are:

The language he uses to speak to his sons is Farsi; his sons and followers coordinate with foreign visitors, especially Indians, Pakistanis, and Afghanis; his hard work to ensure the continuity and intensity of the occasion; the use of loudspeakers to recite *ta‘ziya* and the story of the Battle of Karbala (maqtal); his sons and followers practiced chest-beating and crying, giving legitimacy to these banned practices; the increase of his coordination with the Bahr al-‘Ulum family concerning their negative attitudes toward the Ba‘th Party and the [regime]; he toured the guest houses between Najaf and Karbala and distributed 50 Iraqi Dinars to each guesthouse, in addition to the distribution of rice, sugar and tea with a total amount of 15,000 Iraqi Dinars; passing instructions to the guest houses to

7. From the Central Bureau to the Presidential Office on 22 August 1984. Unless indicated otherwise, all documents referenced in this case study are found in the Ba‘th Party Archive, Ba‘th Regional Command Collection (BRCC), Box 023-4-7.

8. Ibid.

abstain from praising the regime, especially at the guesthouse of Bahr al-'Ulum family; al-Khoei's sons photographed the cooking at the guesthouse of the Azerbaijanis, where their father stayed, and they distributed his pictures.⁹

In the following section, we find the genesis of the regime's subsequent interest in the activities of al-Khoei. The committee recommended "the containment of al-Khoei's conduct" (*tahjim tasarrufat al-Khoei*), a phrase that became the heading for much of the relevant future correspondence. The word "containment" (*tahjim*) is a loaded word, in the context of the documents and the policies they describe. Among other things, it meant applying extreme pressure on al-Khoei and his representatives in the country, putting them under constant surveillance, the imprisonment and even the execution of some of al-Khoei's close associates, and policies to reduce the number of Hawza students, especially the foreigners. Each part of the Ba'th Party organization was informed of its role in this complex plan.

Other recommendations also became part of the Ba'th Party's plan of action in the following years, such as "the prohibition of teaching in Farsi in the religious schools, conducting an inventory of religious book holdings in government and private libraries to collect and destroy any books written in Farsi, and deporting all foreign students who came to study in Karbala and Najaf." Some of these recommendations did not take long to be implemented. We found a handwritten comment by Saddam Hussein from 30 August, 1984, indicating his approval of the recommendations, except for a few of them that he referred to the Ba'th Party Command Council (*al-Qiyadah al-Qutriyyah*) for further deliberation.¹⁰ Among such recommendations was the one concerning the deportation of foreign students in religious schools in Najaf and Karbala, which was discussed in the Command Council meeting on 27 October 1984 and it was decided to "deport the students who come illegally to study in Karbala and Najaf as well as the students who finished their studies." It was also decided to instruct "all companies in Iraq that employ foreign Shi'a workers, Indians, Pakistanis, and others, to forbid their employees from participating in the religious rituals, because they practice activities not related to Islam and harmful to the security of Iraq."¹¹ The Presidential Office passed the instructions ten days later to all ministries, scientific institutions, infrastructure companies, and all security and intelligence

9. Ibid.

10. Saddam's handwritten remarks were made on another copy of the report included in a memorandum from his Secretary for Party Affairs on 28 August 1984.

11. From the Central Bureau to the Presidential Office on 7 November 1984.

agencies.¹²

Similarly, a delegation from the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs and the Ba‘th Party told the representative of Ayatullah al-Khoei, Nasrullah al-Mustanbit, to ensure that Arabic is taught to foreign students to prepare them for studying the curriculum in Arabic in the future levels. Also, the delegation held a meeting with Hawza teachers, who were known for their use of Farsi as a primary language of teaching and speaking. They were informed of the ban on teaching or speaking in Farsi at all times and all levels of instruction at the Hawza. The teachers in question were Muhammad Taqi Al Radhi, Muhammad Ibrahim al-Kirbasi, and Muhammad Kalantar. Although they promised the delegation to comply with the orders, the ministry advised the party to have the Najaf Branch verify the promised compliance.¹³

The recommendation to “contain al-Khoei’s conduct” was one that Saddam approved for immediate action without further discussion. On 9 September 1984, the Presidential Office informed the Ministry of Interior and the Intelligence Agency about Saddam’s approval of the recommendations sent to him by Al-Majid’s committee and his instructions to “have the Ba‘th Party and security agencies to study the conduct of al-Khoei, his sons, and his deputies, in order to contain their conduct.”¹⁴ On 23 September, the Central Bureau (*Maktab Amanat Sirr al-Qutr*) instructed the regional organization of the South (Abdulghani Abdulghafour), the Center (Muhammad Hamza al-Zubaidi), the Euphrates (Mizban Khidhir Hadi), the North (Sa‘di Mahdi Salih), and Baghdad (Samir Muhammad Abdulwahhab al-Shaykhly) to “study the conduct of al-Khoei, his sons, and his deputies, in order to contain their conduct.”¹⁵ The regional organizations presented their studies to the Central Bureau between 25 October and 22 December 1984, and the reports were forwarded to Izzat al-Duri.¹⁶

Meanwhile, the Ba‘th Party Command Council (*al-Qiyadah al-Qutriyyah*) decided on 10 November 1984 to form a committee led by Izzat Ibrahim and a membership consisting of Hassan al-‘Amiri, Na‘im Haddad, Muhammad Hamza al-Zubaidi, Sa‘doun Hammadi, and Kamil

12. From the Presidential Office on 17 November 1984.

13. From the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs to the Presidential Office on 11 November 1984.

14. From the Presidential Office to the Ministry of Interior and the Intelligence Agency on 9 September 1984.

15. From the Central Bureau to the Regional Organizations on 23 September 1984.

16. From the Central Bureau to Izzat al-Duri on 17 January 1985. The earliest report was completed by the South Regional Organization on 25 October 1984, led by the Ba‘thist zealot, Abdulghani Abdulghafour, while other regional organizations took until December to present their reports.

Yasin Rashid “to prepare a study about the [non-Iraqi] Arab and other foreign students in the religious schools and the way they are accepted.”¹⁷ The committee was instructed to seek help from relevant government and Ba‘th Party officials, such as the Ministers of Interior, Culture, Awqaf and Religious Affairs, as well as the Directors of General Security and the Intelligence Agency, and the Governor of Najaf, Aziz Salih al-Nouman. On 12 December 1984, Izzat al-Duri delegated the preparation of the study to Mizban Khidhir Hadi.¹⁸ It is noteworthy that almost all of the principal participants in this effort were Shi‘a leaders in the Ba‘th Party—clear evidence that the presence of Shi‘a individuals, at the highest levels of the Ba‘thist leadership, provided no benefits for their community because their loyalty and service was first and foremost to the regime and its one powerful symbol, Saddam Hussein.

After a number of meetings to discuss the study, which was accomplished by Mizban Khidhir Hadi in January, the committee sent a forty-page memorandum to Saddam Hussein on 6 February 1985, which included the contents of the study along with a few remarks by Kamil Yasin Rashid, Director General of the Ba‘th Party Central Bureau and a member of the committee. Saddam Hussein marked a few lines.

The importance of this study warrants further discussion of its contents. The study consists of two major sections. In the first section, there is a general overview of the Hawza, its history, its curriculum, and suggestions for containing the Hawza and the related religious schools. The second section is titled, “Al-Khoei, his deputies and his followers,” which lists fifteen areas where the Ayatullah was engaged in “hostile acts against the Party and the Revolution.”¹⁹ Among the highlights in the first section is the statement that:

Persian, Shu‘ubiyya, and Jewish elements had destructive roles in our country that cost our people a great deal of suffering. The conditions of the [Iraq-Iran] War, the glorious Qadisiyyat Saddam, which we have been fighting for five years so far, have proven beyond any doubt the validity of our party’s methodical analyses and its objective diagnosis that Persian elements possess deep-rooted loyalty to Iran at all times, and this is a solid truth. Therefore, preparing a study on the Hawza and the religious schools and establishing its foundations on modern bases away from the pollutants of the past

17. From the Central Bureau to Izzat al-Duri on 11 November 1984.

18. From the Central Bureau to Mizban Khidhir Hadi on 12 December 1984.

19. From the Director General of the Central Bureau, Kamil Yasin Rashid, to the Secretary General of the Ba‘th Party, Saddam Hussein on 6 February 1985, p. 21.

is one of the most essential aspects of our journey of patriotic struggle, to pull out the poisonous roots and dead thorns from the soil of the homeland.²⁰

This emphasis on the Persian, anti-Arab, predominance in the Hawza during wartime was enough to capture the attention of Saddam Hussein and extract hostile instructions from him to impose more restrictions on the already highly-restricted Hawza. To make matters worse, the second section, devoted to al-Khoei's conduct, was presented as a case study of the general views on anti-Arab Iranian mujtahids and Hawza students. Here the study praised the decision to deport thousands of Iraqi and Iranian Shi'a to Iran, soon after Saddam's ascendance to the presidency, as a successful measure to curb the influence of "the fifth column for the Iranians." This measure was also credited for reducing the influence of the Hawza on the average Iraqis, in addition to "the irreligious and immoral conduct of al-Khoei's inner circle, his sons and his representatives, [which] isolated them from the masses."²¹ Nevertheless, the committee found many areas where al-Khoei was still able to show hostility to the regime. Among the types of conduct the study highlights are the following: al-Khoei, his sons, and his inner circle speak to each other in Farsi, which indicates a loyalty to the Persian race and the Persian Shu'ubiyya. The study also claims that al-Khoei gave preferential treatment and financial support to non-Arabs, especially Persians, in the Hawza positions. On the relationship with the regime, the committee accused al-Khoei and his associates of making relentless efforts to reject the dates set by the government for religious occasions and insisting on observing these occasions on different days, "just to oppose the government and its official decisions."²² Another note that must have struck a sensitive cord was the emphasis on al-Khoei's ambiguous position toward the Iraq-Iran War. Al-Khoei, according to the study, "did not make a declaration or give his opinion about this war, in spite of the apparent Iranian aggression and the recent revelations about the coordination between Khomeini and the Zionist entity. This can only confirm his sympathy with his own race."²³ It was also noted that al-Khoei and his associates did not attend the memorial services (*fatiha*) for the fallen Iraqi soldiers.²⁴

20. Ibid., pp. 4-6.

21. Ibid., p. 30.

22. Ibid., p. 31. Examples of such days are the beginning of Ramadhan, which marks the month of fasting, and the end of the month. In fairness to the Shi'a, this is not particularly a problem they have. Every year, several Sunni communities mark these occasions on different days, because they are dependent on the ability to see the moon.

23. Ibid., p. 33. The word "race" in the document refers to the Persians.

24. Ibid., pp. 35-35.

Another point, which did indeed trigger Saddam Hussein to order an investigation to collect more evidence, was the accusation of al-Khoei of protecting and supporting the students of religious schools who failed to report to military conscription, and conversely, discontinuing the stipends of the ones who reported to the military service or cooperated with the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs. Furthermore, al-Khoei was reported as continuing to pay the stipends to the families of students who deserted the military or were executed, such as the families of Sabri Sultan Tahir al-Battat, Majid al-Badrawi, Alaa al-Gubbanchi, Izz al-Din al-Gubbanchi, and Malik Abdulhassan al-Maliki. He was also reported as contacting the families of the detained members of al-Hakim family.²⁵ On one copy of the study, next to al-Khoei's reported support to students of religious schools, who failed to report to military conscription, Saddam wrote on the margin: "Is there any evidence on this?" The Organizing Committee sent an inquiry to the Ba'th Party's Euphrates Organization that initiated the accusation in a previous report, to ask for "evidence that al-Khoei supported the students of religious schools who failed to report to military conscription, and conversely, discontinued the stipends of the ones who reported to the military service."²⁶ A detailed memo in four pages was presented to Saddam Hussein about the "hostile" activities, in response to this question and other queries he made, but it seems that Saddam still did not see it sufficient to take action against al-Khoei. He wrote the following on the first page:

Although the number of those whose stipends were discontinued is small, so is the number of those who continued to receive stipends while not reporting to military service, al-Khoei can find logical excuses for both cases, claiming that he only grants stipends to those who attend his school, but not to others, and that he does not know whether the attendees are summoned to military service or not, and all he cares about is their attendance in his school. I say, despite all this, his conduct comprises a clear position—unfriendly position at best.²⁷

It might be striking to those who know Saddam Hussein that he would make a sensible comment in this fashion about such a challenge to his authority, but we must also remember that to be branded "unfriendly" by Saddam Hussein is effectively a death warrant, unless one is saved by

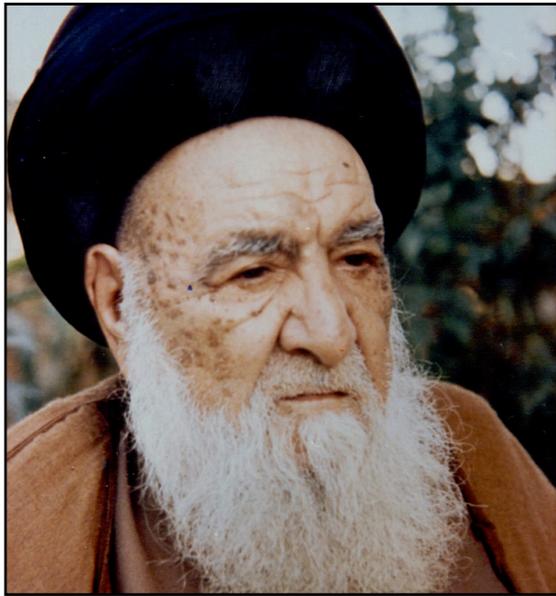
25. Ibid., pp. 33-34.

26. From the Ba'th Party Command Council to the Euphrates Organization on 5 August 1985.

27. From the Director General of the Central Bureau, Kamil Yasin Rashid, to the Secretary General of the Ba'th Party, Saddam Hussein on, (no date), p. 1.

the outcome of the cost-benefit analysis of such a sentence. Sure enough, we will see shortly that al-Khoei's life was temporarily saved by this type of calculation.

The study continues to list a number of al-Khoei family members and their activities. One is Jamal al-Khoei, who escaped to Syria and died in the same year the study was prepared, and was buried in Iran, where two of his sons have "escaped" and one of them, the engineer Musa Jamal al-Khoei, was active in the Da'wa Party. The other two sons of Ayatullah al-Khoei, Taqi



Grand Ayatullah al-Khoei
Courtesy of the Center for Academic Shi'a Studies

and Majid, were reported as being active in the Republican Islamic Party, along with two clerics from al-Khoei's inner circle, Ahmed al-Kadhimi and Fakhri Ya'qubi.²⁸

The committee concludes its report with a few recommendations, most important among them is "compelling al-Khoei to declare his unambiguous position toward our just war against the aggressive Iranian enemy and his position toward Khomeini...by using the methods of flexibility and entrapment."²⁹ Saddam Hussein underlined the last phrase, as if he was waiting for an explanation of this vague concept of "entrapment" al-Khoei.

Other recommendations included the deportation of the Persian associates of al-Khoei and denying residency extensions for others, and finally, a recommendation that was debated many times in subsequent years: "The Party should prepare religious personalities from the patriotic Arab Iraqis, who possess the right intellectual qualifications and solid religious credentials."³⁰

After a pause of activities, the Ba'th Party leadership resumed its efforts to look into the Hawza affairs in June, 1987, when the secretary of the president distributed the previous studies of 1984 and 1985 to members of the Ba'th Party Command Council to study them, and be prepared for a discussion at the upcoming Ba'th Party Command Council and Revolutionary

28. From the Director General of the Central Bureau, Kamil Yasin Rashid, to the Secretary General of the Ba'th Party, Saddam Hussein on 6 February 1985, pp. 35-36.

29. Ibid., p. 37.

30. Ibid., pp. 38-39.

Command Council meeting.³¹ After the meeting, it was decided that a committee to study the Hawza and religious schools be formed by Izzat al-Duri, with the following members: Sa‘dun Shakir, Hassan Ali Nassar, Muhammad Hamza al-Zubaidi, Abdulhassan Rahi Fir‘on, Sa‘dun Hammadi, and Fawzi Khalaf Irzayyiq. They were instructed to seek any necessary counsel from the Intelligence Agency Director, the General Security Director, the Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, the Minister of Culture and Information, and the Governor of Najaf.³² The committee was formed immediately and held an important meeting on 30 August 1987, whose minutes are worthy of careful examination here.

Izzat al-Duri did not make any opening remarks, except for asking the attendees for any remarks on the studies. The first speaker was Abdulhassan Rahi Fir‘on, who stated after a few incoherent lines, that “the work of the Hawza is not based on the interests of the homeland (Iraq), and it will always favor the Persian element.” He claimed that the design of the institution dictates that “the leader of the Hawza must always be a Persian from Iran and, if the current leader dies now, no one will succeed him except for a Persian. Al-Khoei is Persian and in the future they will prepare another Persian to take control of it.” He noted that the regime was “working on promoting Arab elements inside the Hawza to ensure that no one, other than an Arab, can control the Hawza, by the constitution or by legislation.” He objected to the idea of establishing government-sponsored religious schools and advised to keep the College of Jurisprudence (*Kulliyat al-Fiqh*),³³ which was part of the Ministry of Higher Education, infiltrated and completely co-opted by the Ba‘th Party.

The next speaker, Muhammad Hamza al-Zubaidi, presented harsher remarks and more hawkish suggestions, including the call for a complete state control on religious education and the closing of all religious schools. He also objected to allowing foreign students to arrive in Iraq and influence

31. See, for example, the letter and attachments sent to Hassan Ali Nassar on 25 June 1987.

32. From the Director General of the Central Bureau, Fawzi Khalaf Irzayyiq, to Izzat al-Duri on 27 August 1987.

33. The College of Jurisprudence (*Kulliyat al-Fiqh*) was established in Najaf, in 1957, by Shaykh Muhammad Ridha al-Mudhaffar, and was recognized by the Ministry of Education in the following year. In 1962, the University of Baghdad acknowledged the degrees granted by *Kulliyat al-Fiqh* as equivalent to those granted by the University. In 1974, *Kulliyat al-Fiqh* was attached to the University of Baghdad's College of Arts, and in 1979, it was attached to al-Mustansiriyya University and remained until 1987, when it became part of the newly established University of Kufa. In 1991, the government closed *Kulliyat al-Fiqh* as a punishment of the city for its central role in the 1991 uprising. It was re-opened in 2003, after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime. For further details, see Ja‘far al-Dujaili, *Mawsu‘at al-Najaf al-Ashraf*, vol. IX, pp. 123-124.

those studying in the country, suggesting the admission of Arab students instead.³⁴ As for the teachers, he noted that there was a number of professors at the College of Jurisprudence who are associated with the Ba‘th Party, calling for supporting them and “banishing the pollutants.” After a short interjection by Izzat al-Duri, al-Zubaidi resumed his statement, calling for keeping the Hawza in Iraq, and for the security agencies to work on weakening al-Khoei by supporting his rivals. He noted, for instance, that the Ba‘th Party gave some help to al-Khoei’s son, Abbas, who resided in London and, according to al-Zubaidi, “is one of [al-Khoei’s] enemies.”³⁵

Sa‘doun Shakir spoke next, stating that there were sixty-seven religious scholars who cooperate with the Ba‘th Party, like “Ali Kashif al-Ghita’, who is not effective,” because he was known to cooperate with the regime, while “others are effective,” perhaps because their cooperation is not known. Izzat Ibrahim responded by saying that this idea is very old—it was discussed in 1974. He then presented three points for consideration: “(1) we do not want to end religion, because we cannot; (2) we want to end every phenomenon contrary to the [Ba‘thist] movement and evidently disrupts its trajectory; (3) ...if there is a possibility for discussing the transfer of Hawza control to the Arabs, and whether this is necessary – therefore, the Hawza will remain in Iraq but it must not run contrary to the Revolution’s goals; we set this policy and let the specialized agencies take care of its implementation – but replacing a Persian by an Arab will not solve the problem.”

To support the last point, he said:

“If Muhammad al-Sadr ascended [to the Hawza leadership], he would have been worse than al-Khoei, because he is harsher than al-Khoei. He would have caused a disaster... the schools need to graduate those who are loyal to the Revolution and the Party... we must nominate a major ayatullah and our graduates, who recognize our national interests, will be his followers (*muqallideen*) and we support them... How can this support be? Not like [Abdullatif] al-Darmi, whom we transformed into a rat. We can give money to non-Ba‘thists and they will present it as religious dues (*khums*), for instance, saying, ‘this is

34. In the Ba‘thist, Arab nationalist, parlance, the word “foreign” means a citizen of any non-Arab country. Citizens of Arab countries are called “Arab.”

35. In a conversation I had with Abbas al-Khoei’s son, Yousif, who is a leading member of the management at Al-Khoei Foundation in London, he assured me that the difference of opinion between his father and his grandfather, Grand Ayatullah al-Khoei, was temporary and it was exaggerated by outside sources. However, Abbas al-Khoei is on record, on many occasions, making harsh accusations about his brothers, including a long interview in September 2004. But his references to his father were always respectful. His opinion about his father was that he was not fit for the position of a marja’, notwithstanding his superior knowledge, because of his lack of knowledge on worldly affairs. See, for example, www.youtube.com/watch?v=7AWHwuolsZ4.

from me and my tribe'... We must change the curricula as much as we can, not as much as we aspire... restrict school-time to fifteen years, after which unsuccessful students are told to withdraw, and the state provides the textbooks as conditions allow, and link these schools to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education, as we did with the College of Jurisprudence...until now, the language of instruction is Persian, in the Arab Iraq, the Arab religion, the Arab homeland, the Arab Sunna, they study these sciences in Persian...if Persian remains as the language of instruction it would be a disaster.”

Picking on the financial assistance point, Sa‘dun Shakir reminded the committee that “no one will be in contact with any religious leader who receives money from the government even if he is [Prophet] Muhammad (peace be upon him)...the Hawza was essentially established to distribute money and separate the people from the state.” Izzat al-Duri agreed with this assessment noting that Ali Kashif al-Ghita’, whom he considered as “the best intellectual and well-informed scholar,” was “burnt as soon as he was recognized as a collaborator with the state and this will be the fate of anyone who works with the state.”

Sa‘dun Hammadi, who was one of the Shi‘a intellectuals in the regime’s leadership, said two lines only: “there is a category, men and women who recite the ta‘ziya. They have influence among the men and women. It is necessary to create a group of those supportive to the state; they are after the money.” Izzat al-Duri seemed to agree, adding that “it is easier to control this category of people than it is to influence the ayatullahs, because they will be content with five dinars or less to be on the government side and they can play important roles in educating the people.” Hassan al-Amiri suggested that religious schools, most of them having no more than three or four students, need to be consolidated into one school. At this point, Sa‘dun Shakir interjected, calling for a plan to weaken al-Khoei, as a first step, which prepares for the following important step, “the transfer of the Hawza from the Persian element to the Arabs,” asking: “al-Khoei may die, who is the replacement?”

Fadhil al-Barrak took his turn and began by criticizing the study, describing it as “mediocre and beneath the importance of the dangerous issue at hand.” He urged the committee not to press al-Khoei to speak out because this is not possible and that al-Khoei’s “silence did not hurt” them. Izzat al-Duri agreed, recalling a personal encounter when al-Khoei refused to endorse the government’s position against Ayatullah Khomeini. Al-Duri quoted al-Khoei’s defiant statement: “Do you want me to evaluate Khomeini? Then I must evaluate Iraq as well!” Al-Barrak objected to the closing of the religious schools, because “al-Da‘wa Party is everywhere in Iraq,” not only in these schools. Likewise, al-Barrak did not recommend the deportation of non-Arab students, noting that “there are 493 Iranians and they make the entire Hawza cadre, if they were deported

it would be the end of the Hawza existence in Iraq.” Al-Barrak then alerted the committee to the bitter truth that, “having conducted a search on all Arab and Iraqis only to find that after 20 years we do not have one qualified scholar to control the Hawza, our system cannot prepare one scholar.”

Izzat al-Duri had the last word, recommending the diligent work in trying to influence the curricula, making them compatible with the Ba‘thist goals, restricting the number of schools, and becoming more involved in selecting the teachers, as much as possible. He formed a smaller committee to complete the work including the Director of Intelligence, the Director of General Security, the Director of the Central Bureau of the Ba‘th Party, in addition to the Chairman, al-Duri himself.

The final report and recommendations of the latter committee reached Saddam Hussein in March of the following year. Two documents sum up the general situation of the Hawza and its relationship with the regime by 1988. The first is a memorandum from Abdulhassan Rahi Fir‘on, Director of the Euphrates Organization, to the Central Bureau, regarding a “verbal inquiry” about the religious schools in Najaf and Karbala’. The document provided the following statistics:

First: Najaf - the only school in the province is al-Khoei’s school with two classes; the first consists of 300 students and the second 150 students.³⁶ There is another, inactive, school, named the Najaf Religious University with approximately fifteen students. Most of the aforementioned students are foreign (Iranians, Afghanis, Indians, and Pakistanis). The Arabs are mostly Lebanese and Saudis—lectures are delivered by several religious scholars at al-Tusi Mosque and Albu Sharba Mosque.

Second: Karbala’—It does not have any school, except for three individuals belonging to al-Khoei’s school. They attend the lectures of his representative—Ridha al-Safi—at a mosque in Karbala’.³⁷

These devastating numbers represent a result of the relentless Ba‘thist onslaught on the religious schools and their students, that included a combination of deportations and reductions

36. This document shows the devastating decrease in the number of students in the Hawza, which was about 7,000 scholars and junior students of all levels, and it was projected to reach 40,000 by 1990, if the pre-Ba‘th era normal growth pace was maintained. For detailed statistics on the Hawza, see Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, *al-Hawza al-‘Ilmiyya*, pp. 357-358.

37. From the Euphrates Organization to the Central Bureau Director on 8 March 1988, p. 1.

of residence permits of foreign students, as well as the military conscription and arrests that were faced by the Iraqi students. In many cases, Iraqi students were tortured and executed as a repressive measure and to deter others from joining the religious schools. The statistics also tell a story about the state of the Hawza at the end of the Ba‘thist appraisal process in comparison to its already-distressed condition starting in the early 1980s, as the following table shows.

Table 1. Students in the Shi‘a Religious Schools (August 1984)³⁸

Nationality/City	Iraqi	Arab	Iranian	Pakistani	Afghani	Total
Najaf	272	23	190	18	36	539
Karbala	62	--	--	--	--	62

The second document is a memorandum from the Director General of the Central Bureau, Fawzi Khalaf Irzayyiq, to Saddam Hussein, reporting the final findings and recommendations of the Izzat al-Duri Committee. The debate was crystallized to three points. The first point is as follows: “Keeping al-Khoei and not harassing the Hawza in the present time, because deporting him will lead to the removal of the Hawza from Iraq to Iran.”³⁹ This was recommended as a temporary fix until such time “when a replacement of an Arab origin is prepared to receive the Hawza.”⁴⁰ The second point recommends spending more effort on escalating the ethnic prejudice (Arab vs. Persian) to paint an image of Iran as an enemy of Arabs and Muslims worldwide, and propagating the view that Iran’s religiosity is a counterfeit form of Islam. Thirdly, the committee highlights the regime’s accomplishment in reducing the Hawza presence in Iraq. From 1985 to 1988, the number of religious schools in Najaf was reduced from twelve schools to two, while all seven religious schools in Karbala’ were closed during the same period.⁴¹ According to other documents in the archive, this process began in March 1985, when detailed statistics about the Shi‘a religious schools were reported to Saddam Hussein. He wrote the following:

It might be appropriate to announce a decision to close all religious schools with less than fifty students before the regulation was made, instead of announcing the closing of [all] religious schools. Practically, a few remaining schools will have more than fifty

38. Statistics provided in a study prepared by the Najaf Branch of the Ba‘th Party in 1984 and is now part of the archive.

39. From the Director General of the Central Bureau, Fawzi Khalaf Irzayyiq, to Saddam Hussein on 9 March 1988.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid., pp. 1-2.

students, which can also be closed at a later juncture.⁴²

The next recommended task in the final report was to “contain these schools and completely end their role gradually, by opening schools whose curricula are not limited to teaching a particular sect.”⁴³ Saddam Hussein responded to the report with one handwritten word: “Approved!”

The process of review and appraisal of the Hawza was concluded by a memorandum from the Central Bureau to the interested agencies informing them that the president approved “what was reported to his eminence on 9/3 [March]/1988—a copy of which is included—concerning the Hawza and the religious schools, for your information and to do what is necessary.”⁴⁴ The conclusion of the committee work inaugurated the implementation of the recommendations until the final goals were accomplished, namely, the end of the Shi‘a religious schools and the transfer of the Hawza to a pro-Ba‘th Arab Ayatullah, when—and if—such a scholar exists.

Plotting to Infiltrate the Hawza

The idea of infiltrating the Hawza had its genesis in the memorandum presented to Saddam Hussein in 1984, by his Secretary for Party Affairs. The memorandum was written as a summary of the findings of Ali Hassan al-Majid’s committee about the Shi‘a rituals during the anniversary of Imam Hussein’s martyrdom (*Ashura and Arba‘in*). In addition to what the committee recommended as steps to minimize the threat of Shi‘a activism in these annual, religious rituals, the secretary made six additional recommendations, the second of which reads as follows:

I suggest the treatment of...negative phenomenon trends through the selection of advanced Party members (*rifaq hizbiyyin*) who agree to become clerics according to certain criteria that qualify them to fulfill this mission and influence the spirit of the citizens, and this will be their sole Party duty to undertake and be accountable for, before the Party, especially in the Middle Euphrates provinces.⁴⁵

42. A handwritten comment on a memorandum from the Central Bureau to Izzat al-Duri on 2 March 1985.

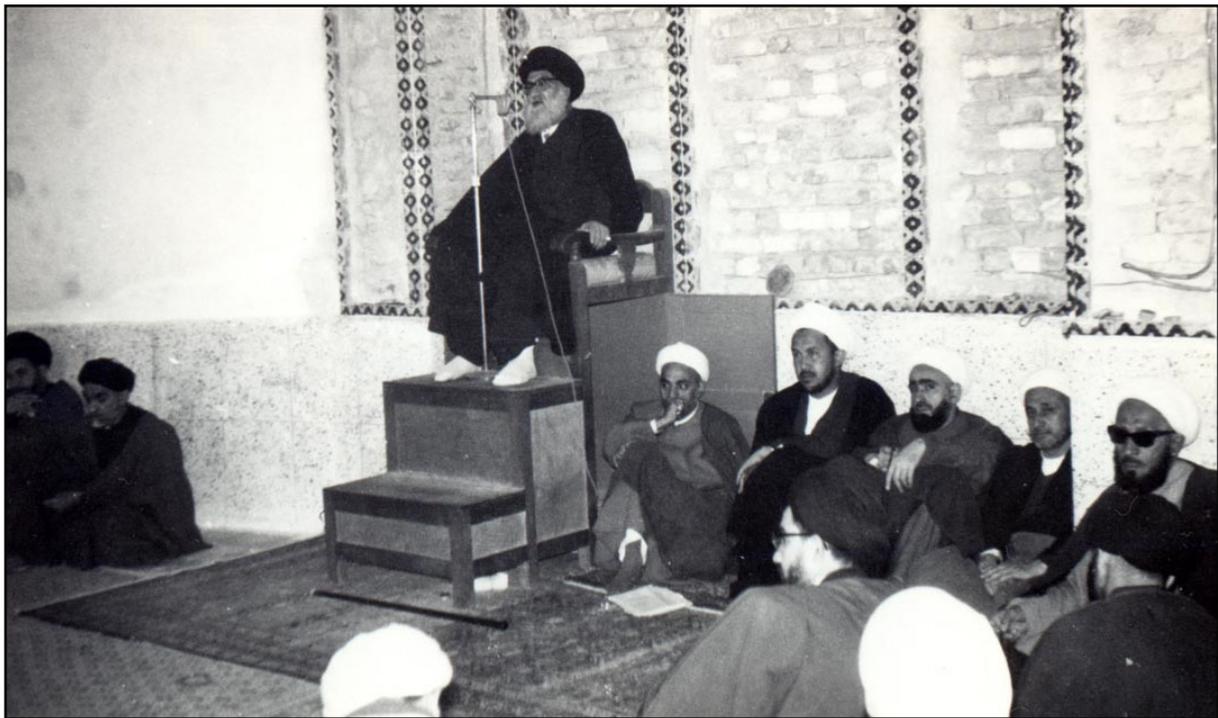
43. From the Director General of the Central Bureau, Fawzi Khalaf Irzayyiq, to Saddam Hussein on 9 March 1988, p. 2.

44. From the Central Bureau to the Deputy Secretary General [Izzat al-Duri], the members of the Organizing Committee, Director of the Intelligence Agency, and the Director of General Security.

45. Memorandum from the President’s Secretary for Party Affairs to Saddam Hussein on 28 August 1984.

The special emphasis on the Middle Euphrates provinces indicates, without a doubt, that the aim was to select advanced Shi'a members of the Ba'ath Party to join the Hawza, disguised as new students, and pursue the normal course of religious studies, to be cultivated later as they ascended to the Hawza leadership. Naturally, this suggestion met the immediate endorsement of Saddam Hussein, who left a handwritten note of approval on the same memorandum on 30 August 1984.

After the approval of Saddam Hussein, the secretary sent a memorandum to the Central Bureau, informing them about the President's approval of some recommendations while ordering that other recommendations be studied further by the General Party Command or the National Security Council. A copy of the memorandum was forwarded to the Presidential Palace to instruct the official agencies to put these policies into action.⁴⁶ Accordingly, the Presidential Palace issued a memorandum to the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research informing them of the following:



Grand Ayatullah al-Khoei teaching advanced Hawza students
Courtesy of the Center for Academic Shi'a Studies

(1) Arabic is the language of the Glorious Qur'an; therefore, foreign students of religious

46. From the President's Secretary for Party Affairs to the Central Bureau on 2 September 1984.

sciences must learn Arabic first, before studying religious sciences, and the first year must be used as preparatory year for learning Arabic. (2) It is forbidden for any teacher of religious sciences to speak [in a language] other than Arabic. (3) Inform Arab and foreign students of religious sciences to avoid violating the enforced laws and avoid participating in the erroneous practices, which our leading party is trying to help the [Iraqi] people overcome.⁴⁷

Another memorandum was issued, also by the Presidential Palace to the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior urging them to act with extra caution during these annual occasions to avoid mistakes that might enable the regime's enemies to exploit any possible use of force. A third memorandum was issued to the Ministry of Culture and Information instructing the "continuation of television broadcasting of drama series and other programs that show the Persian hostility to the Arabic and Islamic heritage, in all ages," and "producing a booklet addressing in detail the financial sponsorship" given by Saddam Hussein "to the holy places in Iraq, especially the holy shrines in Karbala' and Najaf."⁴⁸ A fourth memorandum was sent to the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs instructing them to "approach the religious figures whom you identify as more influential and more respected among the people to make use of their services, by involving them in the Religious Awareness Committees, and activate the role of these committees by allowing them to hold direct meetings with the people during the religious occasions."⁴⁹

A week later, the Central Bureau of the Ba'ath Party issued memoranda to the Regional Organizations of the North, Baghdad, Central Iraq, the Euphrates, and the South stating that:

It was decided to select advanced Party members (*rifaq hizbiyyin*) who agree to become clerics according to certain criteria that qualify them to fulfill this mission and influence the spirit of the citizens, and this will be their sole Party duty to undertake and be accountable for, before the Party. Please...inform us about the names of the qualified members (*rifaq*) for the above mission.⁵⁰

47. Memorandum from the Presidential Palace issued to the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research on 9 September 1984.

48. Memorandum from the Presidential Palace to the Ministry of Culture and Information on 9 September 1984.

49. Memorandum from the Presidential Palace to the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs on 9 September 1984.

50. Memoranda from the Central Bureau to the regional organizations on 16 September 1984.

The Regional organizations replied in November informing the Central Bureau of their candidates, except the South Organization which said, “No one in our organization would like to work as a cleric.” The North Organization presented the names of seven individuals,⁵¹ the Central Iraq Organization presented three,⁵² and the Euphrates presented one from Babil, but no one from other cities (Karbala’, Qadisiyya, and Muthanna) was willing to volunteer for the mission, while Najaf did not respond until the time of the memorandum.⁵³ The irony here is that all the provinces of the Middle Euphrates and the South, for which the mission was created, produced only one Ba‘thist willing to undertake this task—a certain Kadhim Hamza Bnayyan, a former educational inspector with a Bachelor of Arts degree, who was a member of the command in a local division (*firqa*) in the Babil province.⁵⁴ He was then joined by another one, apparently from Najaf, whose response was not timely. The Najaf Branch managed to produce a certain Hadi Hjal Mit‘ib al-‘Abbasi. The twelve candidates were summoned to the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs to arrive on 2 December 1984, “to be interviewed and given a date to take a qualifying test for the above-mentioned mission.”

Whatever came out of this exercise, it is apparent that the Ba‘th did not succeed in accomplishing the ultimate goal of producing a friendly, leading ayatullah with a potential to lead the Hawza. At best, they may have succeeded in planting a few informants in the Hawza, which was accomplished already in several ways, such as planting informants as junior students, or coercing some of the actual students to become informants. This argument is supported by the frustrated remark made four years later by the Director of General Security, Fadhil al-Barrak, during the deliberations of Izzat al-Duri’s committee to review the Hawza, when he stated, “we surveyed the Iraqis and the Arabs and, in 20 years, we do not have someone qualified to be in the Hawza. Our regime (*nidhamna*) cannot prepare one.”⁵⁵ Furthermore, five years after the conclusion of the Ba‘thist effort to adopt measures that would ensure a pro-Ba‘th, and “anti-Persian” Hawza leadership to succeed Grand Ayatullah al-Khoei, the institution’s tradition prevailed and, clearly to the disappointment of the regime, al-Khoei was succeeded by an ayatullah with an Iranian citizenship—a “Persian” in the eyes of the regime, notwithstanding the bloodline that

51. Memorandum from the North Organization to the Central Bureau on 5 November 1984.

52. Memorandum from the Central Iraq Organization to the Central Bureau on 15 November 1984.

53. Memorandum from the Euphrates Organization to the Central Bureau on 4 November 1984.

54. Ibid.

55. See Fadhil al-Barrak’s statement during the deliberations of the committee, chaired by Izzat al-Duri, to decide the fate of the Hawza (30 August 1987), p. 7.

undoubtedly linked him to the Prophet of Islam, the most Arab of the Arabs. Once again, the regime was forced to settle for the deal they had with Grand Ayatullah al-Khoei: a Hawza with an attitude that is, in Saddam's words, "unfriendly at best."⁵⁶

Al-Khoei's Representatives and the Ba'th

Among the documents, there are important, detailed reports on the representatives (*wukala'*) of al-Khoei in the provinces. These were compiled locally in compliance with a memorandum from the Central Bureau to the Ba'th organizations of Baghdad, the South, the Center, the Euphrates, and the North stating the "Party branches were asked to study the conduct of al-Khoei, his sons, and his representatives to contain their acts."⁵⁷ As a result of the background check of al-Khoei's representatives throughout Iraq, their names were sent to the Central Bureau, along with brief summaries of their activities. They were placed in two main categories: "cooperative representatives" and "hostile or suspect representatives." The first category is deemed cooperative for minor acts, such as supplicating for Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi soldiers, while giving religious sermons, or attending memorial services for fallen soldiers.⁵⁸ Also considered among the positive traits is having sons or daughters in the Ba'th Party, no matter how low-ranking, or having a son killed in the Iraq-Iran War or decorated for gallantry in battle. In one case, a representative was deemed "cooperative" because his family donated their jewelry to the war effort—although the jewelry was extorted from Iraqis by local Ba'th agents. But having relatives who were executed or affiliated with the opposition did not cause the representative's placement in the "hostile" category, if he displayed the aforementioned token acts of support for the regime. In one case, a representative was transferred from the hostile category to the cooperative group, despite being arrested more than once, "because of his sectarian tendencies."

Hostile representatives did not have to perform hostile acts, but not actively supporting the regime was enough for them to be considered hostile. For instance, the representative in al-Khaliliyya Mosque (Basra), 'Isam Abbas Shubbar, was listed as hostile for the following: "secluded, uncooperative, claiming that he is exclusively engaged in religious affairs; he

56. From the Director General of the Central Bureau, Kamil Yasin Rashid, to the Secretary General of the Ba'th Party, Saddam Hussein on, (no date), p. 1.

57. From the Central Bureau to the Ba'th Organizations of Baghdad, the South, the Center, the Euphrates, and the North on 23 September 1984.

58. These acts are done, most of the time, upon the request of the Ba'th Party branches, as the documents show. Yet, those religious leaders who comply are given credit for them. One such document is the information sheet attached to the Memorandum from the South Organization to the Central Bureau on 25 October 1984.

does not praise the Party and the Revolution, nor does he disparage Khomeini... He does not define his position toward the war on the pretext that he is a man of religion with no interest in politics.”⁵⁹ As to Hamid Muhammad al-Suwaich, who prayed at the ‘Abbasiyya Mosque (Basra), in addition to his undefined position toward the war, “his sons and sons-in-law resided in Kuwait, with the religious scholar Mir Muhammad al-Qazwini, who was deported from Iraq because of his hostility toward the Party and the Revolution.”⁶⁰ The same can be said about Shaykh Mubarak al-Farrash, a resident of Iraq who is originally from Saudi Arabia and married to an Iraqi woman. He was described as “non-cooperative and possessing his own secrets...he does not associate with religious figures who cooperate with the Party and the Revolution.”⁶¹

Another representative was not helped by the display of token support, unlike many others who passed safely with a supplication for Saddam Hussein or having a daughter join the Ba‘th at the lowest rank. The position of this particular Sayyid, whose name I will shield,⁶² was considered “unclear,” but was placed in the hostile list even though he was reported to “attend the memorial services, supplicating for the victory of the troops, and supplicating *outwardly* for the leader [Saddam Hussein] to have victory...[and] he has a son who is an entry-level member (*mu‘ayyid*) in the Ba‘th Party and a son-in-law killed in the Qadisiyya.”⁶³ Many of Khoei’s representatives passed the test with much lower credentials, but this representative had a cousin who is a fugitive in Kuwait and married to Mir Muhammad al-Qazwini’s daughter. Moreover, al-Khoei’s sons stay in his house when visiting his town. For these latter reasons, all his “cooperative” acts did not bode well for his image in the eyes of the Ba‘thists, and he was deemed hostile to the regime.

Having explored this highly valuable set of documents that covered most of the 1980s—one of the most critical decades in recent Iraqi history, as an era of war and firmly entrenched tyrannical power—we turn to another set of greatly relevant documents pertaining to the end of the following decade: a turbulent era of war, uprising, sanctions, and social turmoil. Once again,

59. A list of hostile or suspect representatives of al-Khoei, p. 1.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid., p. 2.

62. While working on this project, I decided not to reveal any names of the Ba‘thists, whose acts might be subject to criminal prosecution. I only cite the names of those who are high-ranking Ba‘th Party officials whose criminality is publicly documented, and the names of people who opposed the regime. There is no need to shield the names of the former and the latter would welcome the acknowledgement of their well-deserved credit for opposing the regime.

63. Ibid., p. 1.

the relationship between the state and the Iraqi Shi‘a clerical leadership was tested by words and bullets.

THE REGIME AND “THE VOCAL HAWZA”

Ba‘ath Party Communication on Al-Sadr’s Friday Prayers at the Kufa Mosque (1998-1999)

In the relatively short period between 17 April 1998 and 19 February 1999, Iraqi Shi‘a saw a new hope emerging in the wake of their demoralizing defeat in 1991 and the ensuing economic sanctions, imposed by the United Nations, whose punishing impact fell disproportionately on their shoulders. Ayatullah Muhammad Muhammad-Sadiq Al-Sadr (Al-Sadr II) moved to reinstitute Friday Prayers at the Grand Mosque of Kufa.⁶⁴ This authentic Islamic tradition had been put away *ad infinitum* in Iraq, because of the Shi‘a inability to practice free speech, an essential part of the Friday Prayers’ philosophy and purpose.⁶⁵ He invoked, in the first sermon, the historical symbolism of this tradition, stating that he felt honored “to speak at a place where the Commander of the Faithful, peace be upon him, had spoken,” referring to the time when Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (d. 661), the chief historical personality of the Shi‘a, was leading Friday Prayers at the same mosque during his caliphate. Al-Sadr emphasized “the essentiality of history and religion” in relation to his decision, noting that “no one has ever uttered the pure truth like him (i.e. Imam Ali) until this moment, and no one has ever listened to the pure truth as you

64. The followers of Ayatullah Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr began holding Friday prayers in the previous year, but he did not begin leading the prayer until 17 April 1998. Ayatullah al-Sadr’s name may cause some confusion to readers unfamiliar with the Iraqi religious community. First, the occurrence of “Muhammad” twice in his name is owed to his first name “Muhammad” and his father’s first name “Muhammad Sadiq”. The latter is sometimes reduced to one word, “Sadiq”, therefore, his name and his father’s name become identical, “Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr.” Calling him “Muhammad al-Sadr” occasionally would create further confusion, because his equally famous relative, Ayatullah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr (Saddam Hussein’s regime executed him in 1980), is also called Muhammad al-Sadr. To avoid confusion, Iraqis refer to Muhammad Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr as “al-Sadr II” (*al-Sadr al-Thani*) and Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr as “al-Sadr I” (*Al-Sadr al-Thani*). In this paper, I will refer to Ayatullah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr and Muqtada al-Sadr by these names and all other references are to al-Sadr II.

65. The Shi‘a maintain that the Friday Prayer is mandatory only when the infallible Imam is present and when he possesses political power. Although Friday prayers are held in various places such as Iran and Lebanon, Iraqi Shi‘a have not held them in modern history except for rare occasions, with the religious leaders holding them being accused of heresy—hence the historic significance of Al-Sadr’s action. See Adil Ra’ouf, *Muhammad Muhammad-Sadiq al-Sadr: Marja’iyyat al-Maydan*, Damascus, 1999, p. 144.

are now listening until this moment.”⁶⁶ The choice of inaugurating the sermon series was not random. Al-Sadr held the first sermon on 19 Dhu al-Hijja 1418 (17 April 1998), which was the day after *Eid al-Ghadir*, the anniversary of the Prophet’s appointment of Imam Ali as his successor for the imamate and the caliphate.

On that Friday, a new dawn of Shi‘a activism in Iraq was born. Thousands of young Shi‘a men and women attended the prayers at the Kufa Grand Mosque every Friday, sending a wave of panic with ripple effects, that overwhelmed officials of the ruling Ba‘ath Party, from the local level in Kufa to the top leaders in Baghdad. Meanwhile, the exceptional audacity Ayatullah al-Sadr displayed by doing what no other prominent mujtahid had done in Iraq during the Ba‘athist rule, raised many questions about his true relationship with the government of Saddam Hussein. For his Shi‘a followers, the man earned his due benefit of the doubt, even as they anticipated a looming fate for him and anyone treading this path in defiance of the Ba‘thist brutal authority. But among the rivals of Ayatullah al-Sadr, the man was an agent of the regime. The London-based paper, *Al-Hayat*, quoted Sayyid Majid al-Khoei, son of the late Grand Ayatullah Abu’l Qasim al-Khoei, as saying that “the candidate of the [Iraqi] regime is Sayyid Muhammad al-Sadr,” adding that he was “cooperating with the regime, which is trying to take advantage of al-Sadr’s family name to impose him as a Marja‘ even though he is unqualified for the position.”⁶⁷ It must be noted that these statements were made at a time when the al-Khoei and al-Sadr circles were exchanging various accusations. Before Sayyid Majid al-Khoei made these statements, Ayatullah al-Sadr II made some harsh remarks about the inner circles of Ayatullah al-Khoei, saying that they “performed some acts which were not accepted by the people...and many critics began to doubt the validity of emulating Sayyid al-Khoei.”⁶⁸

66. Ayatullah Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr, recording of the first Friday Prayer sermon on 17 April 1998. These sermons are distributed on CD in Iraq.

67. Quoted by Adil Ra’ouf, *Muhammad Muhammad-Sadiq al-Sadr: Marja’iyyat al-Maydan*, pp. 65-66. Sayyid Majid al-Khoei was tragically killed on 10 April 2003 when he returned to Najaf days after the fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime. The American administration in Iraq accused associates of Muqtada al-Sadr of the murder and issued a warrant to arrest him, but after a violent showdown between American forces and al-Sadr’s followers, the warrant was suspended indefinitely.

68. A videotaped interview with Ayatullah al-Sadr II in 1997. Emulation (*taqleed*) is the adherence of ordinary Muslims to the edicts (*fatwas*) of qualified religious scholars (*mujtahids*), without examining the processes by which the edicts were arrived at. In the Shi‘a school of jurisprudence, emulation is mandatory for all, except the mujtahids. The rules of emulation are explained in the beginning of every mujtahid’s handbook of jurisprudence (*risala ‘amaliyya*). See, for example, Grand Ayatullah Ali al-Sistani, *Minhaj al-Salihin*, Beirut: Dar al-Mu‘arrikh al-Arabi, vol. 1, pp. 9-19.

Another attack on Ayatullah al-Sadr came from the Iran-based paper, *Al-Muballigh Al-Risali*, closely associated with the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, led by the late Ayatullah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim. In a scathing article published shortly before al-Sadr's assassination, the paper attributed, to a religious emissary returning from a visit to several Iraqi cities, his observations that Saddam Hussein's "regime has made the *marja'iyya* of Sayyid Muhammad al-Sadr a cover for its plots and it will be used against Islam in the name of Islam." The informant allegedly told the paper about the regime's "efforts to penetrate the *marja'iyya* by proposing the *marja'iyya* of Sayyid Muhammad al-Sadr as an Arab *marja'iyya* for the Shi'a."⁶⁹ The attacks on al-Sadr caused a major schism among the Iraqi Islamists in Iran after his assassination, including the physical assault of Ayatullah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, while he attended a memorial service held for Al-Sadr in Qom.

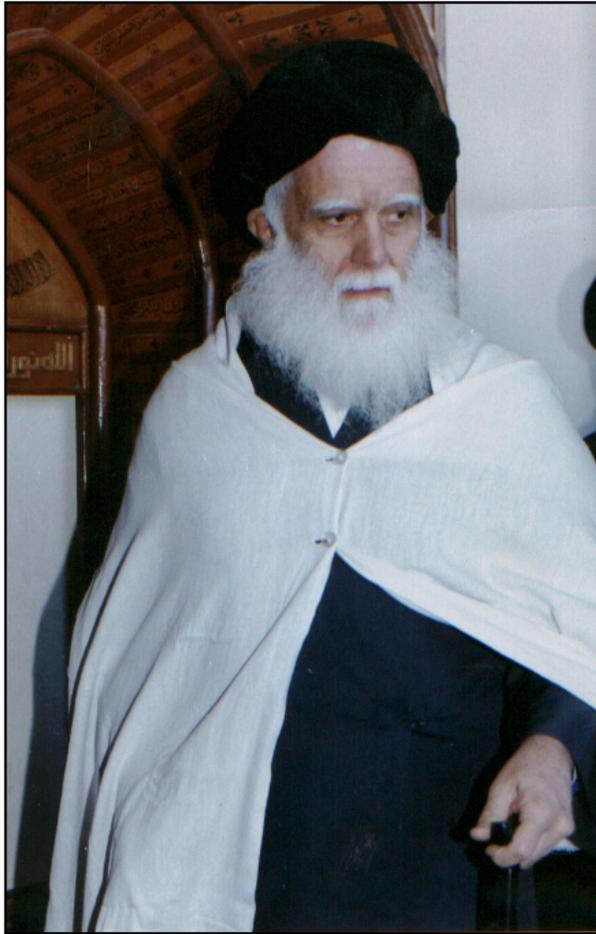
Following the opinions of al-Sadr's rivals, some scholars considered his conduct as the regime's Trojan horse to probe the true intentions of the Iraqi Shi'a, whose 1991 uprising was still a fresh memory. Others argued that this role was conceived by the regime and al-Sadr took no position for or against the regime's plot to use him to that end. Writing in 2003, prominent Iraqi sociologist Faleh Jabar noted the following:

In the wake of the execution of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, in 1980, a cousin of his, Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr, was claimed to have been 'appointed' by the government as an Iraqi *marja'*... Keen on preserving and aggravating the ethnic divide within the clerical class, the Ba'th government was in favour of an Arab line of *marja'ism*. In their eyes, [Grand Ayatullah] Kho'i and his successor [Grand Ayatullah Ali] Sistani were both Persians. The Ba'th government may well have made proxy efforts to create a rival Arab Shi'ite centre. But Al-Sadr could, practically, neither oppose nor endorse such attempts.⁷⁰

As we have seen in this monograph, the Ba'th Party documents from the 1980s, which I examined lately, reveal that the regime had considered this scenario at the highest levels of leadership, even involving guidelines from Saddam Hussein, but without mentioning any particular candidates for leading the "proxy efforts," and no evidence that al-Sadr was ever part of the plot, directly or indirectly, while evidence to the contrary was quite abundant.

69. *Al-Muballigh Al-Risali*, no. 118, quoted by Adil Ra'ouf, *Muhammad Muhammad-Sadiq al-Sadr: Marja'iyat al-Maydan*, pp. 384.

70. Faleh A. Jabar, *The Shi'ite Movement in Iraq*, London: Saqi Books, 2003, p. 183.



Grand Ayatullah al-Sadr II wearing the white cloth as a sign of his readiness to die for defying the regime
 Courtesy of al-Sadrain Institution for Strategic Studies

The leading historian of Iraq, Phebe Marr, wrote, “Opposition continued to emanate from religious clerics as well, and they met with continued persecution. Especially significant was the killing of Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr, who had been handpicked by the regime as a *marja*‘, because it had reason to believe he would cause no trouble. This proved to be a faulty assumption.”⁷¹ The concept of “handpicking” a *marja*‘ by the government does not accurately describe the way an Ayatullah ascends to the position of *marja*‘. Historically, Iraqi governments had succeeded in destroying, or neutralizing, a *marja*‘ every once in a while, but they never succeeded in instating one.⁷²

Other writers made unsubstantiated claims about the relationship between the Sadrists and the regime, which we can now say with certainty, having discovered these Ba‘th Party documents, that they are untrue. For instance, in his journalistic book on the Sadr Movement, Patrick Cockburn wrote that “[a] high point of

cooperation with the regime came in 1997 when it allowed them to publish a magazine called al-Huda, which was edited by Muqtada, Sadiq’s youngest son.”⁷³ Not true, according to the Ba‘th Party documents! In its correspondence to the Central Bureau of the Ba‘th Party, the Ministry of Culture and Information stated the following: “The named Muhammad al-Sadr had published

71. Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, Boulder: Westview Press, 3rd Edition, 2012, p. 249.

72. In a recent conversation with Dr. Marr, she explained to me that she was referring to the regime’s preference to see Al-Sadr II ascend to the *marja*‘iyya, but not necessarily to any arrangement with him. This interpretation of the events is consistent with the regime’s conduct during that period.

73. Patrick Cockburn, *Muqtada al-Sadr and the Fall of Iraq*, London: Faber and Faber, 2008, p. 116. For this and several other claims, Cockburn relies on a hastily prepared study published on 11 July 2006 by the International Crisis Group titled, “Iraq’s Muqtada al-Sadr: Spoiler of Stabilizer?”

a magazine/newsletter, in the past, without obtaining permission from this Ministry, and we notified your Bureau at the time.”⁷⁴ According to other documents, Ayatullah al-Sadr also suggested that a poetry festival and an art exhibition were to be held, and the authorities were offended that he did not attempt to acquire the necessary permits for them. It was recommended that he was to be informed to secure proper permits before holding such activities. Elsewhere in his book, Cockburn states, without any citation, that the Iraqi “regime wanted to use [al-Sadr] to control the hawza, so it gave him control of all religious schools and all new students had to have his authorization.”⁷⁵ Again, this is contrary to the documents. Five documents issued by all levels of the Ba‘th Party hierarchy stated that al-Sadr seized (istahwatha ‘ala) the schools and endorsed a recommendation to withdraw them from him.⁷⁶ Cockburn believes that al-Sadr turned against the regime in 1996.⁷⁷ After that, “[whatever] Saddam Hussein and his security forces expected from Sadiq al-Sadr, he betrayed them. This was why they assassinated him and his two elder sons.”⁷⁸ Undeterred by the lack of any evidence to validate their conclusions, the proponents of this theory often insist that their inability to find evidence on a pact between al-Sadr and Saddam Hussein’s regime does not mean that the pact did not exist, because it “obviously” did. I argue here that this analysis, and the beliefs of other scholars and Shi‘a leaders is invalid, when we consider the content of the relevant Ba‘th Party documents.

The Content of the Archive

As stated earlier, the Ba‘th Party dossier of Ayatollah al-Sadr II begins with a number of documents representing the correspondence concerning a study prepared by the Najaf Branch of the Ba‘th Party describing what the study calls “al-Sadr phenomenon.” Before examining the contents of the study, it is important to describe the network of interested Ba‘th Party offices and government institutions and the level of their involvement in the matter. All documents, other than this study, represent a typical system of circulation, beginning with a report from the Najaf Branch of the Ba‘th Party (*Far‘ Al-Najaf*) addressed to the Middle Euphrates Organization (*Maktab Tandhim Al-Furat*), which oversees the provinces of Najaf, Karbala, Qadisiyyah, and

74. Ministry of Culture and Information to Central Bureau of the Ba‘th Party, “A Study”, (No. 7 on 4 January 1999).

75. Patrick Cockburn, *Muqtada al-Sadr and the Fall of Iraq*, p. 120.

76. The first document to address the religious schools was the aforementioned study that was prepared by the Najaf Branch of the Ba‘th Party.

77. Patrick Cockburn, *Muqtada al-Sadr and the Fall of Iraq*, p. 124.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

Muthanna), with an additional copy addressed to the Central Ba‘th Party Bureau in Baghdad (*Maktab Amanat Sirr Al-Qutr*).⁷⁹ The latter forwards the information to the Director of General Security, after running the highlights of each correspondence by either Saddam Hussein or his deputy, ‘Izzat Ibrahim Al-Duri. The correspondence focuses on highlights of the week’s Friday Prayer sermon, especially the contents that raise security concerns, the number of attendees, their gender and average age, and which provinces they came from. Except for the Najaf Branch study, which generated significant follow-up correspondence, no feedback seems to be sent from any addressee to the senders at all levels. The contents of these documents will be discussed shortly. But first, let us examine the Najaf Branch study and the related correspondence.

The study was prepared sometime in late November or early December, 1998, and the last relevant document addressing its contents was sent on 7 February 1999, twelve days before the assassination of Ayatullah al-Sadr. In addition to the typical system of reporting and correspondence circulation, which is described above, the correspondence involved the second man in the Ba‘th Party, Saddam’s deputy, Izzat al-Duri, as well as two Iraqi ministries: the Ministry of Culture and Media, and the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs.

The correspondence begins with a cover letter signed by Kadhim Khudhayyir Abbas, Director of the Najaf Branch of the Ba‘th Party. The addressee, according to the hierarchic protocol, is “The Comrade, Member of the Iraq Command Council of the Ba‘th Party, the Director of the [Ba‘th Party] Organization [in the Middle Euphrates].” We learn from other relevant documents that the holder of this elaborate title was Mizban Khidhir Hadi, who is currently held in an Iraqi prison after his conviction of many crimes against humanity. Also, according to protocol, a copy was addressed to “The Comrade, Director of the Central Bureau of the Ba‘th Party,” who was ‘Adnan Dawud Salman, as the other relevant documents reveal. The subject is simply “A Study” and the cover letter contains a few lines, as follows: “Enclosed is the study that our branch prepared concerning the religious events and the Friday Prayer, which is held at the Kufa Mosque, and the conduct of the cleric, Muhammad al-Sadr, for your review, with regards ...”⁸⁰

The study consists of three pages of inadequately written, in language and style, but venomous

79. The original reports were written by the local division (*shu‘ba*) in Kufa and sent to the Najaf Branch. I had no access to the Kufa reports because they were kept in Najaf, whose archive was not brought to the United States. But the content of these reports was copied, often verbatim, in the documents generated by the Najaf Branch.

80. Najaf Branch Command to the Director of the [Ba‘th Party] Organization [in the Middle Euphrates], “A Study,” (No. 12/A/878 on 7 December 1998), Ba‘th Regional Command Collection (BRCC). All the documents relevant to the Friday Prayers can be found in Box # 2974 of the Ba‘th Party Archive.

reporting on the escalating activities of Ayatullah al-Sadr, including those related to Friday Prayers. Under the “introduction,” we read the following alarming opening assessment: “We believe that Muhammad al-Sadr has become an important phenomenon at the present time. What helped create this phenomenon was the increased number of his partisans in the southern provinces as well as Diyala and Baghdad. This increased number prompted him to behave according to the Iranian style of holding prayers. He began to speak, in the prayers and the sermons, about the programs and directives, which he believes necessary to be carried out.”

The study then moves to the practical challenges posed by the prayers and the increasing number of participants every week, since such large “gatherings are difficult to control, security-wise, and if any error occurs, deliberately or unintentionally, it will lead to the killing of thousands.”⁸¹ It is hard to understand what was meant by a deliberate error in the latter statement. Perhaps the author refers to an imprudent behavior of a Ba‘th Party gunman or a misjudgment of a local official that might lead to a bloody confrontation. And before we mistake this as a concern for the lives and blood of thousands of Shi‘a worshippers, the study tells us why they prefer not to kill them: “the last thing we need are such confrontations at the present time, which may coincide with the plans of traitors, led by America, Britain, and Zionism, to transgress against the Great Iraq.” It is the wrong timing then, that caused this sensitivity toward Shi‘a lives, and nothing else, for “if an error occurs and many [Shi‘a] are killed, the enemies will have a pretext—that we are oppressing the worshippers [and preventing them] from holding their religious rituals, which is what al-Sadr wants.”

Instead of risking the unpopular route of blatantly killing the participants in Shi‘a religious rituals, something the regime has done many times before, the authors recommended a combination of eight measures that might be considered “less oppressive.” The first, and maybe most important, measure was to separate al-Sadr from his out-of-town partisans. The authors urge the top Ba‘th Party commanders to require that the Shi‘a “perform the Friday Prayer in their own provinces, cities, and small towns, and not permit them to come to the Kufa Mosque.” The excuse to be used was that the numbers are great and the Kufa Mosque lacks the capacity to accommodate too many out-of-town visitors. The actual challenge, however, was given as follows: “It is difficult

81. The “study” is untitled, poorly written, and full of grammatical errors, like almost all Ba‘th Party correspondence. It opens with eleven lines under the “Introduction” subsection, but no other subsections specified. Instead, the document takes the form of numbered paragraphs. Aside from the importance of its contents, its form and style speak volumes about the intellectual poverty of the middle management throughout the Ba‘th Party Organization.

to control these numbers from the security and logistical perspectives, because they end up blocking the roads and interrupting traffic. We must note that the ages of those visitors [from various cities] are between fifteen and twenty-five.”

This measure would disrupt the potential revolutionary network-building process al-Sadr was trying to put in place. Al-Sadr was striving to reach out to as many followers as he possibly could and build a solid base before any confrontation with the regime, having taken valuable lessons from the past disastrous, spontaneous confrontations. He recognized that a window of opportunity was open in the 1990s for a cautious organizational effort without crossing the limits of the regime’s tolerance. On that he said, “The regime...is kind to us so long as we do not meddle in politics, and it would rein its mischief toward us so long as we rein our mischief toward it.”⁸² With this in mind, the Ba‘th Party was trying to scale back on this slim margin of superficial tolerance when it became obvious that al-Sadr was on the verge of becoming impossible to control. If they successfully separated him from his followers, Ayatullah al-Sadr was not going to be very different from his politically-inactive counterparts in the Iraqi Shi‘a seminary.

The next suggestion proposed in the Najaf study seems to combine the typical Ba‘thist propaganda efforts with coercive measures against the visiting worshippers in their cities of origin. The authors write the following: “We suggest that southern branches [of the Ba‘th Party] and those in the Middle Euphrates, in addition to Baghdad and Diyala, play their proper role in raising awareness among the youth, and also enforce the work of official checkpoints on the main highways to prevent the passage of cars carrying those youths, who are traveling to Kufa on Thursdays and Fridays.” The suggestion about raising people’s patriotic awareness seems to be thrown in as a propaganda phrase, void of any substance, so much so that the authors themselves deemed the concept too hopeless to deserve further elaboration. Therefore, they did not care to elaborate on the means and measures of its accomplishment. But when they moved to coercive means, their genius became incredibly apparent. All their expertise in oppressive measures unfolded into tangible steps, from the airtight checkpoints to the imposition of a blockade on Kufa two days per week (Thursdays and Fridays), and all other supporting measures.

After alerting the Ba‘th Party top officials to two contemporaneous problems concerning al-Sadr’s cultural and media activities, which I will discuss shortly, the study goes back to make

82. *Al-Wasat* magazine, no. 116 (18 April 1994), quoted by Adil Ra’ouf, *Muhammad Muhammad-Sadiq al-Sadr: Marja’iyyat al-Maydan*, p. 103.

further recommendations that may curb the activities and influence of Ayatullah al-Sadr. One such recommendation was to reclaim the religious schools “which he seized recently and restrict his activities to one school.” While this step seems useless from an operational viewpoint, since the Shi‘a religious education and advocacy was never limited to school buildings, it seems that the authors were asking the government and the Ba‘th Party to stand against al-Sadr in his dispute with his rivals in the ranks of the religious establishment. This would be a reversal of past Ba‘th policy of non-interference when al-Sadr took control of these schools. Obviously, the schools that were to be reclaimed would be delivered to the less outspoken clerics. This document, and all other references to it, clearly state that al-Sadr did not receive the school buildings from the regime, as some authors and critics of al-Sadr believed. The words “*istahwatha ‘alayha*” unambiguously affirm that he took these schools without permission. All the regime did was look the other way when he took control of these schools, simply because they disliked his rivals more than him, or perhaps thought that he would reciprocate by returning the favor with some cooperation. To be sure, this position changed after al-Sadr began to publicly defy the Ba‘thists. The regime did order the transfer of one school from Ayatullah al-Sadr to Ayatullah Sayyid Muhammad Sa‘id al-Hakim four months before the study was prepared, according to correspondence from the Presidential Palace, citing Saddam Hussein’s directive to the Governor of Najaf to “return the al-Hakim School to al-Hakim’s Family.”⁸³ The school was transferred on 13 July 1998 at the presence of the Director of Najaf Security Police and the Director of Awqaf and Religious Affairs in the Najaf Province.⁸⁴ The involvement of Saddam Hussein personally in a dispute over managing a small religiously-endowed building is very revealing. His endorsement of the al-Hakim family’s claim, in spite of al-Sadr’s stronger argument, seems to be an early warning to al-Sadr that he could not count on the regime to “rein its mischief” toward him.

Going back to the Najaf Branch study, where we read the following vague and non-coercive

83. Images of the relevant documents are printed in Adil Ra’ouf’s, *Muhammad Muhammad-Sadiq al-Sadr: Marja’iyat al-Maydan*, p. 358-363. Responding to a question from his followers, concerning this dispute over the school, al-Sadr argued that Grand Ayatullah Muhsin al-Hakim was not the owner of the money that was used to build the school, which was given to him by a Pakistani donor. He then explained that al-Hakim did not take the money and endow the school with the power of *wilayat al-faqih*, “because he did not believe in it.” The other possibility that would grant al-Hakim ownership of the school is the status of most knowledgeable Ayatullah, according to al-Sadr’s *fatwa*, but, in al-Sadr’s opinion, al-Hakim “was not the most knowledgeable in his era... because two other Ayatullahs were more knowledgeable than him.” See the full *fatwa* text and image on pp. 362-363 of Ra’ouf’s book.

84. *Ibid.*, pp. 360-361. The Sadrist called it the “Pakistani School”, while the government referred to it as Al-Hakim Family School (*Madrasat Bayt Al-Hakim* and *Madrasat Al-Hakim*).

measure: “the assignment of advisors drawn from the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, who must come from the South and the Euphrates regions and must be patriotic and immune [to Shi‘a sympathies], for they will have some influence in this matter.” It is unclear from the study and the other documents what kind of service these mysterious advisors would provide, or whom they would advise, and what the desired outcome of their effort would be. There was no follow-up with the Najaf Branch of the Ba‘th Party to explain this point. But in the ensuing correspondence by the Middle Euphrates Organization of the Ba‘th Party, Mizban Khidhir Hadi objected to this measure, stating that “the employees at the centers of the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs are expected to behave in a balanced way according to the [top leadership] directives.”⁸⁵ Secondary sources tell us that, before the assassination, the regime tried to impose Friday Prayer imams working for the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, but the worshippers avoided their prayers.⁸⁶

The most problematic measure recommended in the study was the following: “forcing al-Sadr and his deputies in the provinces to supplicate for the Leader, President Saddam Hussein (may Allah protect and look after him), and mention the American-Zionist conspiracy against Iraq and [call] for the lifting of the [UN-imposed] sanctions on the Iraqi people.” The authors, having made this disingenuous proposal, knew that implementing this recommendation would mean a sure death of al-Sadr, either way: he was going to choose between character assassination, if he accepted their request, or execution, if he refused. In either case, his threat was not going to be present for a long time. Unlike the question of advisors, Mizban Khidhir Hadi cleverly avoided commenting on this point in his recommendations on the findings and suggestions of the study. Even though he knew that al-Sadr would never comply, he did not want to be on the record arguing against compelling him to supplicate (i.e., pray for the protection and health) for Saddam Hussein. However, he informed the Najaf Branch of the Ba‘th Party about the Central Bureau’s decision that the matter was postponed until further notice.

It is unclear from the documents if Ayatullah al-Sadr was asked, in the remaining weeks of his life, to pray for Saddam or the postponement was in place until the assassination. But it seems to me that he was indeed asked to make such accommodations in his future speeches, but he did not fully comply. His refusal to fully comply, I am convinced, might have led to the hastening of Saddam’s decision to authorize his assassination. While there is no direct evidence in the available

85. Babil and Karbala’ Organization to the Central Bureau, “A Study,” (No. 8/2/2134, on 13 December 1998).

86. Adil Ra’ouf, *Muhammad Muhammad-Sadiq al-Sadr: Marja’iyyat al-Maydan*, p. 251.

documents that he was ever told to pray for Saddam, among other requirements suggested by the study, we can infer from the content of his last sermons that he was actually pressured, or at least he was “advised” to do so, and he partially complied. As Ayatullah Muhammad Hussein Fadhlallah noted, “It was never reported throughout his *marja’iyya* that he ever said a word about the regime that might imply his endorsement of it politically or ideologically.”⁸⁷

Let us recall that the notice from Mizban Khidhir Hadi to the Najaf Branch of the Ba‘th Party about the postponement of this matter was issued under the No. 8/2/2135 on 13 December 1998. Nine days later, the Najaf Branch of the Ba‘th Party issued its weekly report on the Friday Prayer that was held four days earlier, and highlighted, in a special note, that even though the sermon was given while Iraq was under an Anglo-American bombardment, al-Sadr “did not mention what Iraq was going through.” The report further provocatively stated that “anyone listening to the speech would notice that this man is preaching in a country other than Iraq, as if he is unaware of what is going on in this country...which affirms to us that this man possesses corrupt intent and objectives.”⁸⁸

This escalation in the attempts to excite the wrath of top-level leadership against Ayatullah al-Sadr continued throughout the remaining weeks of his life, and apparently contributed to the decision to assassinate him. On 27 December, the Najaf Branch of the Ba‘th Party issued its next weekly report on the Friday Prayer, citing al-Sadr as having spoken in a lukewarm fashion about “the New World Order, criticizing [Presidents] Clinton, and [George H. W.] Bush; saying that America was trying to dominate the world after the collapse of the Soviet Union.” This seems to be as far as Ayatullah al-Sadr was willing to go with the request to be on the regime’s side, but it was not acceptable for the Ba‘th Party officials at all levels. The Najaf Branch of the Ba‘th Party, cited the following statement from its subordinate office, the Kufa Section (*Shu‘bat al-Kufa*), where the weekly reports originated: “he did not mention the endurance of Iraq or the martyrs of Iraq or call for any action against America and Zionism, as if he was just trying to discharge a duty required of him, or as if this is merely a secondary subject in his sermon.”⁸⁹ These complaints were duly sent, in their exact language, by the Central Bureau of the Ba‘th

87. The full text of Fadhlallah’s speech is printed in Adil Ra’ouf’s, *Muhammad Muhammad-Sadiq al-Sadr: Marja’iyyat al-Maydan*, pp. 388-391.

88. Najaf Branch Command to the Director of the Najaf, Qadisiyya, and Muthanna Organization, “Friday Prayer,” (No. 12/A/918 on 22 December 1998).

89. Najaf Branch Command to the Director of the Organization, “Friday Prayer,” (No. 12/A/931 on 27 December 1998).

Party to the General Directorate of Security, Office of the Director, as shown in the Central Bureau's correspondence No. 24/6 and 24/96 on 2 January and 3 January 1999, respectively.

The following Friday Prayer sermons turned increasingly confrontational, and the Ba'ath Party officials were losing their last ounce of patience. The Najaf Branch of the Ba'ath Party reported on the Friday Prayer sermon of 15 January 1999, highlighting al-Sadr's start of his sermon by addressing the problem of electricity blackout in all provinces and his demand to provide



The Grand Mosque of Kufa
Courtesy of Nabeel Alkhafajy

uninterrupted service. He also “emphasized the [inevitable] victory of the Hawza (the religious leadership) and the victory of righteousness and the victory of the oppressed, as the worshippers were reciting the traditional sound of approval (May Allah praise [Prophet] Muhammad and his Family).”⁹⁰ The Ba'athist officials in Najaf were also growing insecure about the rising number of attendees, which was reported in the January and February 1999 reports as ranging between 10,000 and more than 12,000, mostly from other provinces, indicating the failure of all the Ba'ath Party and government coercive measures to prevent his followers from reaching the Grand Mosque of Kufa to listen to his sermons and attend the Friday Prayer.

90. Najaf Branch Command to the Director of the Najaf, Qadisiyya, and Muthanna Organization, “Friday Prayer.” (No. 12/A/32 on 17 January 1999).

The government responded by a multifaceted onslaught against al-Sadr to intimidate him and his followers. His deputies and representatives in Najaf and other provinces were arrested by the security police, and government security forces and militias became more visible in the provinces where he was popular. The Ba‘th Party also launched a propaganda campaign to discredit al-Sadr by having their agents disguise themselves as Sadrists while spreading claims that he is the Mahdi (the Shi‘a Twelfth Imam), while the government was arranging with rival clerics to distribute money to the needy and the greedy among his followers, on the condition that they desist from advocating for him.

Instead of retreating to let the crisis pass, al-Sadr stepped up his criticism of the regime. In his forty-second sermon, on 29 January 1999, “he condemned the arrest of his deputies in some provinces and demanded they be released immediately, and not to arrest anyone in the future,” a point that became the highlight of the following Najaf Branch of the Ba‘th Party’s weekly report number 12/A/49, on 31 January 1999. The report also highlighted the above-mentioned cases of money distribution and the rumors about him being the Mahdi, which he emphasized in his Friday Prayer sermon. On 29 January 1999, he addressed more than 12,000 Shi‘a worshippers in the Kufa Mosque, saying: “There is an old allegation, which was recently renewed, that I am the Mahdi. I have no connection with this whatsoever, and I completely dissociate myself from anyone who makes such allegation.” The report also cited him as accusing the government of trying to close the Grand Mosque of Kufa under the false pretense of doing renovation work, noting that it was in reality an excuse “to obstruct the holding of Friday Prayers.”

Although it did not make it to the final report number 24/2879 that was sent on 16 January 1999 by the Central Bureau of the Ba‘th Party to the General Directorate of Security, the Najaf Branch of the Ba‘th Party reported on al-Sadr’s criticism of the workers in the medical profession.⁹¹ Al-Sadr apparently used this ostensibly social issue to pass a few inciting remarks against the government’s performance. On the social front, he spoke against the mingling of male and female doctors and nurses, as well as the abuse of doctors’ and nurses’ access to certain parts of the body of patients from the opposite sex. He also criticized the practice of working on

91. The list of al-Sadr’s points was included in the handwritten order of the report, but the typed report, which was ultimately forwarded to the General Directorate of Security, did not include them.

the corpses of dead humans at the medical schools, considering it a religious violation.⁹² But, curiously, the truly problematic parts of the sermon were not reported, except a partial reporting on the sale of medicine in the black market. As stated earlier, al-Sadr used this topic to pass some stinging criticism of the government. What the report does not mention was that he attributed the selling of “stolen” medicine in the black market to their claiming that “their salaries are not enough to survive,” a claim he said “is true.” In a truly provocative side note, he said: “I authorized them to take from the medicine in their hospitals what is enough to help them meet the absolute necessities of life, but nothing more, considering the medicine [in the hospital] as property whose owner is unknown,”⁹³—a direct indication that the government is illegitimate.

Two weeks before his assassination, al-Sadr gave the Friday Prayer sermon of 5 February 1999, starting with a warning to his followers that “a trustworthy informant” told him that someone is thinking of planting a bomb in the Grand Mosque of Kufa, calling on everyone to be observant and report any suspect items to prevent the possible “shedding of blood in the pure Mosque.” He also reiterated the demand to release his deputies and “the restoration of Friday Prayers, which were banned, especially in Nasiriyya,” as indicated in the weekly report by the Najaf Branch of the Ba‘th Party.⁹⁴ The rest of the sermon was a call to reconstruct the shrines of Shi‘a Imams in Saudi Arabia that were demolished by the fundamentalist Wahhabis in the first half of the twentieth century.

It is important to elaborate on the content of the latter sermon and provide some context from the generally-known security developments in Iraq at the time. It seems that, by then, the government began preparing for the aftermath of assassinating al-Sadr. The security forces conducted several exercises in predominantly Shi‘a cities and, in a structural re-organization of the Ba‘th Party, the

92. This is a point of dispute among Muslim jurists. In the recent Shi‘a tradition, we find that Grand Ayatullah Sistani states: “it is not permitted to work on the body of a Muslim for educational purposes, unless a Muslim’s life depends on it.” See Grand Ayatullah Ali al-Sistani, *Minhaj al-Salihin*, vol. 1, p. 458. By contrast, Ayatullah Muhammad Hussein Fadhlallah notes that “the benefit from the advancement of medical research and teaching medical students outweighs the violation of the rules against tampering with human corpses.” The website of Fadhlallah Foundation, (<http://arabic.bayynat.org.lb/marjaa/tashreih.htm>).

93. There is a difference of opinion between this fatwa and the fatwas of other Shi‘a mujtahids. For example, Ayatullah al-Sistani states that “it is not permissible to take the property whose owner is unknown, if it is not lost... except when it is subject to damage. In this case, it can be taken with the intention of preserving it, or its value,...and it will be a legal trust in the hand of the taker...” Grand Ayatullah Ali al-Sistani, *Minhaj al-Salihin*, Beirut: Dar al-Mu‘arrikh al-Arabi, vol. 2, pp. 214-215.

94. Najaf Branch Command to the Superintendent of the Najaf, Qadisiyya, and Muthanna Organization, “Friday Prayer,” (No. 12/530 on 8 February 1999).

Muthanna Province was detached from the Middle Euphrates Organization of the Ba‘th Party and added to the South Organization, which was then under the command of Saddam Hussein’s cousin, Ali Hassan al-Majid. This was considered a measure to free the resources of the Middle Euphrates to meet any potential protests after the planned assassination.⁹⁵ The detachment of Muthanna Province can also be attributed to the defiant nature of the Muthanna tribes, especially those residing in Rumaitha, where the 1920 Revolution was started, and many other anti-government revolts took place from time to time, not least of which was their remarkable role in the 1991 uprising. For such a prospective foe, the regime could not find a more fearsome match than the brutality of Ali Hassan al-Majid. Al-Sadr’s criticism of the prayer ban in Nasiriyya was a direct criticism of al-Majid, who had the city under his control. As a show of force, al-Majid arrested some of al-Sadr’s representatives and met the protests with live ammunition, causing a number of fatalities. By criticizing al-Majid, a dedicated member of Saddam Hussein’s family, al-Sadr crossed a lethal line no one in Iraq dared to cross before.

Having reached the point of no return in his confrontation with the government, al-Sadr reiterated his demand for “releasing all the Hawza’s virtuous members who were detained” by the security forces, stating: “I said before, and I repeat, that the arrest of any faithful individual is like arresting me.” According to the weekly report of the Najaf Branch of the Ba‘th Party, al-Sadr then issued an ultimatum to the government, telling an audience of 10,000 worshippers: “If their detention continues until the coming Friday, all Friday imams throughout Iraq should work for their release, using wisdom and kind counsel.”⁹⁶ This statement apparently sealed his fate. He was assassinated shortly after giving the next Friday Prayer sermon. It is interesting that this last report was forwarded by the Central Bureau of the Ba‘th Party to the Directorate of General Security on 22 February 1999, three days after the assassination of Ayatullah al-Sadr. Unlike all previous reports from the Central Bureau of the Ba‘th Party, this one did not use al-Sadr’s name. Rather, the report begins with the following: “The Najaf Branch Command informed us in its correspondence number 71 on 13/2/1999 that the Friday Prayer was held in Kufa on 12/2/1999 and *the speaker* said the following...”⁹⁷ The omission of al-Sadr’s name represents a message to the Directorate of General Security that, although al-Sadr was assassinated three

95. Adil Ra’ouf’s, *Muhammad Muhammad-Sadiq al-Sadr: Marja’iyyat al-Maydan*, pp. 248-249.

96. Najaf Branch Command to the Director of the Organization, “Friday Prayer,” (No. 12/A/71 on 13 February 1999).

97. Central Bureau of the Ba‘ath Party to the Directorate of General Security, “Friday Prayer,” (No. 24/3526 on 22 February 1999). The date format in Iraq follows the European style of “dd/mm/yy”.

days before the correspondence was generated, the Friday Prayer was still a concern, no matter who delivers the sermon in the future. The security police were still needed to be on the case, in anticipation of a potential decision by one of al-Sadr's associates to carry on his effort. This has not happened, of course, and that week in February 1999 was the end of this important episode of Shi'a resistance.

CONCLUSION

Many narratives have been presented about the style of Grand Ayatullah al-Khoei as a marja' and as a scholar. The majority of these narratives, if not all of them, praise his profound intellectual ability and his prolific work on various Islamic sciences, but they give less credit to his political role than he is owed. While he is not the founder of quietism in Iraq, as I have noted in this and other studies,⁹⁸ quietism in Iraqi Shi'a politics was made synonymous with al-Khoei's marja'iyya. But after the examination of the relevant Ba'th Party Archive, the documents revealed that (1) the Ba'th leadership did not consider al-Khoei and many of his deputies to be quietists, so much so that a decade-long task force led by Saddam's deputy, Izzat al-Duri, was assigned to "study al-Khoei's activities" and develop successful methods "to contain them;"⁹⁹ and (2) Ayatullah al-Khoei, as well as many of his associates, denied the Ba'th leadership the satisfaction of receiving any public endorsement for three decades in spite of tremendous pressures on al-Khoei for that purpose, not to mention frequent arrests, torture and/or execution of his students and close associates. The fact that the Ba'thist regime accepted a firewall between the Hawza and the government was because they realized that the only other option was to kill al-Khoei or deport him, as the documents indicate. This plan was thwarted only by the regime's opposition to allowing Iran the symbolic advantage in the competition for the hearts and minds of the Shi'a, while the two regimes were engaged in a terrible war (1980 – 1988) that would require every element of support for the sake of attaining what seemed an impossible victory. Al-Khoei's defiance of the regime could not be more evident than what he told the Director of General Security, Fadhil al-Barrak, who pressured him to make friendly, public statements. Al-Barrak recalls al-Khoei's following response: "Do you want me to blow up my religious doctrine (*ansif madhhabi*) in my last days of life?"¹⁰⁰ As we have seen earlier, an even more defiant position is evident in his statement to Izzat al-Duri, who was second in power only to Saddam Hussein. Al-Duri recalled trying to make al-Khoei criticize Ayatullah Khomeini, but al-Khoei responded in a threatening tone: "Do you want me to evaluate Khomeini? Then I must evaluate Iraq as well!"¹⁰¹

98. See, for example, Abbas Kadhim, "Forging a Third Way: Sistani's *marja'iyya* between quietism and *wilayat al-faqih*," in Ali Paya and John Esposito (eds.), *Iraq, Democracy and the Future of the Muslim World*, pp. 69-73.

99. These and similar phrases were used in the "Subject" line of all relevant Ba'th Party memoranda.

100. See Fadhil al-Barrak's statement during the deliberations of the committee chaired by Izzat al-Duri to decide the fate of the Hawza (30 August 1987), p. 7.

101. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Another key finding of this study is that the survival of the Najaf Hawza during the 1980s was owed to the outstanding scholarly status of Grand Ayatullah Abu'l Qasim al-Khoei. As the documents revealed, the deliberations of Izzat al-Duri's committee concluded that the deportation of al-Khoei at the time was going to relocate the Hawza to al-Khoei's new place of residence outside Iraq. Although the Ba'ath leadership disliked al-Khoei, on the account of his perceived Persian identity and pro-Iranian attitude, and Saddam Hussein considered him unfriendly to the regime, according to a handwritten comment on one document, the other documents reveal that the Ba'athist leadership acknowledged his exceptional intellectual credentials and the respect he enjoyed in the Shi'a community, "Arabs and non-Arabs."¹⁰² In one of the documents, we find an emphasis on the uniqueness of al-Khoei, as the only mujtahid to hold the top position (*za'im*) in the Hawza while not being the highest marja' – he held the position during the marja'iyya of Grand Ayatullah Muhsin al-Hakim, meaning that he was at the time "the *za'im* of the holders of scholastic specializations."¹⁰³

Given the hysterical reactions to the perceived threat from the Hawza during Ayatullah al-Khoei's relatively non-confrontational, albeit non-cooperative attitude, the rise of Grand Ayatullah Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr to the highest ranks of Shi'a political leadership in Iraq became a controversy that caused many people to speculate about this unprecedented phenomenon in modern Iraqi history. Since the deportation of the top Shi'a mujtahids to Iran in 1924, Shi'a religious leaders in Iraq, many of them being Iranian citizens, took a quietest approach toward Iraqi political affairs and focused their energy on purely religious matters.¹⁰⁴ This quietism was forced on the Shi'a mujtahids during the Ba'athist era by the placement of the mujtahids under effective house arrest and controlling their access to all forms of communication with their followers in Iraq and the outside world. The few brave souls, who decided to challenge the regime, however quietly, faced dire consequences.

Given this decades-long established quietist pattern, it was natural for the defiant conduct of Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr to cause suspicion and speculation about his relationship with the regime. It must be noted also that the Ba'athists had succeeded in the past in extracting collaboration from prominent figures in the mujtahid establishment and recruited a number

102. Ibid., p. 7.

103. Memorandum from the Central Bureau General Director, Kamil Yasin Rashid, to Saddam Hussein on 6 February 1985, p. 7.

104. For the deportation of the mujtahids from Iraq to Iran and its impact on the Shi'a, see Abbas Kadhim, *Reclaiming Iraq: The 1920 Revolution and the Founding of the Modern State*, pp. 154-159.

of agents within the lower levels of the clergy, through the use of coercive and non-coercive incentives. In all cases, pro-regime religious figures enjoyed a more generous margin of freedom to express their strong views, albeit in a calculated way. It was hard to imagine that any prominent mujtahid, especially someone named al-Sadr, would take the podium of the Grand Mosque in Kufa, which defines the core of Shi‘a identity and ideals, and speaks truth to the Ba‘thist power.

The importance of the documents under examination in this paper is twofold: first, they represent rock-solid evidence that al-Sadr was not associated with the Ba‘thist agenda to co-opt and pacify the Shi‘a opposition, contrary to the speculation of many observers and scholars of Iraqi affairs worldwide. The documents describe, in detail, the predicament al-Sadr caused for the Ba‘thist authorities from the local level in Kufa all the way to the highest leadership in Baghdad. The meticulous procedures and timely reporting on everything done and said during each Friday Prayer sermon, however innocuous and inconsequential, leads us to realize the panic al-Sadr planted in the hearts of Ba‘thist officials, who were still suffering the post-traumatic effects from the 1991 uprising.¹⁰⁵ It is also possible, as Roger Owen noted, that the local Ba‘thists in Kufa were “also concerned that Saddam Hussein would think badly of them if they couldn’t find a way to satisfactorily ‘contain’ Sadr.”¹⁰⁶ None of the documents, at any level of correspondence, communicated a feeling of comfort or ease about the events in Kufa and their potential consequences, which would be the case if al-Sadr was executing the regime’s plan.

The second reason for considering these documents highly important is that they shed light on the vulnerability of the regime and its weakness against determined Shi‘a activism that involved large numbers of participants—something that may be the most important consequence of the 1991 uprising. The uprising not only proved the practical incapacity of the Ba‘th organization to contain Shi‘a revolutionary movements, but also the failure of the regime’s fear tactics to end the revolutionary aspirations among the Iraqi Shi‘a. The rising numbers of worshippers became a particular cause for panic among the Ba‘thist local officials. As the documents reveal,

105. During the 1991 uprising in southern and central Iraq, most local officials of the regime escaped to Baghdad, took refuge with their tribes, or went into hiding. But many members of the regime’s various security forces and the Ba‘th Party, who missed their chance to escape, refused to give themselves up and fought until death in several provinces. In the first days of the uprising, those who did not manage to find refuge—their numbers are often exaggerated—ended up in the hands of the enraged crowds and were torn into pieces. After a few days, some form of local organization was put in place in each city and any regime officials who were captured thereafter were placed in detention, pending some prosecution that never took place, because the regime recovered all the provinces where the uprising took place.

106. Note made to the author by Roger Owen while reviewing the manuscript of this monograph.

they counted the numbers of attendees every Friday, the male-female ratio was meticulously monitored, as they did monitor the number of visiting worshippers from other towns and the average age of the attendees. The panic of local authorities and their exhortation of top leadership to take the matter seriously are owed to their experience in 1991. They realized that any eruption of violence in Kufa would have claimed their lives first, as was the case in the 1991 uprising.

The documents also correct the record on the history of Shi'a activism and resistance to the Ba'th regime. The movement of Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr and his conduct during the months he led the Friday Prayer represent a defining line in the modern history of Shi'a-state relations in Iraq. What al-Sadr did in Iraq was, in effect, similar to what Ayatollah Khomeini had done for Iran before; he challenged a long-held view that the Shi'a had to accept their fate and disengage from resisting state oppression. His Friday Prayers were meant to be a stepping stone toward building a strong network of organized Shi'a youth to be mobilized more successfully than their disorganized predecessors and make better accomplishments. He was determinedly trying to help the Shi'a of Iraq rise from the ashes of their devastating defeat in 1991 and continue the fight for their right to exist as authentic Iraqis, a concept that was overtly denied in the Ba'thist narrative after the uprising.¹⁰⁷

To state that al-Sadr was acting at any moment with the approval of the regime would be to affirm the conventional wisdom that consistently lost sight of Shi'a resistance throughout the modern history of Iraq. Al-Sadr not only established a vocal *hawza*, as opposed to the "pragmatic" one; he also revived the vocal Shi'a resistance, which was introduced by ordinary Shi'a, just like his followers, during the 1991 uprising. The Ba'thist authorities became frightened and frenzied at the same time, when they realized that their genocidal brutality in putting down the 1991 uprising did not conquer the Shi'a spirit or break their will to revolt. Generated in the midst of Ba'thist panic and anxiety, these documents open a window for us into the mindset of a cruel tyranny that was losing its edge and about to lose its ability to hold on to political power.

Finally, what is most striking about these two cases is the appraisal of some historians, analysts, and, to a large extent the average Shi'a worldwide, of the clerical leadership. Whatever approach a leading ayatullah decided to take in his relationship with the Ba'thist regime, it was considered suspect at best. Because of his style of non-confrontational resistance at the zenith of Saddam

107. Immediately after the 1991 uprising, Iraq's official newspaper, *Al-Thawra*, published a series of articles containing the most vile language about the Iraqi Shi'a. These articles broke decades of silence about the sectarian conflict in Iraq and explained the kind of vitriol that was felt by the ruling Sunni elite toward Iraq's disenfranchised-majority population.

Hussein's tyranny, Ayatullah al-Khoei was labeled as the "quietist" cleric who presided over the "silent" Hawza. But when Ayatullah al-Sadr II, decided to take advantage of the regime's vulnerability and follow a confrontational course, he was paradoxically accused of being an agent of the regime by some of his rivals, while many others assumed that he was wittingly or unwittingly promoted by the regime.

This monograph, and the documents it was based on, presents an alternative narrative about this tortured relationship between an uncompromising state tyranny and a deeply rooted social institution whose resilience has overcome many centuries of systematic efforts of eradication.

APPENDIX I

The Hawza of Najaf: A Brief History

The Hawza consists of the most qualified Shi‘a scholars of religion, their students, and the assisting staff, including the teaching cadre of the seminary.¹⁰⁸ The term “Hawza” is used generally in three ways: first, it is used loosely when speaking about the entire Shi‘a clerical establishment; second, it is often used to refer to the clerical establishment in a given city—such as the Hawza of Najaf (Iraq) and the Hawza of Qum (Iran); and third, it is used in a more precise way when referring to the educational network that is supported by a certain Grand Ayatullah (called *marja* ‘). According to the latter use of the term, we can speak of more than one Hawza in a given city. This educational and spiritual institution is considered the extension of the authority that was vested earlier in the twelve Shi‘a Imams, who succeeded the Prophet as the custodians of authentic Islamic knowledge and spirituality, according to Shi‘a doctrine. The first imam is Ali b. Abi Talib (d. 661 AD) and the last is the Mahdi, who disappeared in 874 AD and believed, by the Shi‘a, to be in occultation until the end of time, when he appears to restore justice on earth.¹⁰⁹ During the earlier period of Islamic history, until 874 AD, absolute authority was vested in the Prophet and the Infallible Imams. The history of the era from 874 AD forward is divided into two periods; the Mahdi’s Minor Occultation period, which lasted from 874 to 941 AD, when his Major Occultation began and will last to the end of time. During the Minor Occultation period, the Twelfth Imam, al-Mahdi, communicated his guidance to the Shi‘a through his delegates, or deputies—four men chosen by him to hold the position consecutively.¹¹⁰ He appeared only to them to receive the questions and concerns of the Shi‘a and pass the proper answers and solutions through them.

The death of the fourth deputy in 941 AD ended the direct communication between the Imam and the Shi‘a, and the role of the ‘ulama (religious scholars) was elevated to the deputies of the Imam. They exerted their best efforts to interpret the Qur’an and the statements attributed to the Prophet and the Imams in order to answer new questions put before them in a process

108. For a thorough study of the Hawza, see Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, *al-Hawza al-‘Ilmiyya*, Najaf, 2005.

109. Following Imam Ali b. Abi Talib, the imamate position went to his sons, Hassan and Hussein, successively. This is the only time when the imamate was transferred from the imam to his brother. Then it was transferred from father to son among nine descendants of Imam Hussein. For a detailed account of the Imams, see my English translation of al-nawbakhti’s *Firaq al-Shi‘a*.

110. The four delegates are: ‘Uthman b. Sa‘id al-‘Amri (250-295 AH), his son, Muhammad, b. ‘Uthman (265-305 AH), al-Hussein b. Rawh al-Nawbakhti (305-326), and Ali b. Muhammad al-Samari (326-329 AH).

called “*ijtihad*.” From that point in time, the Shi‘a community was divided into two classes: the ‘ulama (also called mujtahids), who may practice religion according to their own interpretation of Islam, and the ordinary Shi‘a, who must emulate the ‘ulama and follow their instructions in all matters. This essential role of the ‘ulama created the necessity to prepare qualified personalities to lead the Shi‘a throughout the centuries. Every year, thousands of aspiring students join the financially and politically independent Shi‘a seminary (the Hawza) to pursue a rigorous lifetime course of studies. Successful candidates will join the ranks of the mujtahids. Those who stop at advanced levels may serve at lower functions within the networks of certain mujtahids, but may not propagate their own religious interpretations, having not attained the necessary credentials.

For a long time, the Hawza was not associated with a particular city. Rather, it was located where the most qualified Shi‘a mujtahid resided. However, when al-Shaykh al-Tusi (d. 1067 AD) was forced to move from Baghdad to Najaf, where his safety was more assured in that predominantly Shi‘a region, the Hawza followed him and, for the first time, an educational institution was established in Najaf (Iraq) and remained in operation for the past nine centuries.



Hawza classes underway in contemporary Najaf
©A.R. Norton, 2009

Until this day, the Hawza of Najaf continues to graduate the most prominent religious scholars in the Shi‘a world, along with its sister institution in Qum (Iran), which was established in the 1920s. It is not the aim of this study to provide a detailed history of the Hawza of Najaf, but it is important to give a brief background about its founder and a short history of its role in Iraqi social and political life during the twentieth century.

Abu Ja‘far Muhammed b. al-Hasan al-Tusi (AD 995-1067), also known as Shaykh al-Taifah, became the chief Imami Shi‘a scholar in a time of transition from the sympathetic Buyid rule to the hostile Saljuq hegemony.¹¹¹ During the Buyid period, the momentum to propagate Shi‘a doctrine and articulate the principles of Shi‘a theology and jurisprudence continued, thanks to Buyid patronage, or at least the lack of official hindrance. But the circumstances grew completely different under the Saljuqs. The last decade of al-Tusi’s life was a struggle to preserve the very existence of Shi‘a doctrines in the face of relentless attacks from all directions. In fact, Baghdad, under the Saljuqs, was no longer a hospitable city for Shi‘a scholars. In 1057, al-Tusi’s home was attacked and his library was confiscated, while the rest of his home went up in flames.¹¹² He then realized the necessity of abandoning Baghdad and settling in Najaf, the burial place of Imam Ali b. Abi Talib. As it was stated earlier, his relocation to Najaf marked the beginning of the Shi‘a Hawza in the city, which has remained the most prestigious Shi‘a center of learning until today.¹¹³

Shaykh al-Taifah was born in 995 in Tus, in the eastern part of Iran, a city associated with some of the most important Muslim scholars—both Shi‘a and Sunnis, such as al-Ghazali, Nizam al-Mulk, Nasir al-Din al-Tusi and ‘Umar al-Khayyam. It is also close to the burial place of the eighth imam of the Shi‘a, Ali b. Musa al-Ridha. He began his studies in Tus and at the age of twenty-three he went to Baghdad in 1017.¹¹⁴ His first five years there were spent under the tutelage of the chief Shi‘a scholar, al-Shaykh al-Mufid (d. 1022), whose teaching circle must

111. The Buyids and the Saljuqs were two successive political dynasties that controlled Iraq from the tenth century to the twelfth century. Al-Shaykh al-Tusi lived under both dynasties.

112. Sibṭ b. al-Jawzi, *Mir‘at az-Zaman*, p. 56 and Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 8, p. 81; Ibn Kathir also reports the burning of the books and the works of Abu Ja‘far al-Tusi in *al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah*, vol. 12, pp. 71-72. He mentions further (on p. 69) that al-Tusi fled and his home was looted in 448/1056.

113. Occasionally other centers compete with Najaf for this status, as Qum has done since its revival early in the 20th century up to the present. But the standing of Najaf has always been very strong. The decades of Ba‘thist rule in Iraq represented a great ordeal for Najaf and virtually ended its political role, but it continued to generate first-rate scholarship. Today, Najaf is the most powerful city in Iraqi politics.

114. Muhammad Sadiq Bahr al-‘Ulum, introduction to al-Tusi’s, *al-Fihrist*, p. 12.

have been the richest in both intellectual activity and controversy, given the reputation of al-Mufid and his love for disputation in defense of Shi‘a doctrines, but also on account of the composition of the student body which included “scholars of every creed.”¹¹⁵

After al-Mufid’s death, al-Tusi continued his studies under the sponsorship of the new chief Shi‘a scholar, al-Sharif al-Murtadha, whose political position as *Naqib al-Talibiyyin* and financial resources made him a major Shi‘a philanthropist; he bestowed on his students scholarly guidance, monthly allowances, housing, and provisions. Al-Tusi enjoyed these provisions and a decent salary of twelve dinars from al-Murtadha for twenty-three years.¹¹⁶

Al-Tusi lost in the death of al-Murtadha (AD 1044) a friend, a patron, and most importantly, a defender. Al-Murtadha used his positions as the *Naqib al-Talibiyyin* and the investigator of *madhalim* (government oversight), in addition to the political connections that came with these positions, to shield himself and his students from much of the hostilities they were facing in predominantly Hanbali Baghdad. When he died, al-Tusi and his colleagues were left to fend for themselves. It seems that the efforts of the next *Naqib al-Talibiyyin*, ‘Adnan b. al-Radhi (d. 1057), were not effective, as a result of the weakness of Buyid support during their last decade of rule in Baghdad and the zealotry of the Hanbali vizier, Ibn al-Muslimah. The already-bad situation became even worse when the hostile Saljuqs captured the city and turned the tide in favor of the Hanbalis. The situation became so difficult that even a Hanbali historian regarded the conduct of the vizier as going “too far in harming” the Shi‘a.¹¹⁷ Describing the events of 1056, Ibn al-Jawzi writes:

In 448 the *Rawafidh* were forced to abandon the use of *hayya ‘ala khayr al-‘amal* in the call for prayer and their announcer for prayer was compelled to call, after *hayya ‘ala al-falah, al-salatu khayrun min al-nawm* – twice – when calling for the dawn prayer. The inscriptions of the phrase, “Muhammed and Ali are the best of mankind”, were removed from the doors of their mosques, and chanters came from Bab al-Basra to Bab al-Karkh, reciting poems in praise of the companions [of the Prophet]. The vizier [Ibn al-Muslimah] ordered the police chief to kill Abu Abdillah b. al-Jallab, the shaykh of

115. Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidaayah wa al-Nihayah*, vol. 12, p. 15.

116. Ibid.; and Muhammad Abu al-Fadhl Ibrahim, introduction to *Amali al-Murtadha*, vol. 1, p. 8; According to Ibrahim, al-Murtadha also made a permanent allowance of 18 dinars for Abd al-‘Aziz b. al-Barraj, who became a judge after finishing his studies.

117. Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntadham*, vol. 9, p. 383.

Rawafidh, for his *rafidh* [i.e. being one of the Shi‘a] and exaggeration in it. He was killed and crucified at the door of his store and Abu Ja‘far al-Tusi escaped, but his house was looted.¹¹⁸

Al-Tusi moved after this incident to Najaf to live near the shrine of Imam Ali, and resumed his teaching in the new residence. He was joined by several of his students and close associates. After having spent twelve years in Najaf, al-Tusi died on 1 December 1067. He was buried by his students in his own house next to the shrine of Imam Ali, which was turned into the mosque named after him.¹¹⁹

Al-Tusi was one of the most prolific Shi‘a scholars. His work encompasses all branches of the religious sciences. He compiled two of the four major Shi‘a hadith collections: *al-Istibsar* and *Tahdhib al-Ahkam*.¹²⁰ He is also the author of *al-Tibyan al-Jami‘ li ‘Ulum al-Qur‘an*—twenty volumes representing one of the major commentaries on the Qur’an. Al-Tusi’s contribution to the Shi‘a theology came through his commentaries on the major works of his teacher, al-Sharif al-Murtadha. Among his works in this field are the condensation of al-Murtadha’s major book on the imamate, *al-Shafi*, and the commentary on the theoretical section of al-Murtadha’s other book, *Jumal al-‘Ilm wa al-‘Amal*, which he called *Kitab Tamhid al-Usul fi ‘Ilm al-Kalam*. In addition to being an authority on the Shi‘a science of hadith, al-Tusi also compiled two of the four major works of *rijal al-hadith* (biographies of the narrators of the statements attributed to the Prophet and the Imams). He edited and corrected the book of al-Kashshi (d. ca. 951), *Ma‘rifat al-Rijal* and authored his own books on the subject: *al-Fihrist*, which includes data on more than nine hundred Shi‘a authors and transmitters of hadith and *Rijal al-Tusi*, which classifies the transmitters of hadith according to their generations (*Tabaqat*).

After the death of al-Shaykh al-Tusi, Najaf continued to be a center of Shi‘a religious education until this day. It has endured the Mongol invasion of Iraq, with the political and social upheaval that accompanied the destruction of the Muslim state, and survived the following centuries of

118. Ibn al-Jawzi, vol. 9, p. 385. See also *Tarikh Ibn Kathir*, vol. 12, pp. 68-69. The phrases, “*hayya ‘ala khayr al-‘amal*,” “*hayya ‘ala al-falah*,” and “*al-salatu khayrun min al-nawm*” are parts of the call for the prayer. The first is used only by the Shi‘a and the last is found only in the Sunni call for prayer.

119. Also named after him are one of the gates of Imam Ali’s shrine (*Bab al-Tusi*) and the main street leading to this gate (*Shari‘ al-Tusi*), not to mention the hundreds of commercial facilities, schools and other establishments in Najaf as a testimony to his prominence in the Shi‘a memory.

120. The other two are: *Kitab al-Kafi*, by al-Kulayni (d. 940); and *Kitab man la Yahdharuhu al-Faqih*, by Ibn Babawayh al-Qummi (d. 991).

general decline of Muslim society. This resilience is owed to the strong spiritual and social ties between the Hawza and the Shi‘a society, which allowed the Hawza adequate financial means to operate independently and remain at a comfortable distance from the need for state patronage, and the inevitable government interference that is associated with it.

But maintaining independence in Najaf was not always an easy task for the Hawza leadership. The Ottomans, who became the self-appointed champions of the Sunni branch of Islam, viewed the Hawza as the greatest obstacle in their quest for securing the allegiance of the majority population in Iraq. Their rule (1638–1918) was characterized by continued hostility toward the Hawza, whose graduates were never certified or granted government employment, unlike their counterparts in Sunni religious schools. This hostility continued in the modern Iraqi state, which inaugurated its political acts by deporting the most prominent mujtahids to Iran and did not grant them re-entry until they pledged to not assume any political roles in Iraq.¹²¹

The Hawza was subjected to the cruelest treatment during the Ba‘th rule, soon after its ascendance to political power in Iraq in 1968, especially during the period of Saddam Hussein’s presidency (1979-2003). The extraordinary political circumstances under the Ba‘th regime caused the Hawza, under the leadership of Grand Ayatullah Abu’l Qasim al-Musawi al-Khoei, to withdraw from politics and active social leadership and practice extreme measures of self-restraint to keep the institution afloat. Al-Khoei managed to minimize the wrath of the Ba‘thist regime throughout the trying decades of the 1970s and 1980s by refraining from voicing any public criticism to their anti-Shi‘a measures. These measures ranged from placing bans on the usual rituals to outright oppression and mass executions of certain dissidents, including many of his close associates. He also managed to pass the Iran-Iraq War era with minimal extra damages to the relations with the regime, as both sides settled on a public position of neutrality on the part of the Hawza, as we shall see when examining the documents.

This Ba‘thist, outwardly tolerance toward the Shi‘a, which was often interrupted by various acts of hostility, and even violence, was utterly abandoned in 1991, when the Shi‘a revolted against the regime after its defeat in Kuwait. Saddam’s troops sacked the South and murdered tens of thousands of Shi‘a men, women, and even children, leaving them behind in mass graves. When their work was done, they departed taking with them tens of thousands of Shi‘a men, including minors, to unknown destinations. Those were initially taken to interrogation camps in Baghdad

121. For further details, see Abbas Kadhim, “Forging a Third Way: Sistani’s *marja’iyya* between quietism and *wilayat al-faqih*,” in Ali Paya and John Esposito (eds.), *Iraq, Democracy and the Future of the Muslim World*, pp. 69-73.

and other centers. A small number of them were released, but the vast majority simply vanished. Grand Ayatullah al-Khoei was summoned to Baghdad and appeared on the Iraqi television with Saddam Hussein in a situation never seen before in Iraq's history—Saddam was triumphantly interrogating the frail Ayatullah, whose most memorable statement was, “I am approaching death.” He died the following year. His death was considered “like martyrdom, if it was not exactly that.”¹²²

122. Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, *al-Hawza al-'Ilmiyya*, p. 231.

APPENDIX II

Al-Sadr II Speaking About His Relation with the Iraqi State

In 1989-1990, I was leading a prayer, attended only by workers and artisans. This prayer was described by people related to the Hawza as a trap by the government to know who prays and who does not. [In other words], if you pray behind Muhammad al-Sadr you will not sleep at home... [Certain people in the Hawza] said, even though not in words, but in conduct, that anything related to Shi'ism, the Hawza, and to Najaf, they hold its reins in their hands. They do what they please, and there is no will other than their will. Anyone speaks, objects, or asks questions or raises his voice, loudly or softly [must know that] the figurative sword is ready. He will be left without a limb. So the figurative sword was directed at me, in order to get rid of me in any way possible, because they find in me the ability. In other words, they see in me certain harm to them. I am of course, the cousin of Sayyid Muhammad Baqir [al-Sadr], and suffered from the pressure of the dispute between the marja'iyas of Sayyid Muhammad Baqir and Sayyid al-Khoei. Considering this point, I was his (i.e. Muhammad Baqir's) legitimate heir, so it was important for them to bury me in the sand, not more and not less. So, the best argument they had was that it is not wise to contact him (i.e. al-Sadr II) because there is a hanging stage outside his door. Each one who contacts him, studies with him, takes money from him, gives him money, takes a written note from him, visits him, or even greets him at the shrine, has to be careful, be careful, be careful...

I said that this situation continued until Sayyid al-Khoei died. Then a new page was turned to the current page, which is a new approach to disperse the people around me, exactly. [Claiming] that I am an agent [of the regime,] an intelligence [employee], an officer, a marja' who was appointed by Baghdad as a counterpart to Sayyid al-Sabzavari so there would not be a Farsi marja' to have an Arab and Iraqi...etc. Contacting me [was claimed to be] forbidden (haram) and of course it would not meet the approval of Allah (the Praised and Exalted), because [I was called] an agent, and the agent is a devil and the devil is in hell fire and the worst of fate – that's all. They also did indeed disperse the people around me and managed, but Allah gradually acted on my behalf and cleared [my name], even though some people outside Iraq, as the questions [indicate], still hold these ideas and I ask Allah to cleanse their hearts from these [thoughts]. In fact, during that time I had no lines of defense, because I was in a [state of] intensified *taqiyya*, as I explained earlier. In whose tongue could I have spoken, and in which newspaper could I have published [my side of the story], or on which radio could I have spoken, or on which television could I have made a statement, or at which press conference? That, the truth is not

like that, and that I was lied about and I am not associated with what [is being said about me]! Could I have said that? Of course, I could not. While people outside [Iraq] believe that I was comfortable and doing my work with the support and approval of the Iraqi government...at a time that I have lived in extreme anxiety and heartache...

Until about a year ago, all the [interested] intellectuals worldwide, and indeed all the Shi‘a worldwide know this, in Canada, the United States, Britain, and France, speak to anyone you choose, he “knows” that Sayyid Muhammad al-Sadr is the marja‘ of Baghdad, as if this is a given. God help the ordinary people (*al-‘awam*), because we say in Logic that preponderance (*tawatur*) is the agreement of reports from people whose conspiracy to lie is known to be not extant. So, when reports are abundant in the millions, they become self-evident like the rising sun. So people became convinced, indeed certain, about this description [of me] of course. While the truth is not like that, because preponderance causes certainty if it does not have a common cause (*‘illah mushtarakah*) – that is how we say in Logic. And this preponderance does have a common cause, because money was spent to make it happen, and efforts collaborated to keep its fire burning. So, apparently, preponderance is extant, but in substance, it is not extant... It is certain that there are two entities in the Iraqi society [that promote this defamation], one is related to the Hawza and a temporal one, and similarly there are two entities abroad, one religious and another temporal... so that there are [Iraqi] government employees who think that I am with the state and that I am respected by the state and that my name is effective before the state, even though..., according to my understanding that domestic politics here puts on two kinds of attire, the attire of friendship with Sayyid Muhammad al-Sadr and the attire of hostility toward Sayyid Muhammad al-Sadr, according to the [regime’s] interests. So this question should be put before the Shi‘a population and each individual should reflect on it according to his own conviction, hoping at least that he reevaluates what he heard from old folks and from some “righteous” people that Sayyid Muhammad al-Sadr is suspect. Have they spoken to him (i.e. al-Sadr)? Have they seen [something suspicious]? Have they referred to trustworthy sources? Have they considered the statement (*hadith*), “find seventy excuses for your brother”? Is it possible that one of his relatives or a person he holds sacred can be subject to similar [defamation]? ... Anyway, unfortunately, people’s sense of justice is in short supply...

Two things only, to a certain extent, the Iraqi government participated in them: first, the [religious] schools were given, intentionally and knowingly by the Iraqi government to Sayyid al-Khoei. And in a certain sense, [the government] remained silent when I began to manage them. I cannot say, and it is not clear that [the government] put them in my hands, but when we started running them and when we appointed managers for them, [the people in the government] withdrew, as if

they approved it and kept silent, no more. And this is not a disgrace, because if it were a disgrace for me, then it would have been also a disgrace for Sayyid al-Khoei, because the government also kept silent about [his managing the schools before me]... the other issue is the conscription. This is true. They honored [my requests] and it was in the hands of Sayyid al-Khoei also. He used to present lists of names [to be exempt from timely conscription] and they were approved and the names were granted deferment one year after another. Likewise, this was granted to me for two or three years and my sons were granted deferments and some youth, may Allah reward them, were deferred. Afterwards, we began to send lists...well, the last list we sent about a year and a half, but no response about it [to date]. This means that this case is closed and practically [my role] was cancelled by the Iraqi government, and a number of the youth have been taken to military service, while some paid monetary substitution [instead of serving]...

[As to the issue of preventing Sayyid Ali al-Sistani from leading prayers and allowing al-Sadr to do that,] I have said that they (i.e. the government) know that anyone they oppose will ascend socially and people will think well of him, while anyone they endorse and praise, or at least look away from him, will descend socially and people will think ill of him, and this plotting always exists. Therefore, Sayyid al-Sistani was attacked so that he may ascend, for his own benefit... while I was praised, in a certain sense, and was left alone and my books were permitted for the result they desired: first so that I become suspect, on one hand, and on the other hand, my *marja' iyya* would fail, and also to bring my activity to the light, which was unknown to them before.¹²³

123. Transcribed and translated by the author from the following website: www.youtube.com/watch?v=t8IM4SIT-4vk

APPENDIX III

Excerpts from a Study on the Hawza and its Leader, Ayatullah al-Khoei

Abu'l Qassim al-Khoei is the leader of the Hawza in Najaf. He replaced Sayyid Muhsin al-Hakim in this position after the latter died. It is noteworthy that the leadership (*za'amah*) of the Hawza possessed a great eminence in the old times and until the recent years, because the leader had the heeded words and influence over most clerics and over the citizens in the region, especially the average people. But this authority has decreased in recent years, especially during the time of the Iran-Iraq War, for many reasons; most important of them is the rallying of the masses around the [patriotic] movement and its leader Comrade Saddam Hussein, who became the prominent symbol for Iraqis. The masses began to be inspired by his ideas and instructions and take guidance from them. In addition to the rise of Iraqi conditions, and the rightful measures the revolution had taken in deporting the Iranians, who were the "Fifth Column" for the Iranians, and additionally, the irreligious and immoral conduct of al-Khoei's inner circle, his sons, and his representatives had isolated them from the masses. These reasons have reduced the size of al-Khoei's activities. But despite all that, he continues to pursue certain practices and activities which are hostile to the party and the revolution, including:

1. Al-Khoei, his sons, and inner circle speak in Farsi, confirming their loyalty to the Persian element and the Iranian Shu'ubiyya.
2. Their relentless efforts to reject the dates set by the government for religious occasions just to oppose the government and its official decisions.
3. Al-Khoei's embracing the non-Arab individuals, especially the Iranians, and giving them special positions in the clerical ranks. Additionally, financial support is a priority in al-Khoei's mission.
4. Al-Khoei's position toward our just war against the wicked Iranian enemy is unclear and unfathomable until now. Indeed, until now he did not make a declaration or give his opinion about this war, in spite of the apparent Iranian aggression and the recent revelations about the coordination between Khomeini and the Zionist entity. This can only confirm his sympathy with his own race.
5. Al-Khoei and his inner circle encourage the wrong religious practices and also encourage sectarianism and the attempts to expand it.
6. He is giving refuge to some individuals among the students of religious schools who evaded

military conscription, while discontinuing the stipends of the ones who report to the military service and those who cooperate with the Awqaf.

7. His attempts to obtain as many residence permits as he could for the Afghanis and Pakistanis, as well as some of the families that are under deportation orders, who are still in Iraq, including women.
8. His continuation of the stipends of the fugitives and those who were executed and giving them material help, such as:
 - a. the family of the criminal Shaykh Sabri Sultan Tahir al-Battat.
 - b. the family of Majid al-Badrawi.
 - c. the family of the criminals Alaa al-Gubbanchi and Izz al-Din al-Gubbanchi.
 - d. the family of the criminal Malik Abdulmuhsin Hussein al-Maliki.
9. In 1984, he sent a pilgrimage group to the Holy Lands (Macca and Madina), for the first time to represent him in the pilgrimage season and the group was joined by his representatives in Iran and the Arabian Gulf.
10. He contacted the families of the detained members of al-Hakim family and winning their sympathy and keeping them satisfied to appear before the masses as someone who cares about the affairs of clerics.
11. Al-Khoei and his inner circle do not attend the services held for the pure souls of our martyrs (i.e. those killed in the war).¹²⁴

124. From a memorandum presented to Saddam Hussein by the director of the Ba'th Party Central Bureau, Kamil Yasin Rashid, on 6 February 1985.

GLOSSARY

Amin Sir: Secretary General of the Ba‘th Party. Saddam Hussein held this position during the time covered by this study.

Awqaf (sing. waqf): Religious endowments.

Diwan: the Iraqi Presidential Office.

Far‘: a branch of the Ba‘th Party, normally responsible for an entire Iraqi province.

Fatwa: a religious edict, or an opinion given in response to a question regarding the religious law on matters of worship or worldly transactions.

Firqha: a Division of the Ba‘th Party, normally responsible for a small town or a large section in a major city.

Hawza: the Shi‘a religious seminary. The term refers to the entire Shi‘a religious teaching, or to a seminary in a certain city (Najaf, Qum, Mashhad, etc.). In the latter sense, we can speak about more than one Hawza.

Ijtihad: the process by which a mujtahid arrives at original responses to questions addressed to him. Imamate: the position of the Imam; the Shi‘a belief that it is a designation from God.

Khums: in addition to the Zakat, the Shi‘a pay 20 percent of their extra annual income to the Grand Ayatullah they emulate. The Khums is used generally to support the poor among the descendants of the Prophet and part of it goes for other purposes and causes the Grand Ayatullah deems necessary.

Majlis al-Amn al-Qawmi: National Security Council

Maktab Tandhim: the regional organization of the Ba‘th Party, whose jurisdiction includes several Iraqi provinces, except for Baghdad and several particular organizations that have a special Maktab.

Maqal: the full story of the battle of Karbala and the martyrdom of Imam Hussein—the day of Ashura AD 681.

Marja‘ (pl. maraji‘): a religious scholar who is qualified to provide original religious edicts (fatwas).

Mu'ayyid: the lowest rank in the Ba'th Party membership.

Mujtahid: A religious scholar who is qualified to independently provide original answers to questions not addressed before his time, or provide different answers than what other Mujtahids have given before. He is also called an Ayatullah.

Naqib al-Talibiyyin: the position of an official in the Abbasid era (7th – 13th centuries), whose job is to organize the affairs of the descendants of Abu Talib, the uncle of the Prophet. It is always given to the most important member of the descendants of Abu Talib.

Nasir: one level above the lowest rank in the Ba'th Party membership.

Qadisiyyat Saddam: the Iraqi government's name given to the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988).

Rawafidh: a pejorative term used by Sunni extremists to refer to the Shi'a.

Sayyid: A descendant of the prophet through his daughter, Fatima. Sayyids have a special in Shi'a communities. When they become members of the clergy, they are distinguished by black turbans.

Shu'ba: a section of the Ba'th Party, normally responsible for a large city.

Shu'ubiyya: a term that was used by the Ba'thists to refer to the Shi'a.

Ta'ziya: the recitation of the stories associated with Imam Hussein's tragic martyrdom in AD 681.

'Udhu: a full member in the Ba'th Party.

Wakil: the deputy of a Marja', whose role is to serve as his representative to a certain community with duties that include the leading of prayers, answering questions, collecting religious financial dues, etc.

Za'im (of the Hawza): the highest scholarly authority in the Hawza. It is normally held by the highest Marja'. Al-Khoei held this title before becoming the highest marja' as an exception to the rule.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ba‘th Regional Command Collection (BRCC), an archive held at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, California.
- Baram, Amatzia, *Culture, History and Ideology in the Formation of Ba‘thist Iraq, 1968-89*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991.
- Cockburn, Patrick, *Muqtada al-Sadr and the Fall of Iraq*, London: Faber and Faber, 2008.
- Davis, Eric, *Memories of State: Politics, History and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.
- Al-Dujaili, Ja‘far, *Mawsu‘at al-Najaf al-Ashraf*, vol. IX, Beirut: Dar al-Adhwa’, 1997.
- Fadhlallah Foundation’s website, (<http://arabic.bayynat.org.lb/marjaa/tashreih.htm>)
- Al-Hakim, Muhammad Baqir, *al-Hawza al-‘Ilmiyya*, Najaf, 2005.
- Hamada, Tarrad, *Al-Imam Abul Qassim al-Khoei Za‘im al-Hawza al-‘Ilmiyya*, London: Al-Khoei Foundation, 2004.
- Al-Hirz, Abdullatif, *Muhammad al-Sadr: Kifah al-Jamahir*, Beirut: Dar al-Farabi, 2009.
- Ibn al-Athir, Ali ibn Muhammad, *al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh*, vol. VIII, Beirut, 1983.
- Ibn al-Jawzi, Abdurrahman, *al-Muntadham fi Tarikh al-Muluk wa al-Umam*, vol. IX, Beirut, 1995.
- Ibn Kathir, Isma‘il ibn ‘Umar, *Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah*, vol. XII, Beirut, 1966.
- International Crisis Group titled, “Iraq’s Muqtada Al-Sadr: Spoiler of Stabilizer?” study published on 11 July 2006.
- Jabar, Faleh A., *The Shi‘ite Movement in Iraq*, London: Saqi Books, 2003.
- Kadhim, Abbas, *Reclaiming Iraq: The 1920 Revolution and the Founding of the Modern State*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012.
- _____. “Forging a Third Way: Sistani’s marja’iyya between quietism and wilayat al-faqih,” in Ali Paya and John Esposito (eds.), *Iraq, Democracy and the Future of the Muslim World*, London: Routledge, 2011.

_____. "The Politics and Theology of Imami Shi'a in Baghdad in the 5th/11th Century," (Unpublished Dissertation,) Berkeley: University of California – Berkeley, 2006.

Marr, Phebe, *The Modern History of Iraq*, Boulder: Westview Press, 3rd Edition, 2012.

Al-Murtadha, al-Sharif 'Alam al-Huda, *Amali al-Murtadha*, vol. 1, edited by Muhammad Abu al-Fadhl Ibrahim, Cairo, 1954.

Nakash, Yitzhak, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

Al-Nawbakhti, al-Hasan ibn Musa, *Shi'a Sects (Kitab Firaq al-Shi'a)*, Translated, introduced and annotated by Abbas Kadhim, London: ICAS Press, 2007.

Ra'ouf, Adil, *Muhammad Muhammad-Sadiq Al-Sadr: Marja'iyat Al-Maydan*, Damascus, 1999.

Al-Sadr, Ayatullah Muhammad Sadiq, recording of the first Friday Prayer sermons (1998-1999).

_____. An interview with Ayatullah Al-Sadr II in 1996, conducted by Muhammad Abbas al-Darraji (www.youtube.com/watch?v=poazMInL6PE).

_____. An interview with Ayatullah Al-Sadr II in September, 1997, conducted by Muhammad al-Nu'mani and introduced by Ahmed al-Musawi (www.youtube.com/watch?v=-JVxdAqU9E0).

Sasoon, Joseph, *Saddam Hussein's Ba'th Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

al-Sheakh Ali, Faig, *Ightial Sha'b*, London: The Iraqi Center for Strategic Researches and Studies, 2000.

Sibt b. al-Jawzi, Shamsuddin, *Mir'at az-Zaman fi Tarikh al-A'yan*, Beirut, 2001.

Al-Sistani, Ali (Grand Ayatullah), *Minhaj al-Salihin*, Beirut: Dar al-Mu'arrikh al-Arabi, vols. 1-2, 1998.

Al-Tourihi, Muhammad Said (ed.), *Grand Ayatullah al-Sayyid Abul Qassim al-Khoei*, Nederland: Kufa Academy, 1993.