Has Democratization in Iraq Failed?

Hamzeh Hadad

About

Al-Bayan Center for Planning and Studies is an independent, nonprofit think tank based in Baghdad, Iraq. Its primary mission is to offer an authentic perspective on public policy issues related to Iraq and the neighboring region. Al-Bayan pursues its vision by conducting autonomous analysis, as well as proposing workable solutions for complex issues that concern academia and policymakers.

Honours Thesis Presented to the Department of Political Science

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

King's College

March 2016

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Executive Summary

The common consensus amongst political scientists on democratization is that it is a long process with an unpredictable timeline for each individual case study. However, with regards to the democratization of Iraq, there is a commonly held belief that it has failed within the span of a decade and there is little hope of improvement in the near future. This thesis seeks to show that using an internationally recognized standard index to measure democratic features in Iraq, with other theories related to democracy and democratization, including democratic peace theory and state-to-nation balance theory, there is substantial evidence to suggest that while democracy is still in a nascent phase, it has by no means failed.

The following thesis is comprised of five chapters. The first chapter will deliver a brief history of Iraq, highlighting specific elements of its past evolution as a state. These are essential to providing a balanced assessment of Iraq's democratization – its journey through various forms of government, including autocracy, to where it currently stands. The second chapter will analyze arguments presented, by various sources, as proof of democratization failing in Iraq. Counterarguments will be provided for each claim. The third chapter will give a detailed account of the democratic façade Saddam Hussein was orchestrating and the genuine democracy building which ensued after his overthrow in 2003. These will all be relevant to the main thesis, as the penultimate chapter will provide an assessment of Iraq's democratization based on Polity's data series, democratic peace theory and state-to-nation balance theory, before concluding.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

The objective of the first chapter is to provide an adequate understanding of how historically Iraq got to where it is today and why it faces the narrative it currently does. The first section will provide the necessary background of Iraqi history to understand where Iraq stood before democracy building began. The next section will give a brief overview of the change in rationale for the invasion of Iraq in 2003, leading critics to inadequately use violence and corruption as indicators of progress. The third section will explain how holding pro-war or anti-war sentiments prior to the 2003 invasion automatically set up preconceived notions for assessing the democratization of Iraq in a positive or negative context. This leads to the final section of the chapter, which states why this thesis is important in providing a balanced assessment of Iraq's democratization without including any bias for or against the invasion.

1.1 History

The Republic of Iraq is a modern-day state located in the heart of the Middle East and North Africa region. It is often referred to as the land of Mesopotamia, the cradle of civilization, where the Ancient Sumerians, Akkadians, Babylonians and Assyrian empires once ruled. During the Middle Ages of Islamic empires, the land between two rivers is looked upon fondly, as the days of the Abbasid Empire ruled large measures of the earth from the establishment of their capital Baghdad, founded in 762 C.E.[1] However, the sacking of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258 C.E. saw an end to the romantic lenses through which historians viewed Baghdad and its ruling land.[2] Baghdad would be freed from Mongol rule only to be constrained by the Ottoman Empire, reigning from Istanbul. The vast Ottoman Empire ruled its land through local administrations, dividing the heartland of

1. Justin Marozzi, *Baghdad: City of Peace, City of Blood,* (London: Allen Lane, 2014), 10.
2. Ibid, 149.

the Abbasid Empire into three provinces: Baghdad, Basra and Mosul. They were separate provinces yet closely administrated in Baghdad by the Pasha, the representative of the Ottoman Caliphate. After four centuries, the end of the Ottoman Empire would come as a result of the British and French intervention after the First World War.[3] The events afterwards would physically shape the region for the following century and to the present day, with the establishment of various sovereign states in the Middle East and North Africa region.

Today, Iraq is comprised of the three Ottoman provinces of Baghdad, Basra and Mosul.[4] While there was strong debate as to whether Mosul province would remain under the Ottoman axis of Baghdad and form the modern state of Iraq or become a part of Turkey, Mosul remained under Baghdad's authority. The geographical end result of modern Iraq is very similar to the local administrative mapping of the Ottomans, except under British imperial rule. Whilst some view Iraq as the cradle of civilization or the peak of the Islamic Empire, many today see Iraq as an artificial state amongst 22 others in the Middle East and North Africa region.

Iraq would not stay under British colonialism for long, as a coup d'état in 1958 would transform the Kingdom of Iraq into the Republic of Iraq and Iraqis would attain true sovereignty.[5] However, Iraq was a republic only by name, as Baghdad would be plagued by numerous coups resulting in authoritarian rule after authoritarian rule. Recollecting the general history of Iraq, which dates as far back as written records, it is marred with a distinct paucity of democracy.

From the Ancient Mesopotamian Nebuchadnezzar II to the Abbasid founder/ caliph Abu Jafar Ibn Muhammad Al-Mansur, to modern Iraq's Saddam Hussein,

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3. Ibid, 205.

4 Ibid, 296.

5 Adeed Dawisha, Iraq: A Political History, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 171.

Iraq has been ruled either by its own authoritarian rulers or by other empires. It is vital to grasp this, as this is the starting point from which Iraq's current progress towards democracy should be measured – these are the centuries-old status quo shackles from which Iraq, through its democratization, is attempting to break away from. Iraq's democratization, therefore, should not just be measured exclusively in terms of an unattainable arbitrary level of democracy pre-set by modern day scholars.

1.2 Violence and Corruption as Insufficient Indicators of Progress

Saddam Hussein and his Ba'ath party brutally ruled for a quarter of a century that would see Iraq go through numerous wars, international sanctions and civil unrest. A major uprising in 1991, when fourteen of Iraq's eighteen provinces had been captured by the masses, was brutally crushed by Saddam, when George Bush Senior made a timely conscious decision of enabling him to do so, resulting in the death of hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqi lives. Saddam and his rule would end only by foreign intervention led by the United States of America in 2003 through Operation: Iraqi Freedom.[6] The war was supported by numerous allies in a 'Coalition of the Willing', and the initiative pushed by George Bush Junior's administration led to disarming Saddam Hussein, his death and the dismantling of his weapons program. The absence of any stockpiles of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs), the stated rationale for the invasion, would undermine U.S. credibility and alliance cooperation for years.[7]

The absence of WMDs, combined with the instability and increase in violence after the fall of Saddam, would convince many observers that the intervention of the Iraq War was a mistake, and post-conflict reconstruction was a wasteful failure as a foreign policy. The promise of bringing democracy to Iraq,

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6 Ibid, 236-242.
7 Ibid, 242.

as the latest experiment in democratization, became the main rationale for the war, even though democratization was never the main reason for the invasion - it was all about Iraq's WMD. Spreading democracy to Iraq became a top priority when it was clear there were no WMDs to be found there. Accusations that the war was not only a mistake, but immoral, were common.

The absence of WMDs led to a serious decline in domestic support for the reconstruction effort. The prolonged foreign presence in Iraq and the steady escalation in fighting and violence also contributed to declining public support, which led to the withdrawal of U.S. troops in December of 2011[8], thus fulfilling a campaign promise issued by President Barak Obama during the 2008 campaign.

Although U.S. public support had increased after Iraqis held their first free elections, began writing their constitution, ratified the document with a referendum, and then began rebuilding their institutions under the rubric of democratization, Iraq was largely ignored in Washington after the withdrawal of American troops. The sharp decline of domestic support for the Iraq War and withdrawal of troops resulted in shrinking interest in the U.S. media, think tank groups and foreign policy. Consequently, the effort to democratize was generally, but I will argue mistakenly, viewed as a failure and very often compared to the Vietnam War and contrasted with success stories of democratization in Germany and Japan after the Second World War.

Of course, the persistence in violence provided the evidence critics typically cited when repeating and reinforcing their original concerns about the decision to invade. The high level of corruption was also cited to slam the Bush administration and the neoconservatives who presumably endorsed the invasion to spread democracy under the banner of safeguarding U.S. security. These two

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8 Robert K. Brigham, ed., The United States and Iraq Since 1990, (Singapore: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 230.

common features of post-war Iraq, violence and corruption, were consistently used to define the failure of democratization. Indeed, corruption was also cited to explain violence and low standards of living of Iraqi citizens. But these two indicators are insufficient to gauge a clearer and more comprehensive take on Iraqi democratization. The analysis requires a more balanced and detailed evaluation of multiple factors. In fact, violence and corruption were not introduced to Iraq in 2003; they had been an unfortunate part of Iraqi history for centuries and should not be cited to illustrate the failure of U.S. intervention. The question is how far have we come since 2003 when measured against Iraq's previous centuries-old history?

Simplistic interpretations of political, economic, legal and institutional progress lead to flawed interpretations of Iraq today. When judging progress in Iraq, expectations of what Iraq should look like in a perfect world should not be the standard - where Iraq was and how far it has come since should be the focus when answering these important questions. Indices such as Polity can visually map the levels of democracy of any state and paint a different picture of Iraq's progress. For example, Iraq has vastly improved, across multiple indicators, since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, and has steadily evolved into a much healthier state.

The progressive trend of Iraq's democracy score does not only show Iraq is not a failed state, but also demonstrates other characteristics consistent with expectations underpinning democratic peace theory. Scholars have theorized that non-democratic states will struggle more in order to achieve meaningful progress and are also more prone to violence. But violence in Iraq today is not new and is at levels that are much lower than those from previous periods in Iraq's history. Indeed, Iraq will be prone to violence as long as democracy is pursued in a region such as the Middle East, where the nation is surrounded by non-democratic states.

This will be explained in further detail in the fourth chapter.

Violence is a natural feature of any attempt by emerging democracies to establish meaningful reform in their attempt to democratize, and this should not be used as a definition of an unhealthy democracy, nor should it be a reason to halt efforts for democratization. Another argument used against pursuing democracy in authoritarian states is that it risks producing illiberal democracies that legitimize immoral rule through democratic principles and mandate, as these states may pose an even greater threat to Western liberal democracies. These concerns are legitimate, but again, much like the argument around violence, they should not be used to indicate an insurmountable barrier to progress, or a definitive indication of a failed democratization project. In many cases, most fledgling democracies progress through such teething stages en route to the final destination.

This thesis will show that Iraq's track record of multiple free and fair elections, with peaceful transitions of power from one coalition government to the next, and with different prime ministers and presidents over the past decade or so, challenges the common claims put forward by critics. Iraqi leaders have consistently shown a commitment to strong bilateral relations with the United States and the West, and an equally compelling commitment to improving Iraq's image and role in the international community. Iraq is once again the focus of much debate in academic circles and mainstream media, but it is important to stand up against the latest attempt to paint Iraq as a failed state. This thesis is focussed on arguing against the failed state narrative.

1.3 Explaining Negative and Positive Biases on Iraq's Progress

The reason for the tendency to spin Iraq's progress in either negative or positive terms can be found in the original divisions preceding the Iraq invasion,

specifically between "pro-war" and "anti-war" advocates. Anti-war critics remain committed to proving the wisdom of their initial stance and are more inclined, as a result of confirmation bias, to define Iraq as a failure, regardless of the evidence. Proponents of the war are just as inclined to do the same thing to defend their position, often pointing to any indication that Iraq is a strong and healthy emerging democracy. The key is to step back and to take a more balanced and considerably more comprehensive review of the data and evidence. This thesis is designed to accomplish this important objective.

It is important for the reader to understand, however, that this thesis will not engage in debates over the decision to invade in 2003, or the wisdom of Congress passing the war resolution in October 2002 authorizing President Bush to use military force. The objective is to assess the democratization of Iraq from regime change to the present day. Whether the war was justified initially is a separate question. The question now is whether Iraq's attempt to become democratic is succeeding or failing. The thesis is designed to address this question, and to explore the issue of whether the Middle East is working through its fourth wave of Democratization. The West may still be obsessing over the false intelligence behind the threat of WMDs, but Iraqis are trying to rebuild their state. Their future does not rest on resolving the WMD puzzle.

The costs to life, time and money will be a burden for the U.S. to address for a long time, but debates over the invasion should not be used to bias perspectives and judgments about democracy in Iraq. The confusion is understandable - the U.S. administration was responsible for the change in narrative during the Iraq War, pushing the story away from destroying WMDs for American safety towards the imperative to spread democracy to Iraq and the region. Despite the confusion, this thesis will assess Iraq's pursuit of democracy from 2003 through 2016 using Polity's democracy score index, democratic peace theory and democratization theories.

1.4 Relevance and Importance of Exploring Democracy in Iraq

Iraq is an important ally in the Middle East. Its importance may have declined as the war dragged on, and as Westerners became impatient with progress, but the emergence of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Iraq and Syria has placed Iraq at the forefront of U.S. foreign policy priorities in the Middle East. While interest in Iraq was reignited for the wrong reasons, the period of continued democracy building after the American withdrawal has been largely ignored, which explains why it is so important to revisit questions about progress and to collect relevant evidence. Democratic progress in Iraq has continued despite fighting a war against ISIL, and similar efforts will likely continue after the war as the leaders attempt to stabilize the state. This research is critical to developing a better overall understanding of Iraq's democratization moving forward, particularly in the context of ISIL's growth. Indeed, Iraq's status has become more relevant to the stability of the region today.[9]

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

The second chapter is a literature review and will address several works by scholars who have presented their opinions at different stages of Iraq's democratization on why they believe the process has or will fail. The first section examines arguments made shortly after the US-led invasion on how democracy will fail in Iraq because democracy is incompatible with Islam and such a process has failed in a previous attempt to democratize Iraq under the British. The second and third sections of this chapter provide the origin and cause behind violence and corruption in Iraq with facts countering claims made by scholars that violence and corruption have worsened after introducing democracy. These points are crucial to the main thesis as the last section shows the impact violence and corruption have had, as well as provide objective measures of Iraq's success

9 Department of State (December 3, 2014) Washington DC: Joint Statement Issued by Partners at the Counter-ISIL Coalition Ministerial Meeting.

in democratizing, serving as a contrast to the opinions of previously mentioned scholars.

2.1 Democracy and Islam

The debates and questions emerged shortly after the invasion of Iraq in 2003 were in the lines of: Is Islam compatible with democracy? Can Iraq, a majority Muslim country, become a democracy? In his discussion of democracy in 2006, Iranian journalist Amir Taheri claimed that Islam and democracy are not compatible.[10] Taheri focuses on Shia Islam, the majority sect in both Iran and Iraq, and argues that democracy as rule of the people (with power) is incompatible with power from God in Islamic belief. He uses the late Ayatollah Khomeini to support his argument - as the father of the Iranian Islamic Revolution, Khomeini was a strong proponent of Wiliyat Al-Faqih (WAF), which translates to the guardianship of the jurists. Taheri goes on to quote Khomeini's critique of democracy as, "'a form of prostitution', because he who gets the most votes wins the power that belongs only to God".[11] Iran may be Iraq's neighbour and the majority of Iraqis and Iranians may share the same sect of Islam, but they have fundamental differences in their schools of thought that is directly relevant to prospects for democratization.

The backbone of the Shia sect of Islam is the religious seminaries that produce their clerics, known as the Hawza. The two oldest Hawzas are located in Najaf, Iraq and Qom, Iran. These two institutes originated over a millennium ago and have had a staunch rivalry, one that is not too dissimilar to the rivalry between Oxford and Cambridge Universities in the United Kingdom. While the two Hawzas share similarities in theological and religious principles, the major difference often highlighted is the belief in the role that religion plays in state

10 Amir Taheri, Islam and Democracy Are Incompatible, In Democracy: Opposing Viewpoints, Ed. Mike Wilson, (Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2006).
11 Ibid, 108.

affairs. With the emergence of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the return of Ayatollah Khomeini to Tehran in 1979, the idea of WAF advanced in Qom's teachings and was put into practice in Tehran. The protection of the jurists placed Shia scholars at the top of the state where they would dictate state interests. Elections were held but the scholars' judgments mattered; candidates and election results had to be approved by Iran's top clerical circle led by the leading Ayatollah.

The Hawza in Najaf, on the other hand, had a different belief system to Qom's WAF. The opposing ayatollah in Najaf, the Grand Ayatollah Abu al-Qasim al-Khoei, who believed in the strict separation of the state and the Hawza, opposed WAF. During Saddam's reign, al-Khoei separated the Hawza in Najaf from politics in Baghdad. In 2003, the Grand Ayatollah at the time of the American invasion in Iraq, Ali Al-Sistani, maintained the same belief. It would prove to be a catalyst in adopting democracy in Iraq and protect it from failing into theocracy. In 2004, senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, Reuel Marc Gerecht, wrote a piece titled *Ayatollah Democracy*.[12] Based on his dealings with the clerics in Najaf, Gerecht concluded that hostility towards the U.S. may be present amongst Shia clergy, but they do not hold the same sentiment towards democracy.[13] He quotes one of Sistani's closest clerical aids, Sheikh Muhammad al-Haqqani, "[w]e want a non-Islamic government that is respectful of Islam…There is no strong desire here to copy the Islamic Republic [of Iran]".[14] Another cleric in Baghdad, Sayid Ali al-Waiz warned Gerecht, "[d]emocracy in the Middle East will not be possible without us".[15] Sayid al-Waiz's words can be put to the test. However, it represents Iraq's belief in and determination to achieve democracy. Furthermore, it reveals democracy's potential coexistence in an Islamic society to counter Taheri's argument.

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12 Reuel Marc Gerecht, "Ayatollah Democracy," The Atlantic, (September, 2004).
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.

The discussion of Islam's supposed incompatibility with democracy is correlated with the argument Edwin Black makes.[16] Black shares a similar belief to that of Taheri's in that Iraqis see democracy as the values of the infidels. For Black, this is one of the reasons he expected democracy to fail in Iraq. The other being that Iraq has no experience with democracy whatsoever in its 7,000 year recorded history.[17] According to Black, the British attempt to instil democratic values in Iraq after the First World War failed miserably.[18] Black's argument regarding the British attempt carries less weight when one considers their efforts to create a non-Iraqi national monarchy from the minority sect of Sunnis. In one of Gertrude Bell's letters from 1920 she stated, "I don't for a moment doubt that the final authority must be in the hands of the Sunnis, in spite of their numerical inferiority; otherwise you will have a mujtahid-run, theocratic state, which is the very devil".[19] Iraqis were not only coming out of four centuries of Ottoman rule, the majority of Iraqis continued to experience forced rule by the British - that is far from democracy. The democratic monarchy may have been part of a larger attempt to create a Westminster parliament to run the affairs of Iraqis, but the parliament's representation was a poor reflection of Iraq's demographics and did not possess the political power to counter British advisory rule over Iraq.

The British colonial rule was flawed from the moment it began, with no intention to have true democratic majority rule in Iraq. The three decades of civil unrest under the monarchy was not due to the fact Iraqis were unaccepting of democratic values, but rather unaccepting of another empire's foreign rule over their land. These same sentiments were no different from those held during foreign occupations in 1920 and in 2003. When Paul Bremer, the U.S. Envoy to

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16 Edwin Black, Democracy Will Fail in Iraq, In Democracy: Opposing Viewpoints,
Ed. Mike Wilson, (Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2006), 218-219.
17 Edwin Black, Democracy Will Fail in Iraq, In Democracy: Opposing Viewpoints,
Ed. Mike Wilson, (Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2006), 218-219.
18 Ibid, 221-222.
19 Gertrude Bell, Letters 3/10/1920, Gertrude Bell Archives in Newcastle University.

Iraq in 2003, introduced a government assembled by Americans to force Iraq to abide by a constitution written by Americans, Grand Ayatollah Sistani rejected the idea by making the case for an alternative constitution written by democratically elected Iraqis.[20] This was not the plan Americans had in mind but Iraqis showed greater determination to build their new state on democratic foundations that were not imposed by outsiders. The implication here is that democracy is not only compatible with Islam, but includes principles that can be adopted in a state that has no history of democracy.

2.2 Violence as a Poor Indicator of A Failed State

Pre-war claims against the possibility of democracy in a majority Muslim state suffered from several significant weaknesses, as noted earlier with references to simplistic measures of failure based on corruption and violence. The organizing of multiple free and fair elections backed by the Hawza in Najaf with consistently high voter turnout proved many of the naysayers wrong. It is true that Iraq is not a Jeffersonian democracy, but it is not a failed state by any measure. Critics shifted their arguments by noting that elections are fine, but if violence continues there must be deeper problems. As former British Ambassador to Syria and Saudi Arabia, Andrew Green, [21] claims, "elections were held to loud applause from Washington" but the violence in Iraq became worse.[22] There are two major flaws in this argument: first, the assumption that violence is a direct result of democracy is false. Second, the assertion that the previous form of governance was better is also false.

Jane Kinninmont, deputy head of the Middle East and North Africa Program at Chatham House, argues that it has "become the conventional wisdom – to the

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20 Paul L. Bremer III, My Year in Iraq, (New York: Simon & Shuster, 2006), 163.
21 Andrew Green, "Why Western Democracy can never work in the Middle East," The Telegraph, (August 16, 2014).
22 Ibid.

point of cliché – in many discussions in Western conferences and academia to depict Iraq as an example of why democracy cannot be imposed 'at the barrel of a gun', or imported by foreigners…"[23] But that assumes we "should leave the people in their natural state of authoritarian rule…"[24] It bears repeating that violence in Iraq is not a direct result of democracy. The shift in power also caused the escalation in violence, but democratization often involves shifts in power. In this case the shift empowered the majority Shia-Arabs to take control of the government. After the first elections were held in 2005, which were largely boycotted by Iraq's Sunni-Arab minority, the Sunnis saw themselves as losing their authority over the state with the fall of Saddam's Ba'athist regime.[25] This authority dates back to Gertrude Bell and the British handing Sunnis rule over the Iraqi state in the early part of the twentieth century. Sunni-Arabs did not only boycott the elections, but rejected the reality of Shia ruling Iraq. This led them to take violent measures to voice their rejection and disapproval of a legitimate effort to transfer power to the majority.

Violence skyrocketed after the 2005 elections, marking a vast difference in security from the first couple of years after the war, where the rule over Iraq was largely handled by the United States.[26] The rise of violence would have occurred regardless of the elections as long as the Shia cemented their authority in the state. As it happened through elections assisted by Americans, democracy began to be confused as the catalyst behind the violence. After a year of heightened violence following the first elections, civil war broke out when one of the revered Shia shrines was bombed in the city of Samarra.[27] The civil war would last two more

23. Jane Kinninmont, The Myth of 'Democracy at the Barrel of a Gun', In Iraq Ten Years On, Eds. Claire Spencer, Jane Kinninmont, Omar Sirri, Eds., (London: Chatham House, 2013), 50.
24. Ibid, 50.
25. Dawisha, Iraq: A Political History, 248.
26. Iraq Body Count (2005).
27. Dawisha, Iraq: A Political History, 262.

years before deals with the Sunni-Arabs were brokered by the United States.[28] This was temporary as violence surged again when ISIL expansion spilled over the border from Syria, reigniting Sunni resentment to Shia majority rule in Iraq. To this day, the challenge has been to convince Sunni-Arabs to accept the new reality in Baghdad, as General Michael Barbero reiterated in the opening of the Atlantic Council's Iraq Task Force on February 16, 2016.[29]

The claim that violence has increased since the invasion of Iraq is false. The non-governmental organization, Iraq Body Count, is dedicated to recording all causalities of death due to violence from 2003 to present day. Their numbers accord with Brookings Institution's records that were published from 2003 to 2013.[30] Up until the end of 2015, Iraq Body Count has the numbers of Iraqi deaths of both civilians and combatants at 242,000.[31] That number alone is less than the numbers of casualties Iraq suffered in the eight-year war with Iran from 1980-1988 instigated by Saddam Hussein, with the total number of casualties at 500,000.[32] The number is also less than the 250,000 dead as a result of Saddam crushing the 1991 uprisings as recorded by the U.S. State Department.[33] These numbers do not take into account the estimated 180,000 murdered in the 1989 Anfal Campaign in northern Iraq, targeting Kurdish, Yazidi and Assyrian minorities that allied with the Iranians in the war.[34] The number of deaths under Saddam grows even further when one considers the 1991 Gulf War and the deaths resulting from the police state's routine detainment and torture.

28. Brigham, ed., The United States and Iraq Since 1990, 203-204.
29. Atlantic Council, "Launch of the Task Force on the Future of Iraq," (February 16, 2016).
30. Michel E. O'Hanlon and Ian Livingston, Iraq Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security in Iraq, (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institute, 2013).
31. Iraq Body Count (2003-2015).
32. Dawisha, Iraq: A Political History, 223.
33. Department of State (April 4, 2003) Washington DC: Life Under Saddam Hussein: Past Repression and Atrocities by Saddam Hussein's Regime.
34. Robert D. Blackwill, Embassy of the United States of America: Saddam's Iraq: A Human Rights Catastrophe.

2.3 Corruption as a Poor Indicator of A Failed State

Dr. Loren Thompson of the Lexington Institute offers some points as evidence that Iraq is a failed state. In addition to violence, he cites reports by Transparency International documenting the alarming rates of corruption in Iraq.[35] Pulitzer Prize journalist, David Wood (writing on the tenth anniversary of the Iraq War), wrote that Iraq has become a deeply divided country "steeped in corruption".[36] Corruption in Iraq became an alarming issue as the country opened up to the world and foreign investors took part in business. Along with foreign investors, global organizations, such as Transparency International, were free to enter the country. Of course, none of these organizations had the same access or capacity to compile any information on corruption prior to 2003, so any claims regarding declining trends in corruption (like violence) are simply unsupported by the facts.[37] Over the past decade, Iraq was consistently graded near the bottom, and as low as 170[th,] amongst the most corrupt states in the world (out of 175 recorded countries).[38] It is true that corruption should be considered, like violence, but a more detailed exploration of the facts is required to get a much better sense of the trends and their relationship to Iraq's democratization project.

Corruption in Iraq prior to 2003 can be tracked. Patrick Cockburn, author of three recent history books on Iraq, wrote in 2009 that corruption is one of the cultures under Saddam, which survived the fall of his regime.[39] He states that Iraq was not always uniquely corrupt; the collapse of the Iraqi currency from United Nations (UN) imposed sanctions after the 1991 Gulf War led to a state run by

35. Loren Thompson, "Failed State: Five Reasons Iraq Can't Be Fixed," Forbes, (May 29, 2015).
36. David Wood, "Iraq Reconstruction Cost U.S. $60 Billion, Left Behind Corruption and Waste," Huffington Post, (March 6, 2013).
37. Corruption Perceptions Index, Transparency International.
38. Thompson, "Failed State: Five Reasons Iraq Can't Be Fixed."
39. Patrick Cockburn, "How bribery became a way of life in Iraq," The Independent, (June 27, 2009).

corruption. Cockburn writes, "Saddam Hussein and his lieutenants quickly found ways of evading sanctions by controlling the black market. Uday, Saddam's eldest son, was paid millions of dollars by cigarette importers".[40] In addition to Cockburn, Iraq historian and political scientist, Eric Davis, addresses the root of corruption in Iraq and pinpoints it back to Saddam in 1991 as well.[41]

One of the key impediments to democratization in Iraq is the pervasive corruption that afflicts its governmental institutions. To understand the source of corruption, we need to remember Saddam's degradation of all government institutions, especially after the 1991 Gulf War, and the impact of the United Nations sanctions regime that was imposed on Iraq after the war.[42]

Iraq was excluded in corruption indices produced by Transparency International because of the sanctions regime. But it is clear that corruption became a regular practice of the Iraqi state after 1991, and not from 2003.

Corruption continues to plague the state as it did under Saddam. However, under a democratically elected government, Iraqis have held underachieving prime ministers accountable, and current Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi, has reiterated his commitment to halting corruption within the state through such measures as the abolishing of ceremonial political positions, removing ethno-sectarian quota practices and by holding public servants accountable.[43] These efforts were in response to the large anti-corruption demonstrations, which took place across Baghdad and surrounding regions in 2015.[44] As Saddam introduced corruption as a way of ruling, a democratically elected leader such as al-Abadi

40. Ibid.

41. Eric Davis, Taking Democracy Seriously in Iraq, (Boston: Boston University, 2015), 24.

42. Ibid, 24.

43. Prime Minister's Office (August 20, 2015) Baghdad: Statement on Reforms.

44. Ammar Karim, "Thousands of Iraqis protest corruption, poor services," Agence France-Presse, (August 7, 2015).

has vowed to remove it from state practice. It will prove difficult to enforce such reforms in practice, which have been rooted in over two decades of state-society relations. Dr. Luay al-Khatteeb claims even if al-Abadi's reforms to tackle corruption may not be an "immediate panacea" to Iraq's problems, it is a "momentous gambit" from al-Abadi that could prove to be a "watershed in Iraq's fledging democracy".[45] In addition, the Iraqi people have voiced their demands towards the issue, something that could not have been done before 2003. Iraq's political class has taken these demands seriously as the past decade has shown three different prime ministers being replaced democratically in accordance to the Iraqi constitution. It is unknown how effective al-Abadi's reforms will be in tackling corruption, or whether or not changes will be noticeable during his term, but al-Abadi's government will be held accountable for its services and for the successes of his reforms in the next federal elections. That is a positive sign often ignored by critics- accountability.

2.4 Comparing and Measuring "Failure(s)" of Democracy

Recent scholarly work assessing the democratization of Iraq by Toby Dodge[46] and Emma Sky continue to view Iraq's democratization negatively, with no optimism for the future of democracy in Iraq.[47] Dodge and Sky have published books that have suggested little has improved for Iraqis since 2003, and argue there is even less to be hopeful about from the perspective of democracy building. Sky was opposed to the Iraq War but served as a government coordinator in Kirkuk from 2003-2004 and then as a political advisor to United States General Raymond Odierno from 2007-2010. She claims she wanted to help in the rebuilding of the

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45. Luay al-Khatteeb, "Abadi's momentous gambit against political corruption in Iraq." Brookings Institute, (August 9, 2015).
46. Toby Dodge, Iraq: from war to a new authoritarianism, (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2012).
47. Emma Sky, The Unraveling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq, (New York: Public Affairs, 2015).

state as a way to apologise to the Iraqi people.[48] Sky recollects her experience in her book, *The Unraveling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq.* She states at the end of her first tour in 2004, "[t] here were many things I would remember about my time in Iraq, but building democracy was not one of them".[49] In a more recent reflection on Iraq, Sky states that nothing the Bush administration had set out for Iraq prior to the war materialized, notably regime change resulting in democracy and its spread in the region.[50]

Sky claims that any positive work that had been completed between 2007-2009 was gone, and she concludes with little optimism for Prime Minister al-Abadi.[51] This is the same sentiment that Dodge shares in his third book.[52] After assessing Iraq's development to the end of 2012, he states "[t] he skewed reconstruction of the Iraqi state does not provide a sustainable basis for the consolidation of Iraq's democratic stability in the years ahead".[53] On that assessment, Dodge ends his book by pointing out the high costs in casualties and price paid for an unstable future for Iraq's democracy.[54] Dodge and Sky share a popular view on how the development of democracy has gone in Iraq, and continue to judge progress based on excessively optimistic expectations the Bush administration set out initially. Although they attempt to present an analysis of how Iraq developed since 2003, it remains difficult for them to do this without the bias of pre-war expectations they both held.

48. Kevin Sylvester, "Emma Sky: Why Iraq is the 'worst strategic failure since the foundation of the United States'," CBC News, (August 23, 2015).
49. Emma Sky, The Unraveling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq.
50. Sylvester, "Emma Sky: Why Iraq is the 'worst strategic failure since the foundation of the United States'."
51. Ibid.
52. Dodge, Iraq: from war to a new authoritarianism, 212.
53. Ibid, 212.
54. Ibid, 213.

Chapter 3 – The Path to Democracy

The third chapter outlines the false democratic sense Saddam Hussein instilled throughout his reign and the developments in democracy-building which took place after the American invasion in 2003. This first section explains how democracy will be defined and why Polity is the internationally recognized standard index chosen to measure democracy in Iraq for this thesis. The second section describes the political limitations of Iraqis under Saddam, from illegitimate elections to restricted freedom of speech, as Saddam's Iraq receives one of the lowest possible democracy index score on the Polity scale, the lowest score in Iraq's modern history. The third section in this chapter addresses the important milestones in Iraq's democratization thus far, tracking its rise in the democracy index provided by Polity. Milestones presented vary from holding provincial and federal elections, to the rights and freedoms of all Iraqis enshrined in the newly ratified constitution. The events and facts provided in this chapter serve as evidence for the thesis.

3.1 Defining Democracy

Any attempt to assess Iraq's democracy requires some effort to define, clarify and operationalize the characteristics of democracy used in this thesis. This project will define democracy using the Polity indices.[55] Polity is a research program founded by Ted Gurr in the early 1970's with the aim to provide coding of authority characteristics for comparative and quantitative analysis.[56] Polity research has evolved over the decades as each new research project brings about a new set of data for researchers to use. Polity's fourth and latest project, Polity

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55. Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2014
Measuring democracies, Center for Systematic Peace.
56. Monty G. Marshall and Keith Jaggers, Polity IV Project Dataset Users' Manual,
(Center for Systematic Peace, 2014), 1.

IV, is managed by the Center for Systemic Peace under director, Monty Marshall.[57] Building on previous projects, the aim of Polity IV is to objectively measure the degree of democracy and autocracy of sovereign states with a population over 500,000. The last set of country reports was published in 2010, while the democracy index remains updated and revised annually for further research. From its first data series published, Polity has become one of the leading sources for academics to use to track regime change and effects of regime authority. Having said that, Polity remains largely absent from critics' work on Iraq as it does not provide data reflecting a negative slope in order to support their claim of democratization failing.

It is important to use Polity data series as the main source to visualize Iraq's transition towards democracy, because its criteria is crucial when discussing relevant characteristics and competing perspectives. Polity evaluates democracy based on a state's election competitiveness and openness, overall political participation and the extent to which executive authority is checked.[58] These qualities are judged by six measurable components.[59] There are other measures of democracy used, for example, by Freedom House, but their criteria is less helpful when measuring the process of democratization. Not only is Freedom House's seven-point rating scale restrictive for academic research, its dependence on peer review processes raises concern of subjective measuring.[60] Polity on the other hand accounts for smaller adjustments over a longer time period that proves ideal for the Iraq case. Furthermore, the characteristics of democracy in Polity fall in-line with those Davis uses in his report on democracy in Iraq.[61] The characteristics he uses are "free, fair, and periodic elections, unrestricted political participation,

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57. Ibid, 2.
58. Ibid, 28-29.
59. Ibid, 20-29.
60. David F. J. Campbell, The Basic Concept for the Democracy Ranking of the Quality of Democracy, (Vienna: Democracy Ranking, 2008), 15-16.
61. Davis, Taking Democracy Seriously in Iraq, 4.

accountable governance, transparency in decision-making, and protection of minority rights". These additions are important features that will be used when applying democratic peace theory and state-to-nation balance theory later in the thesis. When combined these measures allow for a comprehensive assessment of Iraq's democratization.

3.2 Polity Indices and Saddam's Republic of Fear

Polity measures allow for the placement of states on a scale from -10 to 10. 10 is the highest, marking a full liberal democracy and -10 indicating a completely autocratic government.[62] Under the Ba'athists, Iraq took a gradual drop in Polity's democracy index. The score hit its lowest point in Iraq's modern history with the rise of Saddam Hussein as president of the Republic of Iraq in 1979.[63] From 1979 to 2003 Iraq showed a steady negative 9 on Polity's graph.[64] Throughout Saddam's tenure, there were only two presidential elections held, one in 1995 and the other in 2002. Both elections posed the same question, which was: "Do you approve of President Saddam Hussein being the President of Iraq?".[65] Citizens were given two options of "yes" or "no".[66] In 1995, the "yes" vote was 99.96%, with less than a thousand votes from the eight million Iraqis who participated disapproving.[67] Saddam would improve upon those results in the next presidential elections by receiving 100% approval.[68] However, he was not the only victor in those elections, despite running unopposed. Unlike the

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62. Monty G. Marshall and Keith Jaggers, Polity IV Project Dataset Users' Manual, (Center for Systematic Peace, 2014), 8.
63. Dawisha, Iraq: A Political History, 216.
64. Monty G. Marshall and Keith Jaggers. Polity IV Country Report 2010: Iraq. (Center for Systematic Peace, 2011).
65. Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Iraqis Go to Polls; Guess Who Will Win," The New York Times, (October 15, 1995).
66. Ibid.
67. "Saddam 'wins 100% of vote'." BBC News, October 16, 2002.
68. Ibid.

previous elections, this one had a 100% turnout.[69] It also meant Saddam Hussein received the approval of every single eligible Iraqi voter.

Saddam's presidential elections were not the only occasion for Iraqis to practice their 'democratic' rights under his rule. Saddam's Ba'athists regularly held parliamentary elections where the party was the one in parliament alongside independents. The Ba'athists always held a majority and the only time other parties had seats was in the 1996 parliamentary elections with the Ba'athist-aligned Kurdish parties: the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and Kurdistan Revolutionary Party held three and two seats, respectively.[70] The Iraqi Communist Party also held one seat.[71] All the candidates, whether Ba'athist or not, had to be aligned with the Ba'athist party in order to be approved to run in the elections. Their independent status was a façade for Saddam in an attempt to give legitimacy to his parliament and status of a republic. Polity's score on Iraq under Saddam reveals the full picture of the police state Iraqis had to endure. This is all in addition to the wars and sanctions they were forced into during large periods of Saddam's oppressive rule.

Elections were no different during other times and instances in the life of Iraqis under Saddam. Iraqis were forced to re-elect Saddam and the Ba'ath party. They were constantly forced to listen to his state propaganda, as there was no alternative due to the lack of freedom of speech. There were only government-controlled channels aired on television, with the Iraqi state news being the only news source to watch.[72] Satellite dishes were illegal as they broadcast channels outside the state's control. Iraqis were punished violently, as was the case for all other crimes, if caught with a satellite dish. Alongside the state authorized channels,

69. Ibid.
70. Iraq Parliamentary Chamber 1996. Inter-Parliamentary Union.
71. Ibid.
72. Sherry Ricchiardi, Iraq's News Media After Saddam: Liberation, Repression, and Future Prospects, (Washington, D.C.: Center for International Media Assistance, 2011).

the Ministry of Information, run by Saddam's eldest son, Uday, controlled all print media. As a result, all the journalists had to be Ba'athist party members in order to be active journalists. Journalists were rewarded with bonuses, cars and land for their loyal work to the state, and any critical writing was punished through arrests, torture and executions. In addition to the restrictions in voicing an opinion through media and elections, Iraqis were prohibited from any form of demonstrations. The only rallies held were those organized by Ba'athists in support of Saddam.

All Iraqis were oppressed under Saddam's police state. Ba'athist-imposed laws were enforced on all Iraqis, regardless of their ethnicity or religious sect. They had to be a Ba'athist or vote for the Ba'athists. However, the Ba'ath party in Iraq ran on a pan-Arab ideology, which marginalized many of Iraq's diverse ethnic minorities, the largest of which are the Kurds followed by the Turkmen and Assyrians. There are many other minority communities in Iraq who were marginalized, including the Yazidis and Shabak groups. These groups all speak a different language from Arabic, including Kurdish, Turkish or Syriac. While Arabic is the most widely spoken language in Iraq, these ethnic minorities were restricted to being educated in Arabic in their schools and to using it in their local administrations. Minority groups were not the only ones oppressed by the Ba'athists. The largest sect in Iraq, the Shia-Arabs, who make up roughly 60% of the population, were marginalized for their sectarian identity. The majority of the Arab states are from the Sunni sect. To avoid being a minority, Shia-Arabs were in favour of a pan-Iraqi identity which was promoted by General Abdul Karim Qasim, the founding father of the Republic of Iraq in 1958, as opposed to a pan-Arab identity as part of a coalition of Arab states under the Ba'athists.[73]

Iraqi Shia were victims to sectarian profiling by Saddam for their sectarian identity.[74] To increase Saddam's political fear of Shia, his rise to power coincided with neighbouring Iran's Islamic Revolution. The Iranians, ethnically Persian

73. Dawisha, Iraq: A Political History, 199.
74. Ibid, 222.

and historic rivals of Iraq, were from the Shia faith, like the majority of Arabs in Iraq. Saddam feared the Shia would align more with the Iranians due to their faith rather than with his party and the Arab world due to their ethnicity. Therefore, Arab-Shia with historic lineage to Iran or political affiliation outside the Ba'ath were deported in waves from 1980 as the start of the Iraq-Iran war began. The Shia, like the Kurds, also experienced genocide and while other minorities were restricted from speaking their mother tongue, Shia were prevented from openly practicing their religion. Dr. Abbas Kadhim wrote an extensive report on the Ba'athist siege against the Shia seminary, Hawza.[75] Despite the Hawza avoiding politics, Ba'athists feared a Shia uprising through the clerics in Hawza.[76] The Shia and other groups have always been limited in their political participation throughout Iraq's modern history, but religious and social restrictions on top of political ones were at their height after 1979. While social practices were applauded, relative to the region, in the 1970s, under Saddam there was nothing for Iraqis other than Ba'athist oppression.

75. Abbas Kadhim, The Hawza Under Siege: A Study in the Ba'th Party Archive, (Boston: Boston University, 2013).
76. Ibid.

3.3 The Road to Democracy
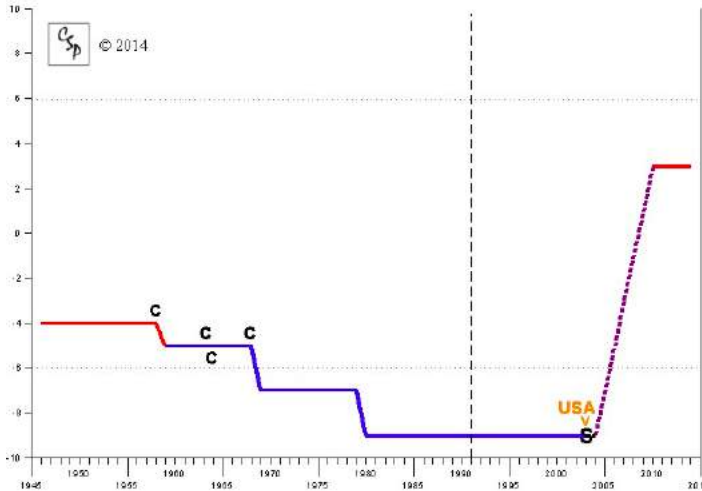
Polity Regime Trend - Iraq[77]

The fall of Saddam Hussein on April 9, 2003 brought the end to the Ba'athist regime in Iraq.[78] The Iraqis' fate would be under the control of the Americans who were admittedly making quick decisions. The consensus amongst American and Iraqi political party leaders was to have a parliamentary republic, which reflects the French state with a president and a prime minister. The idea behind this decision was to have a balance of powers and limit the possibility of an authoritarian rule returning. Ghazi al-Yawar was appointed president and Ayad Allawi was appointed prime minister in 2004.[79] The intention of Americans was to write a constitution for the Iraqis who would later have the opportunity to vote on it through a referendum. Ayatollah Sistani did not approve of the idea. Despite the fact that British imperialism ended nearly a century before, the experience

77. Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2014
Measuring democracies – Iraq Graph, Center for Systematic Peace.
78. Dawisha, Iraq: A Political History, 243.
79. Ibid, 248.

was still fresh in the minds of Iraqis. Ayatollah Sistani proposed his own version of democracy, which included national elections, whereby Iraqis vote for a group of representatives who would write the constitution within a year, followed by a referendum to see if Iraqis would ratify the constitution. These first free and fair elections held in Iraq in January 2005 constitute the point from which Iraq began its push away from autocratic rule.

As violence grew after the first elections, political tensions increased with the time constraint of one year to write a constitution, which met with the agreement from all political groups. Despite the criticism about the time limit and the vague language in various articles of the constitution, there was a complete draft presented to the citizens of Iraq for a vote in October 2005. The final product contained 144 articles acknowledging a sovereign, democratic, and federal Republic of Iraq.[80] It begins by acknowledging the fundamental rights and freedoms of all Iraqi people, adopts the Kurdish language as the nationwide official language alongside Arabic, and embraces Turkmen and Syriac in the local administrations in which their communities reside.[81] In addition to acknowledging Islam as the official religion of the state, all other practiced religions by minorities, such as Christianity, Yazidi and Mandean faiths, are acknowledged and protected within the constitution.[82] The constitution, criticized in some articles for its vagueness, was clear in ensuring the rights and freedoms of all Iraqis, minorities especially. The rights of women were also clear and their representation in government was secured with a 25% quota for women in parliament.[83] A fundamental characteristic of any democracy is the protection of minorities, something necessary in a country like Iraq, which has a rich and diverse population.

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80. Republic of Iraq, Iraqi Constitution.
81. Iraqi Constitution, art. 4.
82. Iraqi Constitution, art. 2, sec. 2.
83. Iraqi Constitution, art. 49, sec. 4.

The referendum was held and, unlike the first elections, Sunni-Arabs did not boycott - a clear demonstration of the kind of buy-in expected in a healthy democracy. Politically, they had already taken a knock from the fall of the regime and did themselves no favours by boycotting the first elections. Having hardly any representatives elected, there was outcry from the Sunni community regarding their absence during the writing of the constitution, which ultimately defeated the principle purpose of boycotting the elections. Although not many Sunnis were elected, there were senior Sunni politicians included in the writing of the constitution and the referendum went through. The rules for the referendum required a majority "yes" vote across the 18 provinces, or no more than 2 provinces voting majority "no" to a nationwide "yes" vote. The three Sunni-Arab provinces in Iraq voted "no", but only two of the provinces were a majority two-thirds "no" vote. The rest of the provinces made up mostly of Shia and Kurds voted in favour of the constitution and it officially became ratified.[84] Two months later, in December of 2005, there would be another nationwide election where members of parliament would be elected for a four-year term as outlined by the newly adopted Iraqi constitution. The turnout rate for that election, which was not boycotted by any group, was over 77%.[85]

As Iraqis once again went to the polls and elected a parliament on a four-year term, Iraq would rise in the Polity score above a negative six for the first time since 1968, the year the Ba'ath party took over. Rising above a negative six indicates under Polity that the state is no longer under an autocratic authority.[86] Iraq would continue to climb the democracy score index throughout the tenure of its first government, drastically rising from a negative six to a positive three. That four-year span recorded Iraq going from a closed anocracy to an open anocracy. This consistent climb in Polity score was coinciding with the breakout of civil

84. Dawisha, Iraq: A Political History, 251-252.
85. Ibid, 258.
86. Marshall and Jaggers, Polity IV Country Report 2010: Iraq.

war between 2006 and 2008. Sunni-Arabs were dissatisfied with losing their status of exclusive power over the state, but this did not halt the development of democracy, with the adoption of a constitution, which protected all Iraqi groups, including Sunni-Arabs. The conclusion to the civil war coincided with the first provincial elections in 2009, which continued to see a high turnout of Iraqi voters, even for provincial elections, with a turnout of 51%.[87] This was the first opportunity for a transition of power between governments, which took place on the provincial level. This is where Iraq would begin to see its constitution and infant democracy put to the test.

Iraq had successful provincial elections in 2009 and multiple provinces such as Baghdad and Basra saw peaceful transitions of governments from one political party to the next. The end of the civil war brought stability back to many parts of the state, however Iraqis had been resilient throughout the civil war and had continued in their path of holding elections and rebuilding their institutions. Many attempted to use the civil war violence as evidence of democracy being unsuitable for the country, but the voter turnout proved otherwise. The violence did not impact the whole state either, as many of the southern and northern provinces avoided conflict. Although most of the violence occurred in the western Sunni-Arab region of Iraq, elections were still held in Sunni majority provinces such as Anbar and Salahaldin, where their candidates were free to run for elections and hold the position of governor.

The next federal elections were held in 2010 and Iraq would see a more difficult transition of power between governments than its provincial elections. Nouri al-Maliki, the incumbent prime minister, would win the most individual votes in the country, but his party would get two seats less than the party of

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87. Ahmed Ali, Iraq's Provincial Elections and Their National Implications, (Washington, D.C.: Institute for the Study of War, 2013), 9.

rival Ayad Allawi. Allawi was the American appointed prime minister (2004-2005) and his party won the vote with 91 seats versus al-Maliki's 89.[88] Despite the uproar for a recount by al-Maliki, the numbers would stand and ten months would pass before another government was formed. Although Allawi had won the most seats, the constitution required the leader who formed the largest block to be granted 30 days by the president of the Republic to form a government.[89] Al-Maliki was able to form a larger block with his 89 seats and was granted the right to form a cabinet, which was subject to a vote in parliament and required two-thirds approval. While the constitution is clear in who is given the right to form the government, the call for a recount by al-Maliki and the duration before he was able to form his cabinet would be the beginning of a turbulent coalition government formation.

Al-Maliki's second term would take off on the wrong footing and it would never regain its balance. The previous two years, which many had regarded as the best couple of years in Iraq's history since pre-Ba'ath Iraq, would be forgotten and the spillover of the civil war from Syria would make matters worse. ISIL fighters would cross the border and inhabit many Iraqi-Sunni towns leading to the fall of Fallujah and the second largest city in Iraq, Mosul on June 10, 2014.[90] Once again, many anti-war critics claimed this constituted a failure of Iraq democratizing, claiming that the second largest city of the country would never have fallen to ISIL militants had democratization been stable. They are correct in that Mosul would not have fallen to ISIL, had it not been for the majority of ISIL leadership being former Ba'ath officials who had sided with the terrorist organization to once again attempt to retake control of Baghdad. Despite the political disputes and the ISIL crisis, which began at the end of 2013, Iraq had not dropped in its democracy

88. Dawisha, Iraq: A Political History, 359.
89. Iraqi Constitution, art. 76, sec. 1.
90. Karl Vick, "Iraq's Second Largest City Falls to Extremists," Time Magazine, (June 10, 2014).

score on Polity's data series, which has been recorded up to 2014.

Despite the presence of ISIL in Syria, Iraq maintained its electoral timetable of holding regular elections with the 2013 provincial elections and again in April of 2014 with the federal elections. With the provincial elections, transition of government was once again seen across many of Iraq's provinces. Many who had been elected to replace the prior government in 2009 were replaced themselves in 2013. The fall of Fallujah to ISIL militants in January 2014 did not stop the federal elections in April and the internally displaced Iraqis were provided temporary voting booths across the country. It was only after the elections results were confirmed by Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) did Mosul fall, in June 2014. Even with Mosul under ISIL control, the formation of a new government in Baghdad maintained its course. However, with the fall of Mosul, Prime Minister al-Maliki was replaced by fellow party member Haider al-Abadi. Al-Maliki's coalition had won the most seats in the elections but not enough for a majority. Members of parliament outside of al-Maliki's list agreed to form a block with his list, in turn being able to be the block, which forms the government, in exchange for leadership change to al-Abadi. This resulted in al-Abadi forming a new cabinet and becoming the fourth prime minister since the fall of Saddam Hussein.

Political commentary in Iraq had raised concerns over Prime Minister al-Maliki's intention to run for a third term, especially after the conundrum, which led to his second term. There was fear amongst Iraq analysts that another dictator would rise in Iraq, as the constitution does not hold a term limit on the premiership. The worry of many Western analysts disappeared when al-Maliki stepped aside from attempting to form another cabinet for a third term. Although Iraq's geographical location is hostile, and although the state was weakened in 2003, factors which have allowed it to be prone to foreign attacks, this certainly

did not mean its goal of achieving democratic rule was unachievable. Despite the spike in violence in 2005 and again in 2013, not once did the violence affect Iraq's performance in Polity's data. There has been fragmentation recorded by Polity from the formation of the 2010 government, but it has not degenerated in its democracy score. Other democracy indices such as the Economist also have Iraq constantly rising in democracy rankings. Placed 113th overall in 2012, Iraq improved two spots to 111th in 2014.[91] Like Polity, Iraq has not witnessed a drastic jump as previous years but there has been no negative trend after 2003. All of these rankings have also not taken into consideration the new government of Prime Minister al-Abadi.

To understand the stability of Iraq's democracy beyond Polity and the Economist's data, with the fall of Mosul, Douglas Ollivant states that Baghdad, the capital and home to about a quarter of the Iraqi population, is heavily protected and unlikely fall to ISIL militants.[92] New government formations continue to take place in Iraq and it is nowhere close to becoming like Syria. Ollivant also claims the Kurds are still far from likely to secede and will continue to take part in the federal government of Iraq, giving more credibility and stability to the Iraqi government. From an economic point of view, there is no risk of oil production being affected with a majority of Iraqi oil produced in the south, beyond Baghdad and even safer than the capital.[93] While violence resurfaced due to ISIL, Iraq's democracy remained unharmed and in fact the violence gave Iraqi politicians greater urgency to form a new government in 2014 than 2010 when there was more security in the state.

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91. The Economist Intelligence Unit. Democracy Index 2014: Democracy and its discontents.
92. Douglas A. Ollivant, "Why Iraq Is More Stable Thank You Think," Politico Magazine, (July 9, 2014).
93. Ibid.

Chapter 4 – Assessing Iraq's Democratization

The fourth chapter will provide the main arguments of the thesis. It will do so by beginning with Polity's criteria for measuring democracy. The first section will assess Iraq's democratization based on three characteristics which form the definition of democracy for Polity. After those characteristics are discussed in detail, the state-to-nation balance theory will be used to explain the violence which resulted after the invasion in 2003 and what impact this has on Iraq's democratization. The last section, to provide the final component of the thesis, will examine the characteristics of democratic states found in the democratic peace theory and compare them with the characteristics of Iraq.

4.1 Polity's Criteria of Determining A Democracy

Holding elections alone does not make a state democratic, but it is a vital pillar in democracy and in shaping a state. Iraq has gone from a one-party police state to a multiple-party, federal state that has held consistent, competitive and free elections. Parties are free to have candidates running in any province of the country. Despite criticism in Polity's 2010 country report of some restricted political participation, there are Arab parties running in the Kurdish provinces and there are Kurdish parties running in Arab provinces. The first national elections in 2005 showed a more ethno-sectarian divide as the main Shia political parties formed a coalition and the Kurdish parties formed a Kurdish coalition, dominating the first two federal elections. As the parties had a full term in parliament, the next elections began to see some of the larger coalitions like the Shia coalition, have parties run independently of each other. In 2010 the major political parties formed coalitions with smaller parties and independent candidates based on Iraqi national identity and on shared political platforms, representing a shift from the

ethno-sectarian divide.[94] This was encouraged by the change in 2010 elections system, from the 2005 one-constituency system, to 18 constituencies based on provinces. In 2014, the Kurdish parties, which ran as a Kurdish coalition outside the Kurdish provinces in previous elections, ran separately this time like the Shia parties began to do in 2010.

Iraqi politics remains categorized in terms of ethnic and sectarian lines, but with each consecutive election, there has been a shift by political parties to move away from those divisions. The Iraqi constitution does not impose ethno-sectarian division despite what has been practiced over the past decade. This allows for future governments to move past being formed along ethno-sectarian quotas. Iraq's current Prime Minister al-Abadi has shown intentions to hold reforms on ethno-sectarianism practices by choosing his cabinet differently than his predecessors. His first set of reforms shrunk his cabinet from thirty-three members to twenty-two, by cancelling the deputy-prime minister posts, four cabinets and merging another eight cabinets into four, regardless of the ethnicity or sect of the minister.[95] This is necessary for Iraq to move forward, as political scientist Benjamin Reilly writes, one of the biggest fears from post-conflict elections is the landscaping of political parties and government on ethno-sectarian division.[96] This is something Iraq has continued to move away from and will be able to move past with national reconciliation efforts from all political parties. This leads into Polity's second criteria of the general participation in politics, on which Iraq has done considerably well since Sunni-Arabs ceased boycotting the new political process. Not only are all factions in Iraq participating in the political process, they are free to criticize the state as they please.

94. Rod Nordland, "The Iraqi Voter Rewrites the Rulebook," The New York Times, (April 3, 2010).
95 Prime Minister's Office (August 16, 2015) Baghdad: Prime Minister Orders Decrease in the Council of Ministers Members.
96 Benjamin Reilly, "Post-Conflict Elections: Constraints and Dangers," International Peacekeeping, (Vol. 9, No. 2, 2002).

After the fall of Saddam Hussein, private news outlets went from zero to more than 200 almost instantly.[97] Satellite dishes were no longer banned and as Internet use grew throughout Iraq, the introduction to social media came with it. Unlike neighbouring countries, including the democratic state of Turkey, Iraq does not impose any social media bans on its citizens. As a result, both citizens and politicians have been given all rights from the state to criticize and comment. While reporting on the freedom of speech in Iraq, criticism has been held on the number of journalist deaths since 2003 by outlaws and specific political parties. This has been a phenomenon that has decreased with time over the past 13 years and is not tolerated by the state. The overnight jump from no free media to an abundance of outlets has been difficult on the weakened Iraqi state to ensure the safety of every individual journalist. However, freedom of speech is a defined right of every Iraqi[98], meaning the only hurdle to ensuring journalists' safety in future is the strengthening of the state's security forces. Freedom of speech is enshrined in the constitution and private media is permitted in Iraq, both signs of improvement from Saddam's tyranny and both only possible because of Iraq democratizing.

The third and final characteristic of Polity's grading is based on the extent of checks on the executive authority. This is where Iraq received its lowest grade from Polity in its latest report.[99] However, Iraq does have the necessary checks and balances in place for the government, with separate judiciary and legislative branches of government, in addition to the president holding emergency powers to ensure any branch is not defying the constitution. The Iraqi parliament not only votes on the cabinet of the prime minister at the start of a term, but also holds

97 Ricchiardi, Iraq's News Media After Saddam: Liberation, Repression, and Future Prospects, 4.
98 Iraqi Constitution, art. 38.
99 Marshall and Jaggers, Polity IV Country Report 2010: Iraq.

the power of a vote of no confidence throughout a prime minister's tenure.[100] It is important to note that after the 2010 Polity report on Iraq, under al-Abadi, the executive branch has been held more accountable.[101] Prime Minister al-Abadi and his ministers have attended more questioning sessions by parliament than his predecessors have.[102] The grip of the executive branch in government has loosened in the transition from al-Maliki to al-Abadi.

Despite the checks placed on the executive authority, past governments of Allawi, al-Jaffari and al-Maliki, have all been held accountable for their time in office. Iraq may not directly elect their prime minister through popular voting, previous prime ministers have been forced to step down to allow another member who leads the largest block to take up the position. Prime ministers are not the only ones who have faced accountability and changed their position; speakers of parliament and presidents have as well. Both of these are elected votes by the members of parliament. The ability to transition from multiple governments with different governors, presidents, parliament speakers and prime ministers is a testament to the stability of Iraq's democracy. Iraq has withstood the task of not only holding elections but also withstanding the change of multiple leaders at the top level, both provincially with governors and federally with legislative and executive leaders. A struggle at times, but all former prime ministers Ayad Allawi, Ibrahim al-Jaffari and Nouri al-Maliki have had to respect the rules defined by the constitution and accept defeat through political manoeuvring of other leaders in forming larger blocks to attain the Iraqi premiership.

Iraq has survived political challenges early on in its infant democracy by way of upholding the constitution. There have been cases where certain political

100 Iraqi Constitution, art. 61, sec. 8.
101. "Parliamentary claim to prevent Minister of Defense from travelling in preparation for questioning," Shafaq News, (April 26, 2015).
102. Prime Minister's Office (March 2, 2015) Baghdad: Prime Minister Dr. Haider al-Abadi Deliver a Speech at the Council of Representatives.

groups defy various articles of the constitution, but the executive authority and the legislature have been operating through means set out in the constitution. The constitution has not only ensured peaceful transitions take place between governments, but has ensured the rights of minorities are protected like the Turkmen, Yazidis, Assyrians and others. These minority groups have been at great threat from terrorists like ISIL and other outlaw groups and the state needs to improve its capability of ensuring their safety. Having said that, the state does recognize all of Iraq's minorities without favoritism towards any one group. There has been no attempt of genocide from the state itself to eliminate a certain group by state-sanctioned violence or cultural genocide, as Saddam Hussein once did. The Iraqi state has not conducted ethnic cleansing (Arabization) campaigns to geographically change demographics in certain areas of the country. This is a complete change from the Ba'athist pan-Arab ideology ingrained in the former regime, as the current Iraqi constitution recognizes each and every single group in Iraq, focusing on their unifying identity of being Iraqi nationals. The violence which has targeted various groups of Iraq does not represent a lack of undemocratic values from the state but rather inferior security capabilities, as is the case with the safety of journalists.

4.2 State-to-Nation Balance Theory

Pre-2003, violence existed in Iraq but to understand why it is still present in its current form despite the introduction of democracy and its development over the past decade, the state-to-nation balance (s/n balance) theory needs to be examined. Benjamin Miller, writing in International Studies Quarterly, claims that when democratization occurs in an s/n balance, it will have stabilizing effects on the state and region.[103] This is the effect many Westerners, including the Bush administration, believed in when they changed the rationale for the

103. Benjamin Miller, «Does Democratization Pacify the State? The Cases of Germany and Iraq,» (International Studies Quarterly, 56, 2012), 460.

2003 war as spreading democracy in the region. Iraq would be the first of many countries in the Middle East and North Africa region to democratize. While there is little stability about an eight-year war with Iran and an invasion of Kuwait, the violence after 2003 allowed critics to rave about the instability the 2003 war caused. As Miller continues his hypothesis, he says when democratization occurs with an s/n imbalance, it will bring about instability and violence and he uses Iraq as his example for democratization in an s/n imbalance country.[104] Miller explains that s/n balance has two distinct features and they are state strength and national congruence.[105] Iraq is a weak state that is nationally incongruent and therefore these factors have allowed for instability, or in this case, allowed for instability to be maintained and has rendered it prone to violence.[106] This explains the outbreak of civil war in 2006 and the return to violence in 2013 with ISIL. Miller concludes that it is not democracy that determines violence during democratization, it is the s/n balance.

Benjamin Miller explains that under Saddam Hussein, Iraq was a strong state but nationally incongruent. It then became both a weak state and nationally incongruent after 2003.[107] In Iraq's case, Miller also explains that the introduction of democracy was not just happening in an s/n imbalanced country but one surrounded by many s/n imbalanced countries.[108] Surrounding states such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Syria were all very cautious of what was happening in Iraq and were afraid of a democratic spillover. The s/n balance does not predict the possibility of democratization succeeding, rather only how unstable the state may become and how violent the process might be. With Iraq, the environment was always nationally incongruent and any form of regime change from Saddam

104. Ibid, 460.
105. Ibid, 457.
106. Ibid, 463-466.
107. Ibid, 457.
108. Ibid, 460.

was going to weaken the state. The theory does not provide any argument as to why democracy should not be pursued; only that greater care and effort must be put in cases like Iraq for it to succeed. The majority of the population of Iraq has shown their determination of pursuing democracy despite all the hardships they have faced.

Polity data reveals Iraq's progression with democracy and Benjamin Miller simultaneously explains why Iraq is facing violence despite democratization through the s/n balance theory. Therefore, there can be advances in democracy while still experiencing violence. The question is then, will there eventually be national congruence within Iraq's diverse demographics to diminish violence as its democracy matures? Michael Hanna of The Century Foundation writes that Western analysts have mistakenly judged Iraq's development on 'their' timeline and not on Iraqis' timeline.[109] Hanna explains that it will take time before Iraqis arrive at the right combination of reforms for their federal state to function. It is only after a decade that both Sunni and Shia political parties have begun sharing common intentions of a more decentralized federal state. They have come to this conclusion on their own, seeing both the costs and benefits of their past policies.[110] There is no coincidence that Sunni groups are calling for a more decentralized state at the same time one of the agenda goals set out by Iraq's current Prime Minister, al-Abadi, is to gradually decentralize the state. As Michael Rubin writes, Sunnis in Iraq will come to the realization of the new reality of Baghdad with the Shia being a democratic majority and ultimately accept it.[111] Increasing provincial administrative powers with the acceptance of Shia majority rule will ease sectarian tensions, and naturally, this will eventually halt the violence in Iraq.

109. Michael W. Hanna, "The Line in the Sand: Is Sykes-Picot Coming Undone?" Journal of Middle Eastern Politics and Policy, (July 13, 2015).
110. Ibid.
111. Michael Rubin, "Sunnis Must Accept Baghdad," Commentary Magazine, (January 26, 2016).

4.3 Democratic Peace Theory

The common belief that spreading democracy and democratic dyads will achieve higher levels of peace and security is a central feature of democratic peace theory (DPT). The theory claims that democratic countries do not go to war with other democracies.[112] As a result, the more democratic dyads in the world, the more global peace there will be and less chance of war. The Bush administration pushed the theory even further with the claim that creating a democracy in Iraq will begin a domino effect of a fourth wave of democratization in the Middle East and North Africa region, despite the initial reaction that will be caused based on the s/n balance theory. While it is still premature to credit the Arab Spring (however destabilizing it has become) to the Iraq War, some speculate that it will lead to a fourth wave of democratization. What is clear from other readings of the democratic peace theory is that Iraq's nascent democracy has shown many signs of a liberal democracy early on, based on the characteristics found in the theory.

Unlike Iraq under Saddam Hussein, contemporary Iraq has not instigated wars with any of its neighbouring countries. Despite the violence in Iraq today, it is not a result from Iraq starting war but rather war coming to it. This is clear with ISIL fighters crossing the Syrian border and occupying Iraqi cities like Fallujah and Mosul. Although there were security breaches from the Syrian border causing terrorist attacks within Iraq, such as the attack on Iraq's foreign ministry in Baghdad in 2010, the Iraqi government did not respond with military action.[113] Other incidents from state actors involve Iran and Turkey crossing into Iraqi territory without Baghdad's consent. In 2009, an incident occurred with Iran over an oil tanker crossing the border into Iraqi territory, and the most recent

112. James Lee Ray, «A Lakatosian view of the democratic peace research program,» (Progress in international relations theory: Appraising the field, 2003), 212.

113. "Maliki blames Syria for attacks, Assad denies claim," Agence France-Presse, (September 4, 2009).

incident was when Turkish troops crossed the border into northern Iraq in late 2015 without the permission of the federal government.[114] The Iraqi government did not respond with force in either case but rather through diplomatic channels of conflict resolution and open dialogue with the governments of both Iran and Turkey. More specifically with Turkey's case, contacting the United Nations Security Council and Turkey's North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies when the Turkish government remained unresponsive.[115] These are dramatic changes in the dealings of the Iraqi government.

Critics will respond by claiming that the Iraqi state is still very weak and unable to prevent non-state actors like ISIL from invading, but having a democratically elected government in Baghdad which respects the international community and its laws has strengthened its alliance with many democratic allies. With the Iraqi state in need of support to defeat ISIL, over sixty states led by the United States joined a coalition to support Iraq. This coalition has provided precision air strikes, military aid and training, humanitarian and economic relief. This is one of the largest coalitions formed with many democratic states supporting the Iraqi government. On the other hand, Syria's Bashar al-Assad is facing the same enemy but has received nothing like the support Iraq is getting, for many obvious reasons.[116] DPT dictates that even when democratic states find themselves at war, they will be able to receive assistance from other democratic states more easily than the non-democracies.

The democratic peace theory does not shy away from the fact that states in transition can be more prone to war especially if they are surrounded by non-democratic states, as in the case of Iraq.[117] The democratic peace theory is

114. Michael Hastings, "Border oil dispute worsens fears about Iran's influence over Iraqi government," The Washington Post, (January 9, 2010).
115. Darren Butler and Ahmed Rasheed, "Turks keeping troops in Iraqi camp, Baghdad turns to U.N." Reuters, (December 11, 2015).
116. Ray, «A Lakatosian view of the democratic peace research program,» 224-225.
117. Ibid, 221.

consistent with the s/n balance theory, which also claims that countries surrounded by s/n imbalanced neighbours will face further instability and external threats of violence. Iraq's neighbours have shown great hostility towards it, both after 2003 and after the Arab Spring. This has to do both with the introduction of democracy in the region, as well as with the shift of power in Iraq from the Sunni minority to the Shia majority. Despite the hostility from many of their neighbours and having to deal with ISIL terrorists, Iraq has been able to maintain its democracy through the will of its people and support of its democratic allies. The latest threat from ISIL terrorists has been on the retreat, and Iraq's Minister of Defence, Khalid al-Obeidi, reported at the end of 2015 that 40% of the land ISIL had occupied in Iraq has been reduced to 17% thanks to the Iraqi Security Forces and help from the U.S. coalition.[118]

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

Iraq has made sizeable gains throughout its first decade of democratization starting after the fall of Saddam Hussein on April 9, 2003. The Iraqi state has gone from completely collapsing, to rebuilding on the foundations of democracy with the writing of a new constitution and holding referendums and elections. The elections have all been recognized by the international community as free and fair. The elections have resulted in multiple coalition governments with different leadership positions being replaced, all passing the mantle peacefully, a striking contrast to previous coup d'états and assassinations. Transition of power can be seen throughout all levels of governance, all through the voice of the citizens. Despite being new to the democratic process, the Iraqi people have fought for democracy and accepted democracy as the legitimate form of rule, demonstrating their dissatisfaction through freedom of speech and holding politicians accountable via the ballot box.

118. Dalia Fadel, "Defense Minister: ISIS controls 17% of Iraqi territory after it was 40%," Iraqi News, (December 20, 2015).

The imminent defeat of ISIL in Iraq will not be the full solution to solving all of Iraq's problems, nor will it mean Iraq completes its democratization. Iraq will be coming off one of the most expensive wars in its modern history, coinciding with the state's economic crisis as its petro-oil dependent economy is facing low oil prices on the international market. This has affected Iraq's national budget, which not only has to finance the defeat of ISIL, but maintain security afterwards and rebuild the demolished cities affected by ISIL occupation and sabotage. The Iraqi government will be in need of continued military assistance and economic aid to withstand the rebuilding of liberated areas, as well as maintain governance over the whole country. The handling of the Iraqi state after the defeat of ISIL will shape the future of the country and assistance from democratic allies in the coalition will be crucial. The road to achieving full democratic status is long and riddled with obstacles, and despite the success in implementing democratic steps since 2003, without the continued support of its democratic allies, Iraq's democratization is still at risk of being derailed in a hostile region.

It would be unwise for democratic states to pull out of Iraq after ISIL is defeated. The West should understand that Iraqis are democratizing on their own timeline and will require patience and continued support. There will be less domestic pressure to pull out when ISIL is defeated, because all boots on the ground in the fight against ISIL so far have been Iraqis. There will not be war fatigue domestically as was the case before with the Coalition of the Willing. The coalition needs to maintain training of Iraqi troops and advising with the rebuilding of cities. Democratic allies will need to adopt the Iraqi schedule of democratization and adopt commitments to adhere to the need for Iraq to achieve full democracy.

Future studies should focus on how democratic allies like the United States can adopt state-specific agendas to better assist states to democratize. Every

country will have their own specific paths and much can be learned from the democratization of Iraq, as violent as it was, as long as a majority of the citizens are willing to achieve democracy on their terms. Despite a civil war and the second-largest city falling to ISIL militants, Iraqis have maintained their faith in the democratic process and the constitution to solve their current challenges. The end result of Iraq's democratization will continue to be decided by Iraqis' determination to stay the course.

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